

Ex-teen leaders reunite

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — To what degree does a teen's involvement in youth ministry carve the path he or she walks as an adult? No scientific formula exists, but consider how the last decade has evolved for 25-year-old Brian Moroni.

From 1994-96 Moroni served on the Diocesan Youth Committee, representing St. Cecilia's Parish in Irondequoit. This coalition of teens, formed in 1993, dedicates itself to planning diocesan youth events and taking leadership roles during them.

"My time on NYC has helped me to be the leader I am, as well as meeting lifelong friends," said Moroni, who now teaches at James Madison School in the Rochester City School District.

Moroni and nearly 40 other former NYC members enjoyed a rare opportunity to connect Aug. 10. Ranging in age from their late teens to mid 20s, these young Catholics — along with several former adult NYC representatives who had served in advisory roles — gathered for a 10-year NYC reunion on the final day of the 2003 Diocesan Youth Convention.

Gathering in a conference room at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the NYC alumni sat in a large circle and, one by one, delivered "where are they now" reports. Several attendees traveled from out of state. Some are now married; others have become engaged.

Interestingly, many have begun or are pursuing careers that have a strong link to ministry: working with troubled youths and the developmentally disabled; studying public service and theology. Church ministry, as well, ranks high: Erin McConnell (St. Mary's, Bath) is studying youth ministry in college, and Anne Kidera (St. Thomas More, Brighton), serves as youth minister at Henrietta's Church of the Good Shepherd. Among adult NYC alumni, Deborah Housel, a former youth minister, is now pastoral administrator at St. Michael's Parish in Lyons; and Rich Rasmussen has gone from volunteer youth ministry to taking a full-time position in that field at Ithaca's Immaculate Conception Parish.

Many who attended the reunion said they keep in touch with their



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Former members of the Diocesan Youth Committee gathered Aug. 10 for a 10-year reunion, which was held at Rochester's Crowne Plaza Hotel during the Diocesan Youth Convention. Mary Votava (left) Kate Rickard, Nickie Keenan, Lisa Dundas, Michele Gammariello, Josh Harris and Tabita Torres-Rodriguez laugh as former NYC members share memories of their time together.

Youth

NYC friends, with Moroni likely taking the top prize in that department. He was introduced to his wife, Kelly, by another NYC alumnus, Megan Fettinger (Christ the King, Irondequoit). Fettinger served as maid of honor in the couple's July 12 wedding at Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary Church. Another NYC alum, Paul Nagy (St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Hamlin), was best man.

Along with the biographical updates, NYC alums were asked to share a favorite memory of their time together. Laughter and smiles filled the room as attendees recalled playing practical jokes; singing silly songs; and other good times. Nick Joseph (St. Andrew's, Rochester) reminisced about talking with friends deep into the night, then "staying up until breakfast so the only time to sleep was during the (program) sessions." Meanwhile, his sister Megan's top memory was "eating breakfast with Bishop Matthew Clark."

Other people grew sentimental while recalling their NYC days — including Michael Theisen, diocesan

director of youth ministry and founder of the NYC, who got slightly choked up while expressing his appreciation for the NYC's past efforts.

"I really didn't have a favorite memory. They're all favorites," concluded Dan Kwiecien (St. Mary of the Assumption, Scottsville). "Every time was the best time," agreed Pat LaMay (St. Alphonsus, Auburn). Meanwhile, Brianna Carney (St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit) rated her term as a NYC member "the best two years of my life."

What made these moments so spe-

cial? Perhaps Margaret Rickard (St. Louis, Pittsford), who attended the reunion with her sister Kate, summed it up best. Though happy with her career in the corporate world, Rickard is wistful about the closeness she enjoyed among her NYC peers.

"The spirit that we all had — you miss it when you go away," she said.

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