

Grown ups reap rewards serving Arkansas' Catholic teens

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Marvin Boyd, 50, concerns himself with many things. On any given day, he could be coaching seventh- and eighth-grade football, doing programming work for a digital systems company or attending Mass at Christ the King Church in Little Rock.

Arguably his most rewarding work, however, comes from his ministry with diocesan youth programs.

"My introduction, I believe, was in 2010," Boyd said. "I was called in to help with some technical issues, and I've been there ever since."

"It is a gift and a blessing and an honor to be able to serve in this ministry and to be trusted with helping develop these young souls and to watch them embrace their faith and take ownership of it — that is a greater gift than anything that we could ever give," Dwayne Capps said.

Boyd is one of six members of the Adult Advisory Council (AAC), a group of adult volunteers involved with diocesan youth ministry programming.

Other members include Jennifer Kilpatrick, 45, from Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock; Lisa and Steve Dearasaugh, both 64, from Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in North Little Rock (Marche); and Angie and Dwayne Capps, 53 and 47, from St. Paul Church in Pocahontas. The Capps have been on the council for six years, while the others have volunteered for more than 10 years.

The AAC is open to any adult Catholic in good standing who has experience in youth ministry and a desire to serve teenagers. At least six members are needed to mentor the three youth committees. There's no term limit for AAC.

The group is responsible for mentoring the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and assisting Liz Tingquist and Tricia Gentry, director and program coordinator of the diocesan Youth and Campus Ministry Offices, respectively. The two councils meet at least once a month to prepare for annual diocesan events, such as the Junior and Senior High Youth Rallies and the spring Catholic Youth Convention.

"We make it clear to the youth (that) it's their council; it's their ministry," Boyd said. "We definitely try to make sure we're in the background. When it comes to actual events and interaction with the youth, we try to make sure we empower them to take as much of a leadership role as they can."

Each member mentors with a specific YAC committee. Boyd collaborates with the multimedia committee to promote diocesan events through digital and social media. The Capps work with the skit committee to bring Christian messages to life through skits.

These responsibilities, however, were put to the test with the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only was it impossible to plan in-person events because of safety guidelines, but the YAC members now had few to no opportunities to gain leadership experience.

"You have kids who ... are seniors who (have) only done one event," Kilpatrick said.. "To keep them focused and how to do it and what to work on ... all remotely was a challenge."

These struggles became especially apparent with the Glory on the Grounds, an outdoor youth rally held at St. John Center in Little Rock June 6. On top of being the first in-person diocesan youth event since March 2020, it came with unique challenges such as outdoor logistics and weather contingencies. Boyd stressed, however, that this distinct challenge provided "an opportunity to branch out and do something new" and to trust in the Holy Spirit that the event would run smoothly.

Each of the AAC members pointed to the youth as the main reason they continue to be involved with diocesan ministry.

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Kilpatrick said she has seen YAC members blossom over two years.

"You have kids who have not properly proclaimed, who ... haven't really been in that role before," she said. "And by the end of the year they are up there proclaiming and just writing these beautiful prayers that, for kids who a year ago, or even a month ago, had never written a prayer before."

Boyd hopes their contributions will continue to positively impact the diocese.

"If things are going to be better, if our world's going to survive, churches have to be in the

middle of it," Boyd said. "If we can help to ... spark that transition back to the Lord so that people can realize that that's really where you're going to be fulfilled ... maybe they can change the world. Maybe they can make things better for generations to come."

The Adult and Youth Advisory councils will host a Senior High Youth Rally at Mount St. Mary Academy in Little Rock Sunday, Oct. 10.

"All these people are incredible — all of them take up vacation days to set up events, and Trish and I, we just sit there and we cry every time because we don't know why they do it," Tingquist said. "I really hope that somehow ... you'll let people know the sacrifice that they put into all of this."