

St. Ann's senior-senior dance is a hit

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — As they jitterbugged around the dance floor, Joseph Laurer revealed to his partner, JoAnna Adams, a goal he had set for the afternoon.

"He said he loves dancing with all of the beautiful ladies, and he wanted to dance with every one of us," reported JoAnna, 18.

Laurer, 86, later owned up to that statement. "It's a great opportunity for the girls," he joked.

Their dancing venue was the recreation room at St. Ann's Home, where the sixth annual Senior-Senior Ball took place Feb. 27. The event meshed 25 Bishop Kearney High School seniors with numerous residents from St. Ann's Community — St. Ann's Home, The Heritage and Chapel Oaks.

The Senior-Senior Ball was held a couple of weeks later than its traditionally scheduled slot near Valentine's Day. Nevertheless, the students proceeded with enthusiasm in creating a Valentine's Day atmosphere. For starters, they arrived early to decorate the room with red balloons, each bearing the inscription "With Love, Bishop Kearney."

All the volunteers were dressed elegantly: evening gowns for the young women, and suits and ties for the male students. "Everyone was very excited. We all wore our best dresses," JoAnna said.

Many teens volunteered to help transport residents in wheelchairs from an elevator to the dance site. Upon arriving at the entranceway, other BK seniors offered red carnations to each attendee.

"But I'm not graduating!" one resident joked upon receiving her flower.

The room filled quickly, and before long residents were invading the dance floor — both by foot and by wheelchair — with their teen dance partners. A disc jockey played music that featured such favorites as Bobby Darin's "Mack the Knife," while group-participation numbers included "Chicken Dance" and "Hokey Pokey" — not to mention some high-kicking to Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York." Needless to say, there was no hip-hop, heavy metal or rap played that day — in fact, one student volunteer remarked that for this audience, Eminem would be nothing more than a brand of candy.

The event was highly invigorating for Laurer, who said he began dancing when he was 16 years old and continues to enjoy dancing several times per week. "I'm still at it," he



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Bishop Kearney senior Caitlin Centanni dances with The Heritage resident Joe Laurer during the Senior-Senior Ball at St. Ann's Home in Rochester Feb. 27.



said proudly.

Geraldine Schaefer — who, like Laurer, resides at The Heritage — enjoyed the opportunity to dance with BK's Jeff Cookinham, 18. They slowly swayed to "Sentimental Journey" by Les Brown and His Orchestra with Doris Day on vocals.

Asked how it felt to dance with a young, sharp-looking man, the 91-year-old Schaefer exclaimed, "Oh, wonderful!" Her favorite music of the day? "All of it."

Schaefer, who said she attends the Senior-Senior Ball every year, added that she appreciates the efforts made by BK's volunteers. "Everyone is friendly and kind and helpful," she said.

Senior-Senior youth participants were gleaned from Bishop Kearney's peer ministry and National Honor Society coalitions. Because the event is staffed by members of the senior class only, the dance on Feb. 27 was a first-time experience for all the volunteers. Jeff said that

he and his fellow students felt a bit awkward at first, but became more comfortable once they realized which residents wanted to dance and which "were content to sit and watch," he said. Indeed, many who attended were clapping their hands and singing along even if they opted out of dancing.

Jeff, who said he'd been dancing

steadily all afternoon, noted that St. Ann's residents were telling him how much they enjoyed dancing compared to their regular daily exercises. His own personal highlight of the Senior-Senior Ball? "I'd have to say seeing the smiles on people's faces," Jeff said.

Added JoAnna: "We love to make their day. And they make our day."

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