



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier.

Sixteen-year-old Maureen LaRussa, a parishioner of Holy Name of Jesus Church in Greece, entertains 4-year-old Carlito Cardona July 16 at the former Corpus Christi School in Rochester during the annual House of Mercy summer day camp.

## Volunteers energize urban summer camp

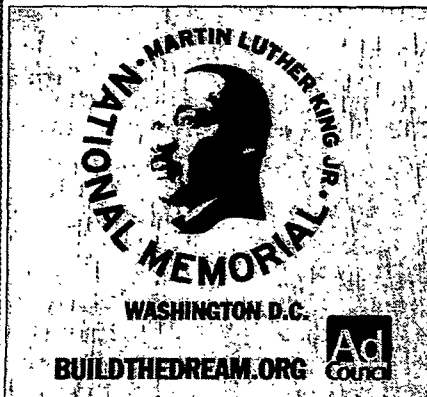
Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — "Sound it out," Rob Makuch instructs 8-year-old Nehemiah Larkin as they examine a picture card showing two sticks. Rob then adds, "Now I want you to put it together."

"S-t-i-c-k-s," Nehemiah says slowly. "Good job," Rob declares.

This exchange occurred July 16 as Rob tutored Nehemiah and other urban kids as part of the annual summer day camp operated by House of Mercy. The camp is designed for city youths ages 6-13 and is taking place this year at the former Corpus Christi School.

Highlights of the camp include



### Youth

prayer, music and Bible study; arts and crafts; assistance with English and math skills as well as social skills; and special off-site outings such as swimming and trips to Sea Breeze and Seneca Park Zoo. Breakfast and lunch are offered free by the City of Rochester.

According to Cozette Cooper, program coordinator, the sixth-year program has swelled from about 25 children per week in its first summer to 100 this year — in no small part due to involvement by the Catholic community. Many Catholic teens have become volunteers through the organizational efforts of such people as Chrissy Carpenter of St. Louis Parish in Pittsford; Anne Casey, youth minister at Holy Name of Jesus in Greece; and Nora Bradbury-Haehl, youth minister at St. Paul in Webster.

During the week of July 14-18, the camp got a major volunteer boost from the Social Action Learning Team (SALT), a third-year diocesan program in which teens assist for one-week stretches at several city

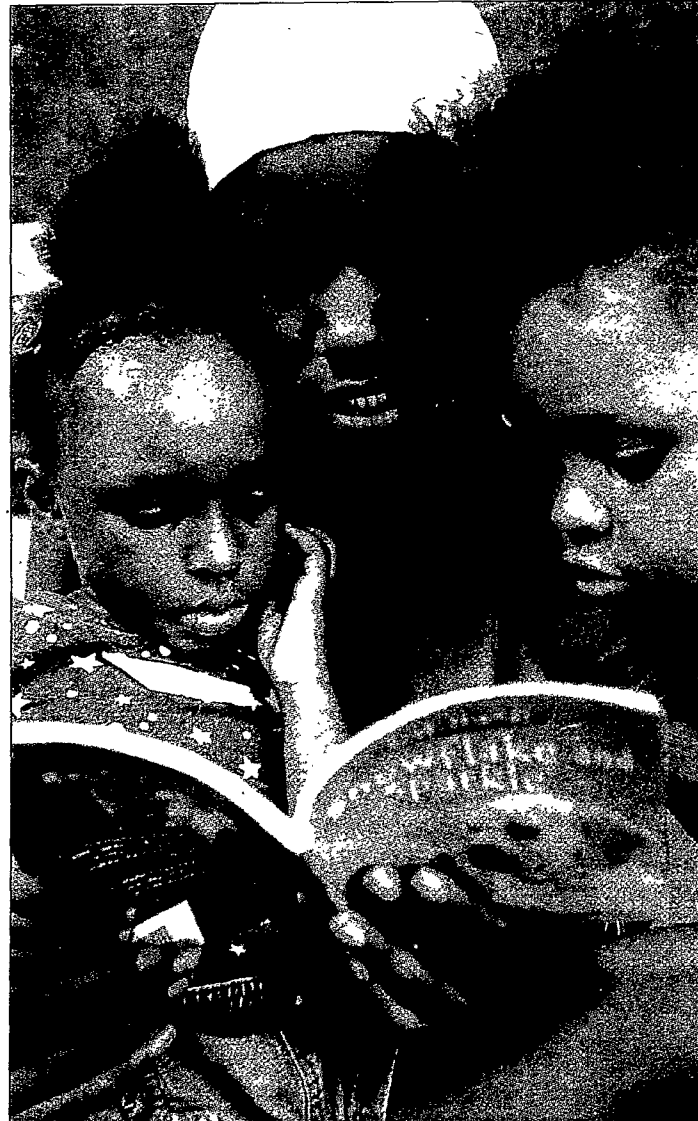
outreaches. Rob, who has been a part of SALT all three years, noted that he also worked with the young House of Mercy campers in 2001.

"I'm a little kid at heart so I can relate to them," said Rob, 16, who attends Aquinas Institute and belongs to St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Scottsville. He observed that displaying a good balance of patience, kindness and authority is the key to his success: "If they do give you lip, you've got to correct them in a nice way. It's all about making them happy."

The day camp attracts other adult and teen volunteers, both Catholics and such non-Catholics as Brittney Burrows, 13. She lives near the House of Mercy and was a first-year volunteer after having attended the camp in its early years.

"You get to meet new people and learn new things," Brittney said of the camp. "They're looking to learn new stuff."

Anna Callan, a parishioner of Rochester's Our Lady of Perpetual Help, was also a rookie camp volunteer this year. Although her classroom on July 16 was filled with noisy, highly active children, Anna — who will turn 17 on July 28 — was



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During the camp, Kourtney Burrows reads to 4-year-old Shahira Burrows (left) and 5-year-old Shavory Burrows.

keeping right up with them, laughing and smiling the whole way.

House of Mercy's camp is being held over a six-week stretch through Aug. 15, with Bishop Matthew H. Clark scheduled to make a special appearance on Aug. 12. The camp has traditionally taken place at the House of Mercy, an outreach on Hudson Avenue for inner-city residents. This year, due to renovations at that facility, the program was moved to Corpus Christi, thanks to the intercession of Father Neil Miller, a retired diocesan priest who approached Corpus Christi's pastor, Father Vince Panepinto. Father Miller ministers at the House of Mercy, which is directed by his sister, Mercy Sister Grace Miller.

Anna — who, like Rob, is an Aquinas Institute student — said she's impressed that so many people, young and old, are dedicated to providing a pleasant environment for camp participants. "I like the fact everybody comes out for the kids," she said.

Mercy Sister Livia Ann Ruocco, a camp coordinator, agreed. "We've got so many wonderful volunteers," Sister Ruocco exclaimed while giving Anna a big hug.

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