

# Camp provides haven for families

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the first article in a series on single-parenting issues.

Thirty-seven families headed to Camp Stella Maris on Conesus Lake Aug. 22, eager to spend the next seven days there. These 122 campers were looking forward to more than a typical summer-camp experience, however, as they came to take part in Single Parent Family Camp.

For more than 25 years, Camp Stella Maris has hosted Single Parent Family Camp, which has a long-term affiliation with Beginning Experience, said Matt Flanigan, Stella Maris' executive director. Beginning Experience is an international peer ministry for the divorced, separated and widowed that was founded by a Catholic nun in the early 1970s.

The camp's goal is to bring single, separated and widowed parents and their children together, according to Robin James, program director for Single Parent Family Camp. This allows the parents and children to strengthen their family bonds in a caring environment filled with peers who understand their situation.

At camp, the children are kept busy with arts, crafts and outdoor games and activities, and teens participate in leadership activities, said

## Parenting



First in a series  
Single Parenting

Tom Weaver, camp director at Camp Stella Maris. Adults attend sessions on topics such as enhancing par-

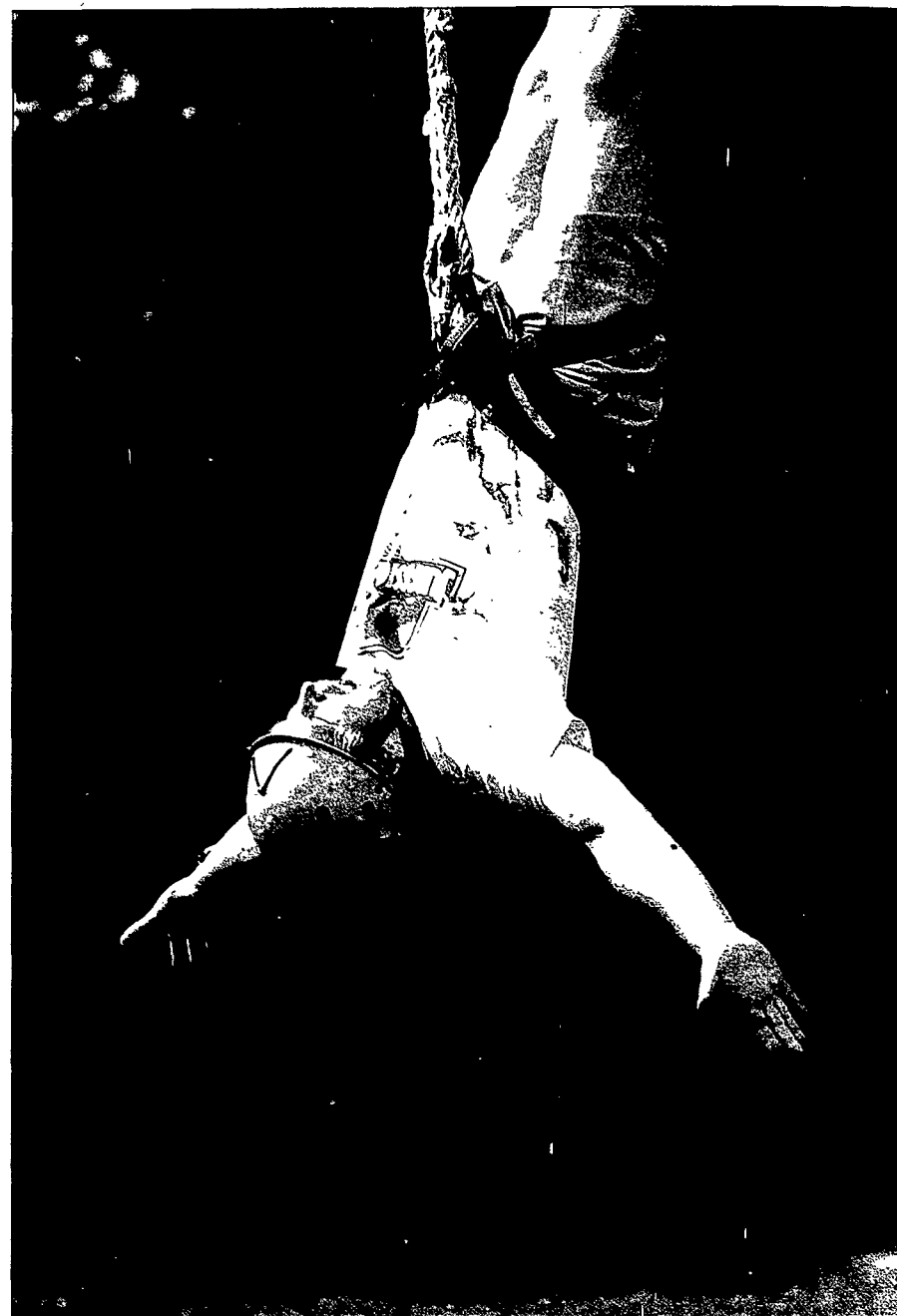
ent-child relationships, coping with stress and increasing management skills. Campers also use Camp Stella Maris' adventure and ropes courses, and time is set aside for family interaction. The week kicks off with an opening Mass on Sunday, and there is a reconciliation service on Thursday evening.

At Single Parent Family Camp, no one has to explain their feelings — their fellow campers have been in their shoes. The compassion campers show each other creates such a nurturing, healing environment that by week's end campers often feel like family members.

"They pray together, they cry together, and there's a closeness that happens among the adults. They just feel like family," said Father John Glogowski, who has been involved with the camp for more than 20 years.

Children from these single-parent families have different questions than most of their peers; questions like "how do you feel when Mom brings a new boyfriend home?" Father Glogowski said.

"Kids have a place they can bounce these things off each other; buddies they can talk to about that, and their other friends back at school don't even understand the question," he noted.



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Bill Kloc of Wheatfield smiles as he glides hands-free down a 100-foot zip line Aug. 26 at Camp Stella Maris. He and his 10-year-old son, Joe, came to Stella Maris as first-time participants in Single Parent Family Camp.

James and her six children attended the camp for the first time eight years ago, and have returned ever since, with this being James' first year as program director. At the camp, her children have been ex-

posed to positive father figures, which was something they'd never seen before, James said.

"Even the very first year, when we left, they said, 'Wow, some dads are really cool. They really like to play with their kids,'" she recalled.

Fellow camper Clayton Boyce also joined the camp "family" eight years ago. He and his brother, Sheldon, had both recently been through divorces and thought it would be a good way for their families to spend time together. That was true, but they also left the camp with an unexpected extended family, Clayton said. Both brothers are now on the camp's plan-



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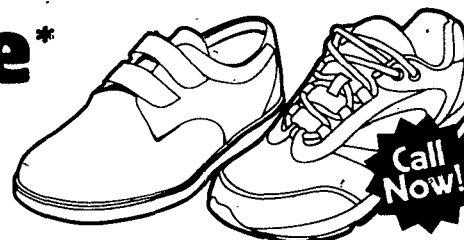
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