

Head of the class, firm on the issues

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

If you're going to get topical with Lindsey Huddle, better set aside a good chunk of time. The 18-year-old thrives on delving deeply into current social and political issues.

And don't be surprised if you find Lindsey sitting on the other side of your viewpoint.

"I've faced that many times, but I enjoy it," she said. "My basic goal is not to get people to agree with me, but get them to think about an issue and form their own opinion."

Lindsey has become particularly well-known for her opinions through newspaper columns in the *Elmira Star-Gazette*, the local daily, and her school publication, *The Maryleaf*. She said she writes not only for enjoyment, but also out of a sense of duty for her age group.

"The youths are often under-represented. It always saddens me to hear things like 'children should be seen and not heard,'" she commented.

Voicing an opinion was among the goals Lindsey suggested for fellow graduates in her valedictorian speech during Elmira Notre Dame High School's commencement June 20. "You owe it to yourself to develop an opinion. No matter what your opinion, it's best to have one rather than be ambivalent," she asserted during a recent interview.

This past school year Lindsey was a planning coordinator for the *Star-Gazette's* "Listen Up" column, written exclusively by teens. Lindsey has been tweaking public consci-

Youth

ness since her very first column for the *Star-Gazette* last year, when she examined the pros and cons of stem-cell research — a field that many scientists say could be used to test new drugs and gain valuable information about serious diseases.

"It kind of sparked a debate in my Catholic school and established me as someone willing to write about controversial issues," Lindsey recalled. The Catholic Church is opposed to embryonic stem-cell research, saying it could promote the killing of human fetuses.

This past winter Lindsey wrote of her disapproval of the war in Iraq, and also traveled with a group from Notre Dame to a peace march in Washington, D.C. She also teed off in print on Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, for his remarks that many perceived as racist.

Lindsey, who is also in her second summer at the *Star-Gazette* as a news intern, said that teachers and students generally praise her columns while sometimes offering their own two-cents' worth. "They say 'Lindsey, very well-written article — but I disagree with you,'" she said.

Lindsey said her Catholic faith plays into her stances, yet she carefully analyzes the church's teachings before drawing conclusions. "I'm not one of these people who's going to agree with what the Catholic Church says just because the church says it. I'm going to explore both sides, but I am going to bring my faith to the table," said Lindsey, a parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes in Elmira.

The valedictorian has also ad-



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Lindsey Huddle, valedictorian of Elmira Notre Dame High School's Class of 2003, poses June 13 for a picture in the school's library, a place where she spent a good amount of time during her senior year.

ressed important issues through her school involvement in Amnesty International and Students Against Destructive Decisions, as well as a committee against bullying. She also played for the Notre Dame girls' tennis team, where she filled the second singles position this past fall. Stating that high school is "more than just academics," she said she would more readily have shed her No. 1 class ranking than her extracurricular activities.

But she did indeed finish atop the class, and is now armed with numerous scholarships and awards as she heads to the Ivy League this fall. Lindsey will enroll at Princeton University, where she plans to major in international politics and economics. She eyes a career in politics, law or even journalism, just so long as she can be a part of the national and international scene. Based on her experience as a team leader for

Model United Nations, working for the UN is a distinct possibility. "I've just fallen in love with the parliamentary process of the UN," she said.

Working in the nation's capital is another viable possibility. "I really want to be someplace where there's a lot of action going on. I really hope to settle in Washington someday," she said. "I want to have a family, but there's things I feel I need to do first."

Whatever her career choice, Lindsey's prevailing commitment is to make the world a better place.

"I would love to make a positive difference because there's so many negatives. I really feel empathy is what the world needs, and I feel I have empathy. Ireland, Palestine, India and Pakistan — there is no empathy," she said. "People are so caught up in their own problems, they can't see the other side."

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