

SALT work retreat lends assist to city

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — To Emily Fields, many fine folks can be found in the inner city — but she contends the point isn't raised nearly enough.

"I think a lot of people just characterize the city as a bad place," said Emily, 17, a parishioner of St. John the Evangelist (Humboldt Street) in Rochester.

Emily and Andriana Farruggia certainly didn't find anything bad about the families to whom they served lunch July 19 at Bethany House, a food cupboard and temporary shelter for women and their children.

"Most of the people were very nice," said Andriana, 15, from St. Lucy's in Retsof, Livingston County. She and Emily were especially touched by the little children: "The kids were so sweet," Emily said. "Adorable," Andriana agreed.

Emily and Andriana were among several teens and adult coordinators who took part in the fourth annual SALT (Social Action Learning Team) work retreat, held July 18-21. Volunteers assisted at Bethany House and two other inner-city outreaches: Salvation Army, where they helped staff a summer youth camp; and Cameron Community Ministries, where they sorted clothes, cleaned, painted and served meals. In addition, SALT representatives staffed School of the Holy Childhood in Henrietta, where they were teaching assistants for developmentally

Youth

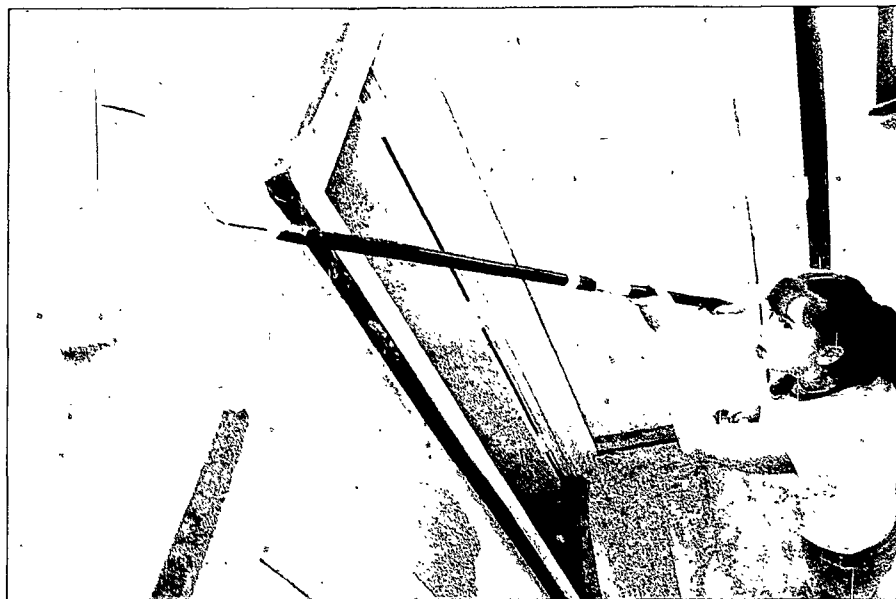
disabled students.

During the retreat SALT workers stayed at the Urban Center, in a former convent across from Rochester's Holy Apostles Church. The volunteers broke up into small teams Monday through Wednesday, staffing the same work station all three days. Along with the mornings and afternoons of this duty, SALT involved numerous opportunities for prayer and group discussion.

Emily noted that one of the Sunday-night activities was a tour past the facilities where SALT crews would be dispatched.

"We talked a lot last night about putting yourself in other people's shoes," Emily said, noting that the next day she met a woman who had lost her job and was eventually forced to move to the city. "It just shows how you can't take anything for granted."

At Cameron Community Ministries, an ecumenical outreach for the neighborhood poor on Rochester's west side, Chelsea Nash and Lauren McAdoo spent a portion of Monday sorting, hanging and folding donated clothes. They admitted that urban Rochester's large ethnic mix and obvious poverty were a culture shock compared to their small-town settings in western Livingston County. Nevertheless, both were eager to take part in SALT.



Mike Crup/Catholic Courier

Fifteen-year-old Allison Stein, a parishioner of St. Lucy's in Retsof, paints the entranceway of Rochester's Cameron Community Ministries July 20 as part of the fourth annual SALT (Social Action Learning Team) work retreat, held July 18-21.

"We wanted to help the people who aren't as fortunate as we are," said Lauren, 15, from St. Thomas Aquinas in Leicester. "We wanted to see what it was like to live this way," added Chelsea, 15, from St. Mary's in Geneseo.

Lauren LaRussa, who also helped at Cameron, said she became involved in SALT through the example of her sister, Maureen, a participant at two previous SALT retreats. "It really opened her eyes," said Lauren, 15, from Holy Name of Jesus in Greece.

Yet a third LaRussa is now a SALT veteran: Lauren and Maureen's brother Sam, 15, served at Bethany House this year. On July 19 he helped to clean cupboards, arrange clothing, serve lunch and sort donated food. Following lunch, he even

took a crack at washing dishes by hand while enduring some ribbing from his co-workers.

"My hand got a cramp, but other than that it was all right," he said, failing to generate any sympathy. More cleaning awaited in the afternoon, although Sam quipped that he may not rate as the best candidate for such work: "You should see my room at home."

Sam's adult supervisor was Becca McMurray, the recently departed youth minister from Our Lady Queen of Peace in Brighton. For McMurray, SALT marked a memorable exit from Rochester: She was due to move to Iowa just a few days after the retreat ended.

"I've always had a strong feeling about doing community service, and there are certainly a lot of needs in Rochester," McMurray said.

Those needs were apparent to the teen workers. "There were so many little kids' clothes. You don't want to think there are little kids who are needy," Emily said. Andriana added that SALT made her realize "just how lucky we are to have what we have."

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