

# Urban ministry begins 3rd year

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

In the inner city of Cleveland, where Lynette DeJesus grew up and was later a youth minister, the landscape was often not rosy.

"I know lots of people who have been shot, some of them killed," she said.

DeJesus is beginning her third year as Rochester's diocesan coordinator of urban youth ministry. The conditions DeJesus has encountered in that job aren't quite as severe as in Cleveland, but it's still apparent to her that Rochester's youths have their share of challenges. For instance, DeJesus recalled a gathering of urban teens earlier this year at Holy Family Church during which "almost everyone knew of someone who had been shot or was in jail," she said.

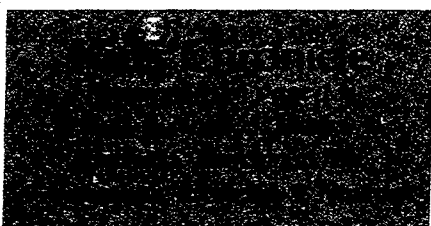
Crime, gang warfare and violence are all commonplace in the inner-city environment. Yet DeJesus said that doesn't mean youths have to engage in, or tolerate, such actions.

"It's not shocking but it's still disturbing," she said. "When you talk to the kids it still bothers them because they know it's not right. They can decide to do something for themselves."

That "something" can potentially be activities offered through DeJesus and the Rochester Diocese. As DeJesus gears up for a new year of programming, she said more and more city youths are turning in this direction.

"We'll have something every month planned; I'm excited about this year. A lot of groundwork has already been laid ... it's a busy year and I think it's more so because we know each other better," said DeJesus, who noted that a special effort is being made to rotate events to as many urban parishes as possible.

This past spring the first-ever Urban Faith Fest drew more than 100



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Julian Bell (center), a parishioner of Rochester's Immaculate Conception Parish, converses with Pedro Nuñez, a parishioner of Rochester's Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, and Leslie Pierre-Phillippe of Immaculate Conception at the Urban Center in Rochester.

## Youth

participants, including Bishop Matthew H. Clark. In previous months "Super Saturdays," featuring various themes, activities and guest speakers, were well received. DeJesus offers other programming as well as one-on-one ministry from her office at The Urban Center for Spirituality and Action, located on the campus of Holy Apostles Church on the city's west side.

Holy Apostles has also been the site for two highly successful fall overnight urban retreats that combined fun, food, music, and frequently intense prayer and faith-sharing. Plans are already being made for the next retreat, to be held Oct. 18-19. DeJesus noted that many teens who have attended past urban retreats are anxious to serve in leadership roles for the upcoming event.

"When I was making calls to see who wanted to join the team, everyone responded," DeJesus said.

DeJesus welcomes non-Catholic as well as Catholic teens to her events — especially those who live near any church where a program is taking place. "You really need to get out in the community to see what the needs are. It's our job to go out and preach the Gospel, and that's where we (as Catholics) get stuck. If you're taking it to the parish only, you're missing the 150 kids on your street," DeJesus remarked.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Yolanda Ortiz, religious formation coordinator at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, introduces herself to Stephen Toyer, an Immaculate Conception parishioner.

Ashley Brass, a parishioner at Immaculate Conception in Rochester, takes DeJesus' sentiment to heart. She has brought non-Catholic friends to past urban retreats, saying religious affiliation doesn't matter in these instances.

"It's more about your faith and you. And they had a great time," remarked Ashley, 16.

Ashley, who plans to serve as a peer leader at the upcoming fall retreat, said the availability of such

programs can help to raise the perception of urban living.

"A lot of (negative) things happen in the city, but it's not really that bad being in the city," she said. "A lot of people give us a bad rap. (But a retreat) gives a good look on the city kids. We all come together, have a fun time and let it all out."

Ashley credits DeJesus for much of this positive influence: "I love her. She's a really nice person and keeps everything together. We all like her."

# Res

Mike Latona/Cat

When the Unite to war with Iraq John DeSocio fig duty as a Unite servist chaplai His only fear, l said, was being re egated to behin the-scenes wor such as serving c committees, whereas his grea est desire was to

The Rochester concern was quic ther DeSocio was Island of Crete, i where he served Naval Support Ac the only priest, a chaplains, on a ba tary personnel — mal population du

Father DeSoc: nearly half the p Catholic — so nee highly sought o young men who h first U.S. troops in started and were : orientation, lack rowly escaping de were reservists d sickness.

"Some of the r gotten married, : children," Father

All of Father D reservist hitche United States. Ho currently resides assigned to a E when the war bega 56, is vice rector College of the Im tion at the Catho Louvain, where he seminarians and second year of a ment.

Father DeSocio late March; for the he ministered to r the Navy, Coast Merchant Marine Army. His original for one and possib that was cut shor Bush declared ma finished on May 1 to be seen whethe would be demobil turn stateside and niversary celebra tion.

"My brother an were going to have or without me, an to have a priest as