

# Kitchen service pays off

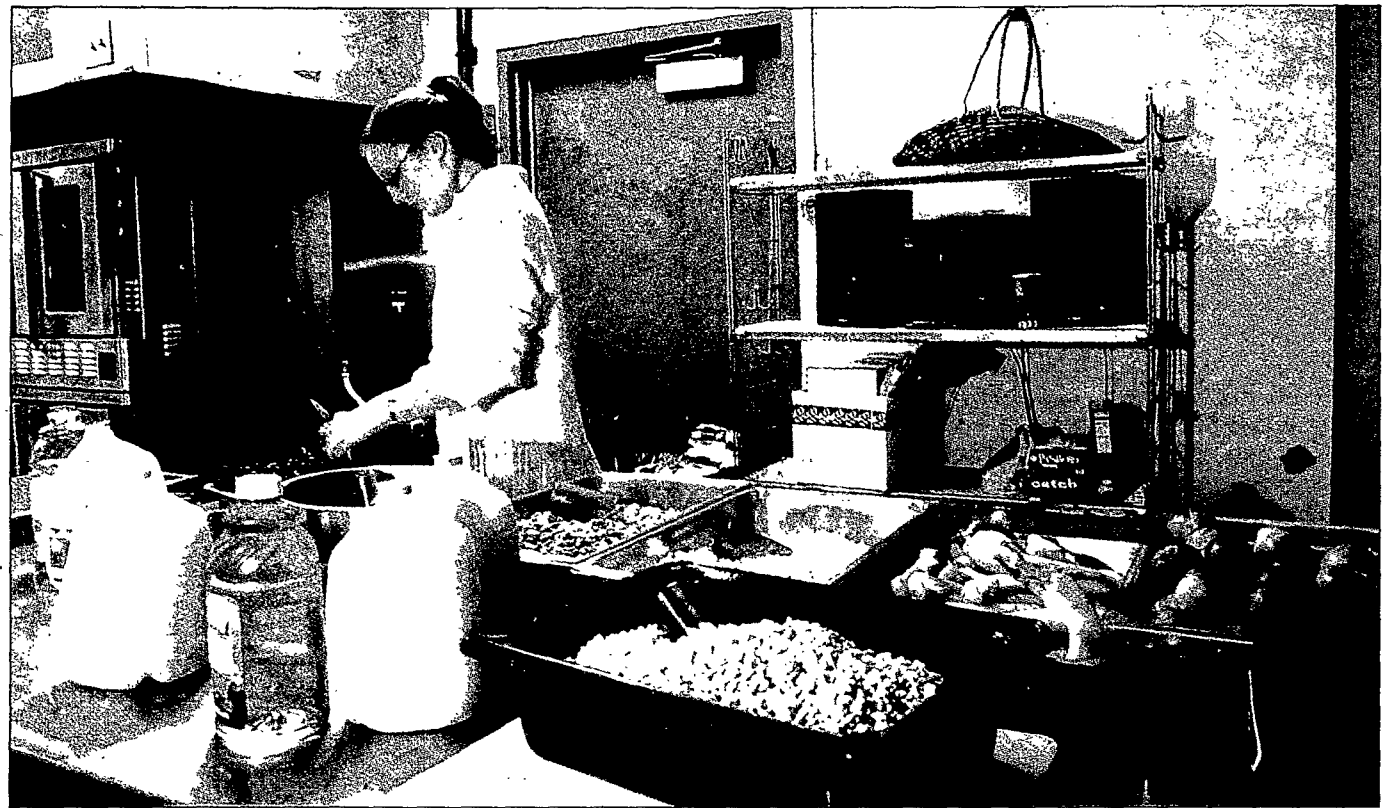
Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

LIVONIA — *Featured cuisine for Saturday lunch: Start with your choice of vegetable, taco or cream of broccoli soup. Select from a wide array of cold cuts. Sample scrumptious homemade brownies for dessert. And by all means, visit the salad bar as often as you'd like! Warning: Save some appetite for dinner, when offerings will include baked ham, twice-baked potatoes, peas and green beans, applesauce, ice cream and cookies.*

Those were the choices served up on a recent Saturday by the Taste and See Cafe, a dining spot that serves combinations you might expect at a top-rated eatery — even though you won't find Taste and See listed in any restaurant guide or phone book.

It's actually a volunteer staff from St. Mary's Parish in Bath that tended the kitchen during a diocesan teen retreat held April 11-13 at Camp Stella Maris. Few in the 10-person contingent were versed in the culinary arts, yet this combination of parish youth-group members and adult volunteers compensated with care and flair.

"Do you want me to put more cheese into this?" 14-year-old Jamie Wall yelled to his advisers as he stirred a big batch of soup while listening to top-40 music on a small radio. Minutes later, Jamie and other staff members were buzzing in and



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Sara Wall, 18, a parishioner of St. Mary's Parish in Bath, cooks breakfast for retreatants April 12 at Camp Stella Maris in Livonia.



out of the kitchen with plates and pots full of food as approximately 100 retreatants and staff members entered the dining area for lunch, cafeteria-style.

St. Mary's is one of several diocesan parishes that perform kitchen duty at retreats during the year. Other staffs in recent months have hailed from St. Charles Borromeo in Greece, Tioga Catholic Community and St. John the Evangelist in Spencerport.

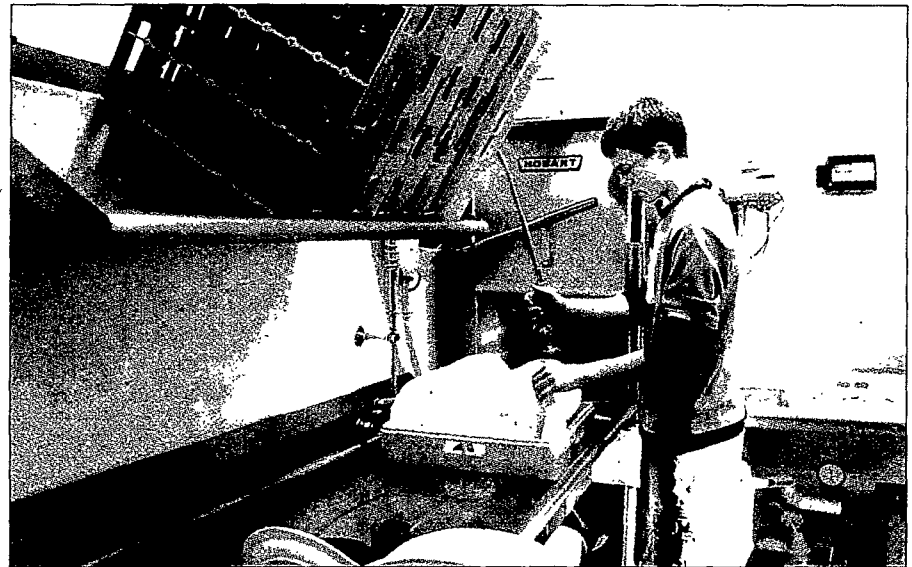
Each group brings its own niche, such as the "singing chefs" from Spencerport. And on April 11-13, St. Mary's played up the Easter season by wearing rabbit ears and holding a jellybean-guessing contest.

This marked the third year of St. Mary's involvement. Mary Carol Wall, youth minister, credits a core group of adult volunteers, led by Betsy Carisetti, for planning menus and utilizing homemade recipes that lead to many yummy entrees on retreat weekends.

"St. Mary's loves food," Wall stated.

Yet it's more than a love for food that motivates St. Mary's and the other parishes to spend long hours volunteering at retreats. Participating groups are given cash allotments by the Diocese of Rochester to purchase food for the retreats; any money left over is put into the parish's youth-ministry scholarship fund.

This tradition has gone on for several years. Although not all retreat



St. Mary's parishioner Jamie Wall, 14, washes dishes at Camp Stella Maris after serving breakfast to approximately 100 retreatants.

facilities permit parishes to bring in volunteer kitchen crews, such an arrangement is allowed by Camp Stella Maris as well as Salvation Army Camp in Penn Yan and Rotary Sunshine Camp in Rush.

One of the past "regulars" for kitchen work was St. Joseph's in Livonia, which staffed weekends at nearby Rotary Sunshine Camp. St. Joseph's Anna Beck, 19, recalled that while volunteering as a junior-high student, she sat in on some of the inspirational retreat talks. This spurred her interest in actually going on a retreat, and she eventually attended several of them in high school.

Preparing the meals can be an invigorating experience as well. Despite the sacrifice of showing up ear-

ly to make breakfast and cleaning up from dinner some 12 hours later, kitchen staffs are adept at filling in the slower moments by playing cards, holding group prayers and sitting in on the retreat's Sunday-afternoon closing Mass.

"It's like your own little mini-retreat," Anna said.

Jamie and St. Mary's James Johnson, 14, filled in their down time April 12 by shooting hoops on the Camp Stella Maris grounds. Yet Jamie and James also found fun in their work, as evidenced by their fascination with the large automatic dishwasher and its powerful spray rinser that led them to consider numerous practical jokes.

"That dishwasher's pretty cool," James commented.

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