

# Group home gets holiday welcome

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Maggie Hendler speaks from experience when she cites the need for bonding between developmentally disabled adults and the community at large.

"There is such a stigmatism stuck to those who are disabled, and yet which one of us do not have our own handicaps? But most of ours are worn on the inside," commented Hendler, who serves as the house manager for the Arc group home in Palmyra.

During her four years with Arc of Wayne County, Hendler said she has often brought her sons Jeff and Joey to share time with various residents — to the point where they "have become a second family to my children." On Dec. 28, the Hendlers shifted their focus to their home parish — St. Michael's in Lyons — to help stage a party for a nearby Catholic Charities group home.

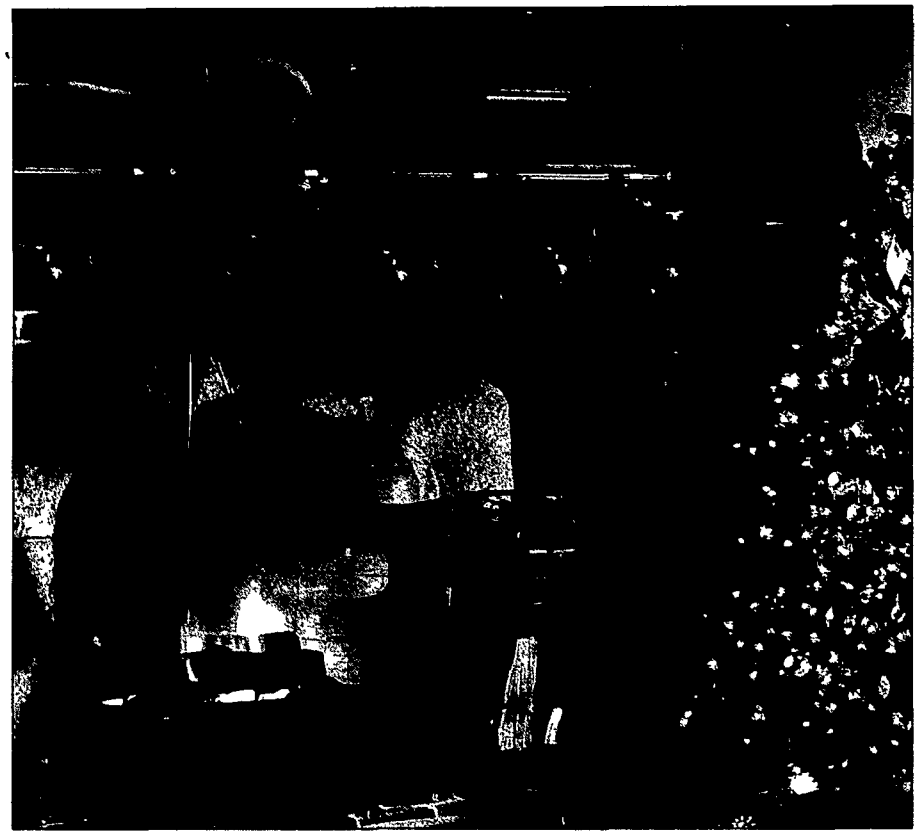
"I can't say enough about the importance of having all youth in-

## Youth

involved with the disabled," Hendler said. "The kids today need to be able to step away from those stereotypes and see the value each disabled adult has. Kids aren't able to do this unless they are involved with an activity such as this."

The fun evening in the St. Michael's rectory included snacks; playing bingo with prizes awarded for winners; singing Christmas carols; and making ornaments that the guests got to bring home. Attendees were also treated to piano tunes by Father Edward Dillon, a retired diocesan priest who resides at St. Michael's.

Twelve adults in all attended from the Lyons group home, which is located just a stone's throw from St. Michael's. Welcoming them were 14 youths and several parents representing St. Michael's as well as St.



John the Evangelist/St. Patrick in Clyde and Savannah.

Jeff and Joey Hendler found it easy to mix in with the guests, saying all seemed to enjoy the party. Joey noted that one adult, Carl, had an obvious interest in football.

"His favorite team is the Cowboys and I was wearing a Cowboys shirt," reported Joey, 12.

Meanwhile, Jeff spent some quality time with a man named Larry. "We were partners for bingo and I helped him get his food. Larry was quiet but very nice," said Jeff, 13.

Zack Rivera, who volunteered along with his mother Mary Glanzel, said the guests "seemed to be like kids in older bodies." Yet Zack, whose family attends St. John the Evangelist, said he didn't feel awkward and was pleased the adults were having such a good time.

"They seemed happy. They seemed excited that a lot of people were there," said Zack, 17.

Whereas Zack, his mom and the Hendlers were first-year helpers at the annual party, Matt D'Amato is now a three-time veteran of this event after volunteering Dec. 28 with his mother, Linda. Matt, 14, said he assisted guests in locating numbers on their bingo cards, and also

listened to them talk about their family members. He stated that the party "shows that our community cares about the people who have disabilities."

This holiday tradition was started several years ago by Father William Barrett, the former St. Michael's pastor who retired in 2002. According to Sister of St. Joseph Catherine Gibbons, faith-formation director for St. Michael's and St. John/St. Patrick, youth-group members would visit the group home to sing Christmas carols. Then, beginning two years ago, the church began serving as host with an expanded list of activities.

Sister Gibbons said the party "helps the kids learn about the diversity of people and their capabilities." Meanwhile, Jeff Hendler said this activity reaps benefits for both the youths and the group-home residents.

"It shows to the kids that some people have life harder than others," Jeff said. "And to the residents, it puts a smile on their faces to see young people."

Added his brother: "It makes me feel good, and it makes them feel good to have people to talk to. Then they aren't lonely."

Mom's  
partly  
paralyzed  
and  
needs help  
feeding herself.

But I work full time.

Eldersource can help. We have the people and the answers for any older adult care issue you face. Call us.

325-2800

eldersource

www.eldersource.org

Eldersource is a volunteer program of the Holy Family Center and LIFE SPAN. Both are operated by the Arc of Rochester as a public service of the Diocese.



CATHOLIC RADIO  
1460 AM

THE STATION OF THE CROSS

Your Listener Supported Catholic Radio Station

Bishop Sheen Dr. Ray Guarendi Fr. Groeschel

Mother Angelica Scott Hahn Fr. Mitch Pacwa

All God, All the Time!

Tax deductible donations can be sent to  
Holy Family Communications  
PO Box 25433  
Rochester, New York 14625  
877-888-6279  
www.holyfamily.ws

Tune In!