

Teen thrives on ministry to kids

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

When David Sloand agreed to volunteer with his mother, Mary Ann, at a camp for children affected by AIDS and HIV, he didn't know much about the camp or the cause, it served.

What he did know was his love for working with kids. So it didn't take David long to feel right at home — to the point that he ended up doubling his original commitment time.

"I went into it nonchalant, and it just blossomed," recalled David, 18. "I was only supposed to stay for half a week but ended up staying the whole week."

David worked with boys ages 6-8 last summer at Camp SOAR, held annually for children infected by HIV or AIDS or who have family members infected. Sponsored by diocesan Catholic Charities, Camp SOAR takes place at Camp Koinonia in Yates County.

David assisted with such fun activities as arts and crafts, nature hikes, ball games and bingo. He said there was no discussion of AIDS or HIV — rather, the camp served as a break from the ravages of the epidemic for which there is no known cure.

Although he had an uncle who died of AIDS in 1995, David said he was too young to grasp the deeper realities of the epidemic. After the

Youth

Camp SOAR experience, though, he got a better feel for what it's like to live with AIDS. Thus, he paid closer attention when the annual World AIDS Day was observed this past Dec. 1.

"It's real people, so you get to put a face on it," he said of Camp SOAR.

David has logged several other service efforts involving children. Just months before the camp, he finished off a successful effort to repair and give away more than 20 bicycles to young city residents. He worked on the project during the 2002-03 school year, enlisting several of his friends from McQuaid Jesuit High School for assistance. The bikes were presented during a special ceremony in the spring to students at Rochester City School No. 36.

"Some of them were very eager to jump right on the bikes," David recalled.

The bicycle initiative served as David's Eagle Scout project. He's a member of Boy Scout Troop 209 in Fairport and received his Eagle honor this past fall.

In addition, David has an ongoing commitment with kids in his parish, Fairport's Church of the Resurrection. He teaches the Children's



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David Sloand, a senior at McQuaid Jesuit High School, teaches Children's Liturgy of the Word Jan. 4 at Church of the Resurrection in Fairport.

Liturgy of the Word once per month, often getting help from his sister Meaghan, 13, in acting out the Sunday readings.

David said that employing WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) is an effective teaching tool for his young students, who are in kindergarten through third grade.

"I relate (the readings) into real life. It's real easy when I do that and ask them what they would do," he said.

Much of David's focus on kids stems from his awareness of being a positive role model. "(Young children are) developing, and you're helping them with developing," he

explained. "An older kid can really have an effect on their lives."

David earned the diocesan Hands of Christ Award for outstanding service this past fall. A senior at McQuaid, he is also an avid gymnast and is looking at Miami of Ohio, Holy Cross or Fairfield for college.

Though he's not yet sure of his major, he didn't rule out the possibility of a career involving children. But first, he admitted, he has to blend a bit of tough love into his passion for helping youngsters.

"One of the things I learned at Camp SOAR is that I'm a big pushover," he said with a smile. "I have trouble punishing kids."

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