



DEFEND LIFE

Promoting the Culture of Life and Fighting the Culture of Death since 1987

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Campus pro-lifers get boost from LI

At Stephanie Gray's Defend Life-sponsored talk at Johns Hopkins University last October, Defend Life Director Jack Ames noticed a young man who seemed more involved with the event than the other collegians in attendance.

Ames, an inveterate schmoozer, soon learned that Leif Purcell was not a JHU student, but a recent graduate of Quinnipiac College in Connecticut.

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Pro-life site delivers multimedia news

When Defend Lifers held signs reading "Real Italians Don't Kill Babies" while pro-abortion House Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi was being feted at the Italian Embassy January 3, prolifeneews.tv was there.

Ditto the next morning when pro-lifers dogged Pelosi's steps at a prayer service at St. Peter's Catholic Church on Capitol Hill.

In several articles on the four-day "coronation" festivities leading up to Pelosi's swearing-in as the first woman Speaker of the House, the Baltimore *Sun* gave the protesters

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King's Men launch battle royal

Mark Houck and Damian Wargo spend time hanging out in front of porn shops with their friends.

They carry signs with messages like "Protect Your Children Now! Fight Porn," "Pornography Hurts Families," and "Pornography Destroys Marriages."

They also hand out literature describing the dangers of pornography and how to get help for pornography addiction.

Hostile porn shop owners threaten them. Passing motorists deride them.

Customers give them the finger.

Sometimes, that is.

"The reaction is mostly positive," says Houck. "Eight out of ten motorists give us the thumbs up or horn honks."

"We have guys that turn away from the store, get back in their car."

At Adult World in Montgomerystown, Pa., where they picket every Wednesday, says Houck, "Five to seven guys turn away in shame every time we go there. The place

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Porn busters

King's Men members confront porn shoppers in Philadelphia's porn district at their first No More Porn Tour September 13.

LEADERS, from page 1

As a field representative for the Campus Leadership Program, Purcell's job is to help conservative students on Maryland and Delaware campuses start independent organizations and newspapers, and to offer advice and assistance to existing conservative groups.

Ames told the young field rep about an upcoming pro-life demonstration at Towson University. Purcell was there to help and advise the fledgling group, Towson Pro-Life, at its training session November 12 and during the November 14-15 event.

The Campus Leadership Program is a project of the Arlington, Va.,-based Leadership Institute.

Last fall the Leadership Institute sent out 60 trained field reps to college campuses across the country to organize new, independent conservative groups.

By early January LI listed 1,059 active and cooperating conservative groups or publications on U.S. college campuses.

The Campus Leadership Program identifies and recruits conservative students to form their own, independent organizations. Once formed, these groups make all their own decisions; LI has no control over them or any supervisory authority.

The idea, says LI founder and president, Morton Blackwell, is to create young conservative *leaders*, not followers of a national organization.

A glance at the names of some of these groups reveals a broad spectrum of conservative ideals and causes: The Edmund Burke Society, Students for Saving Social Security, the Capstone Conservatives, Citizens for Tight Borders, Santa Barbara Free Thinkers, the Second Amendment Club, The Reason Club, People for Eating Tasty Animals.

A significant number of the groups are pro-life. By June 2006 (the most recent statistics available), of 738 groups and publications listed, 145 were pro-life.

Ames met with Blackwell on January 6 at LI's Arlington headquarters, where they discussed the benefits of a closer liaison between the pro-life movement and the Leadership Institute.

Blackwell, 67, spent his first 32 years in Louisiana, an unlikely environment for the nurturing of a conservative.

While he was growing up, 98 percent of the state's registered voters were Democrats. His parents were both conservative Democrats.

‘The real pro-life battle is on the college campuses.’

But young Morton was a voracious reader.

“My mother taught me to read before I went to grammar school,” he recalled. “I had broad interests and I had good grades. And I loved history!”

His eclectic reading familiarized him with conservative principles.

“My Dad had a subscription to *Newsweek* which, back then, was pretty conservative,” he noted.

A *Newsweek* column on organized labor's effort to defeat Arizona's Sen. Barry Goldwater stoked his interest in Republican politics.

Morton, then a student at Louisiana State University, followed the 1960 Republican Convention, and with some fellow students, started Students for Nixon and Lodge. He decided he wanted to be a Goldwater delegate from Louisiana in '64.

Impossible, said Sam Semple, a friend of his dad's and the only adult

Republican Morton knew. Semple ticked off the only three ways you could be a Republican delegate from Louisiana:

1. Contribute a lot of money to our hopeless candidates.
2. Volunteer to be one of our hopeless candidates.
3. Work for many years for our hopeless candidates.

Undaunted, Morton immersed himself in Republican politics on the college level, helping organize Students for Conservative Government and Young Republicans at LSU.

“I traveled the state, organizing 15 college Republican clubs and teen Republican clubs in high schools,” he said.

Blackwell's hard work paid off. He was elected to the Republican State Central Committee in 1963. And at the age of 24, he became Barry Goldwater's youngest elected delegate to the 1964 Republican National Convention in San Francisco.

The '64 election was, of course a disaster for Goldwater (although he did carry Louisiana and other Deep South states). But Blackwell was hooked.

“You're going to be active in politics,” a friend predicted darkly; “if you don't get corrupted, you're going to starve to death.”

For years, Blackwell admitted, “My salary was never great. Sometimes it was zero.”

Moving up to the nation's capital in the summer of 1965, he worked for the Republican Party doing what he knew best: organizing the youth vote.

“I had undertaken youth organizing as a means to an end – being a Goldwater delegate. But I found I enjoyed it and was good at it.”

In 1967 the party lent him out to head a youth effort for Kentucky's Republican gubernatorial candidate,



Jack Ames (left) talks with Morton Blackwell about Defend Life campus activities.

Louis Nunn.

When Nunn was elected the state's first Republican governor in 24 years, he offered Blackwell a state job.

Blackwell declined.

"I said, I'm going back to D.C. to begin a mass-based youth effort."

He started small, training 20 young recruits in the old Lafayette Hotel on Sixteenth Street.

He sent two youth organizers to work for Richard Ogilvie, who was elected Republican governor in Illinois.

Another youth coordinator that he trained went to work for Marlow Cook's winning senatorial campaign in Kentucky. He was Mitch McConnell, now the Senate Republican leader.

He also trained Terry Branstad, who served four terms as governor of Iowa.

"We did a bang-up youth effort for Reagan in 1980," said Blackwell.

In 1979 Blackwell formed the Leadership Institute, a non-partisan educational foundation that trains young conservatives for success in politics, government and the news media.

Offered a position on President Reagan's staff, he took the job on the condition he could still be head of the

Leadership Institute.

During 1981-'84, from Mondays through Fridays, Blackwell worked as Special Assistant to the President for public liaison to all the conservative, religious, veterans, civic and fraternal groups.

On weekends he trained young conservatives.

In January 1984 he went to work full-time with the Leadership Institute.

Over the years, LI has trained more than 54,000 students. From its humble beginnings, it has grown to employ a staff of 58 with an annual revenue of \$12.7 million.

Blackwell wants young conservatives to be well-grounded in conservative principles. For that reason, he gives them a list of Morton's Twenty-Five Recommended Books. They range from *Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* to the best of William F. Buckley, Jr., Russell Kirk, Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek.

But having a good political philosophy isn't enough, says Blackwell: in order to win, you need to know *how* to win.

LI offers that "how" – Blackwell calls it political technology – through 36 educational programs at its Arlington headquarters and in locations across America, as well as an intern program and a free employment placement service.

Its training programs and workshops, which range in length from half a day to five days, are offered at low cost to the students, subsidized by a very successful, "low-volume, high-dollar" direct mail program.

"My theory was, if I have a list available to me, I will mail just to donors who have given \$100 or more to someone else," Blackwell explained.

He was resolved to treat his donors better than anyone else treated theirs.

"Most of the time the donors hear from us, we don't ask for money," he said.

Fifteen or twenty years ago, he decided to send jars of the surplus honey from his family beekeeping harvest as gifts to his top 200 donors.

"The following year, it had a remarkable effect on our annual appeal," he noted. One donor upped her donation from \$400 to \$10,000. The honey gifts became an annual event.

Are LI's efforts to form conservative campus groups paying off?

The most successful student publication at Berkeley is the conservative *California Patriot*, said Blackwell.

And candidates from conservative groups won two of the last three student government elections at the University of Wisconsin.

As for the pro-life groups helped by the Campus Leadership Program, "The real pro-life battle is on the college campuses," Defend Life's Jack Ames told Blackwell.

"You're doing there what nobody else has done in the pro-life movement."

The Leadership Institute's website is www.leadershipinstitute.org.

MEN, from page 1

will empty out when they see us protesting.”

Wargo agrees.

“Most commonly, the people that make fun of us are people driving by. They yell, ‘We like porn!’ ‘You guys are gay!’ or ‘You can’t get any!’

“But we get a lot of support; people will bring us food or offer donations.”

But, whether the reactions they get are positive or negative, Houck and Wargo are convinced that fighting evil head-on is what real men do.

That’s one of the reasons they have formed a group they call The King’s Men.

The seed for The King’s Men sprouted at a Theology on Tap session in Philadelphia in the summer of 2004.

There, Mark, then a chastity educator for Generation Life, and Damian, a religion teacher at Cardinal Dougherty High School, along with a third friend, discussed the need for men’s accountability regarding the virtue of chastity.

The three began to meet regularly for mutual support, then expanded their group to include other men. By December 2004 their group had a name: Real Men.

Real Men held weekly accountability and formation meetings. The men strengthened their resolve through frequent use of the sacraments.

By early 2006, Mark and Damian were discussing the possibility of taking Real Men to a deeper level, “to cover all the virtues,” explains Mark.

They presented their concept for a new group, The King’s Men, at a meeting with Philadelphia Auxiliary Bishop Joseph McFadden.

The aim of King’s Men would be, in adherence to Christ the King’s universal call to serve, to unite and build men to fulfill their natural roles.

“Men are, by nature, called to be leaders, protectors and providers,” says Houck.

But, for whatever reason, he adds, the Church is not helping men to do that.

“A man knows in his heart that there is a battle going on between good and evil,” says Wargo.

“I think men are looking to be summoned into the battle of good and evil. A man’s heart is stirred when he is challenged to join in this battle.”

Unfortunately, say the two men, the Catholic Church is not calling Catholic men to arms. It’s failing to



Damian Wargo is co-founder of The King’s Men.

reach out in a way to appeal to men.

The numbers confirm their charge. On any given Sunday, women outnumber men two-to-one in the pews. Eighty-five percent of ministry work in the Catholic Church is headed by women.

“It’s a complex issue,” Wargo acknowledges. But often at Mass, the priest’s homily centers around the concept of love as “just being nice. Even Jesus is just a nice guy. That’s a turn-off to men.”

“It’s a lot easier for women to participate in Mass,” says Houck. “They’re much more social beings. The Mass is sadly, at times, in a feminine modality.

“I think we need to get a more

masculine modality in the Church, and it has to start with the priest. We need men properly formed. We need priests like Fr. [Frank] Pavone, who preaches like a lion!”

If we had more sermons about fighting abortion, pornography and other evils, that would motivate men to join in the battle, says Houck.

“Because men are so complex, they can be much more easily blocked spiritually,” he says. “It all comes back to proper mentoring.

In addition, says Wargo, “A lot of fathers have failed their sons; they have never taught them how to be men. So the sons don’t know how to teach *their* sons.”

What can be done to remedy this situation?

“It all has to start with building men on a natural level,” says Wargo.

“All men need to know that their natural role is to be leaders, protectors and providers. As more and more men discover their true vocation, they, in turn, will become mentors for other men.”

The King’s Men aims to reach its goal through a four-pronged approach: Education, Formation, Action, and Healing.

Education comes through workshops and conferences on topics related to masculinity, such as masculine spirituality, virtue, leadership, accountability, and mentorship.

At The King’s Men’s first official outreach, at Malvern, Pa., last July, 86 men from seven states heard talks on masculine spirituality by Fr. Phillip Chavez, SOLT.

Houck and Wargo had met Father Chavez, a priest from the Harrisburg Diocese, through Bishop McFadden, who knew that Chavez was already interested in developing a spirituality and leadership program for men.

“He’s a man’s priest!” says Houck.

To achieve its second goal, Formation, King's Men utilizes the Real Men accountability meetings of small groups of men.

Three Real Men groups in the Philadelphia Archdiocese now meet weekly to help men live out the ideals they have learned.

The protests at the porn shops are a part of the Action prong. But King's Men doesn't plan to stop there.

"We want to shut them down completely," says Houck, not only through raising public awareness through picketing, but by lobbying the Pennsylvania legislature.

In the meantime, King's Men is also taking action on another front. Every third Friday of the month they stand outside a strip joint in South Philly called Show and Tell, where they try to dissuade men from going in.

They also talk to the strippers.

"At first, they're surprised," says Wargo. "Sometimes they ignore us. Other times, they try to justify themselves. They say, 'Are you going to pay my bills?'"

"But sometimes they listen and take our literature."

The goal of The King's Men's fourth prong, Healing, is to help men



Mark Houck holds a sign at the October 4 No More Porn Tour in Philadelphia.

heal from sins of impurity and other addictions, but mostly from sexual addictions.

Five out of 10 church-going men are addicted to pornography, says Houck.

The Healing prong is still in the development stage, "but we do have

counseling we can refer men to," he says.

Mark now works full-time as president of King's Men. Damian works there part-time as director of operations.

He still teaches at Cardinal Dougherty, where he moderates the high school's dynamic Respect Life Club – he took 150 Dougherty students to the January 22 March for Life in Washington, D.C.

The King's Men is holding an all-day Lenten Conference for men, called Men on a Mission, in Paoli, Pa., on Sunday, March 4.

Father Chavez will give two talks: "Challenges in Religion: Surmounting the Barricades within Church Life," and "Challenges in Prayer: Taking Command of the Power in Your Grip."

Dr. Philip Mango, a licensed psychotherapist from New York, who counseled Mother Teresa and her nuns and patients, will also deliver two talks.

Both Houck and Wargo are available as speakers at men's conferences and retreats.

For more information on The King's Men, see thekingsmen.us, or phone Mark Houck at 267-980-5507.



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'Body language' tells us about God, says Healy

George Weigel, biographer of Pope John Paul II, has said that John Paul's Theology of the Body is a theological time bomb, waiting to go off.

But even its proponents admit that it is a dense, weighty, and abstruse time bomb.

In a Defend Life-sponsored talk before almost 100 listeners at Annunciation Church in Washington, D.C., January 12, Dr. Mary Healy stripped this "time bomb" down to its intriguing essentials.

"This generation is living in a time of great graces," said Dr. Healy. "We have seen two of the greatest saints: Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa."

But, she warned, it is also the time of a deadly battle for the heart and soul of civilization.

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, where two cultures, the Shire and Mordor, engage in an epic battle for world domination, Healy noted that the focus is on a small gold ring – "not a ring that binds through covenant love, but a ring of power that is the antithesis of a wedding ring.

"We, too, are seeing an anti-marriage 'ring'; we are seeing a breakdown of marriage and family," the foundation on which civilization rests.

We live in a culture of rampant promiscuity, in which teens perform perverted sexual acts in school hallways, said Healy.

Premarital sex and cohabitation are endemic: 5 1/2 million couples are living together, including an estimated 70 to 90 percent of Catholics coming for marriage preparation.

"We see broken families with broken lives, and the triumph of the Culture of Death," said Healy.



Seminarian Patrick Murphy chats with Mary Healy before her lecture.

"By the time I finish my talk tonight, 3,500 children around the globe – 87 a minute – will have been killed by abortion.

"We need to ask ourselves, what are the roots of this crisis?"

Pope John Paul said that deep in every human heart is the desire to love and be loved in an authentic, lasting relationship; man cannot live without love.

The opposite of love, he said is "to use": to treat another person as an object, a means to an end.

"Our culture is telling us to use and be used, and people are so starved for love, they're eating this up," said Healy.

In the Theology of the Body, John Paul's teaching on love, sex and marriage, he is saying that the body holds a clue to the very meaning of life: "What is love, and how can I find it?" said Healy.

"It's not like John Paul made this up! It was there for us, waiting to be discovered."

But since sin and our culture

have garbled the message of the body, we can't read it properly without the use of the proper "reading light": Scripture.

Referring to Genesis I:27, "God created man in His image . . . male and female He created them," Healy explained, "There are two different kinds of bodies, male and female, neither of which makes sense, unless we see them together.

"Anatomically, psychologically, emotionally, they complement each other. They reveal that we are made for relationships, a union most naturally fulfilled in husband and wife."

John Paul noticed that, in Genesis I:26, God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image."

"God is a trinity – a community of persons," said Healy. "There is a continual exchange of love in the heart of the Trinity."

In the marriage of a man and woman, she pointed out, "We are meant to reflect that eternal exchange of love," a complete, mutual

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one dismissive sentence.

Other mainstream media didn't even mention them.

Prolifenews.tv gave the Pelosi picketers plenty of ink, lots of photos, and a 6-minute video interview.

"CNN and those other guys don't cover us, or if they do, they portray us in a negative light, like we're religious fanatics or nutcases," said Peter Shinn.

That's why, early last year, the 45-year-old Virginian launched pro-lifenews.tv.

"Other pro-life groups were doing news, but not multi-media, with audio and video," Shinn explained.

"My tag line is 'Multimedia Pro-Life News' – I'm the only such website in existence."

A visitor to the website can click on news, commentary, photos, audio and video.

"And it's timely," said Shinn.

Prolifenews.tv has carried events live, using streaming video.

When Shinn went to Chicago last November to report on the Pro-Life Action League, he told League Director Joe Scheidler, "Let me

show you the power of video."

Two dozen people attended a talk by Scheidler at the University of Chicago.

"But I had 110 people watching it live on the internet!" said Shinn.

"They weren't just casual sessions; they were watching the entire 1 1/2 hours. "It cost me \$60 – that's not a lot of money."

More recently, Pete also carried Mary Healy's January 12 talk, "Cohabitation: Why Not?" live on streaming video.

He used an ordinary digital camcorder hooked up to a notebook computer.

"You also have to have a streaming server and an encoder," Shinn explained.

His equipment fit easily on the top of a classroom desk.

"I spend \$20 a month for a streaming server, and I have to pay for the bandwidth I use, according to how many people watch," he said.

But with this startlingly simple technology, he added with a grin, "I'm doing what CBS and NBC are doing!"

Shinn's first pro-life project on

the internet was a website he created a few years ago called Monthlycal-lforlife.com.

On it, he encourages people to phone and e-mail their elected representatives on the first Friday of every month and tell them to defend life.

"That's what our representatives are supposed to do: defend life, not take it!" he exclaimed.

"I'm not political – I want both Democrats *and* Republicans to do the right thing and pass a pro-life amendment."

Shinn followed up that website with a second one, Prolifeunity.com – "because we really don't have a pro-life movement; it's all divided up into different groups."

Since September, he has also been the technical director for National Pro-Life Radio (accessible on the internet at nationalproliferadio.net).

Shinn said he became pro-life at the age of 17, after his 17-year-old girlfriend became pregnant.

"On Friday, I was handing out cigars," he recalled. "On Monday, I was mourning the death of my child," after his girlfriend's parents took her for an abortion.

Before that happened, Shinn said, he didn't know anything about abortion.

"But after you lose your child, you *know* what it is."

Shinn's path to full-time pro-life work was a rocky one.

He was born and raised in Germany, the son of an American father (his dad was editor of the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper for the U.S. military for 35 years) and a German mother.

"My parents never discussed religion, except when my mother told my brother and me that we were Jewish," said Shinn.



Peter Shinn transmits Mary Healy's talk live on streaming video.

Her father had been dragged into the streets by the Nazis and shot because he was Jewish.

Peter became a Christian in his early teens.

He was also “a big-time hippie, waving peace signs and saying Jesus loves you.

“We copied American culture, but we were several years behind what was going on in the states,” he said. “We were still singing ‘Hotel California’ when stateside kids were getting into heavy metal.”

Peter was about 11 when he was introduced to drugs. A crossing guard sold him some pills, promising him, “These will make you happy.”

In November 1979, while he was making a turn on his motorcycle, a car broadsided him, severing his foot.

“They sewed it back on, but it didn’t work, and they had to take it off again. I was in the hospital for almost three months.”

When Shinn was 19, he emigrat-

ed to America without his parents, bought a motorcycle and traveled the country, still in his hippie mode, carrying his peace signs and his Jesus signs.

By then, he was also into drugs, alcohol and depression big-time. His wife Patrizia warned him that if he didn’t get help for his problems, she would leave him.

“We were apart for several years,” he said. “But through the power of prayer and determination, I got myself straightened out.”

Now married 24 years, Pete and Patrizia have two children, Kalila, 22, who will be married in April, and 9-year-old Robert. Shinn is a member of Christ Community Church in Asbury, Va.

A former auto mechanic, Shinn became an electrical technician for a short time, then moved on to computers. About 15 years ago, he went into business for himself.

“I realized not many people knew both hardware and software, which I did,” he said.

“The tech industry has gone through many changes. I’ve adapted to those changes.”


The retainers Shinn receives as a communications consultant for commercial clients allow him to do pro-life work full-time.

Although much of prolife news, tv’s stories currently center on events in the Baltimore-Washington metro area, Pete is working to expand his coverage, and welcomes news contributions from other pro-lifers.

“I’ve got a woman in Kansas who sends me stories about George Tiller’s abortion mill. She’s boots on the ground; she contributes on a regular basis.”


He also has several occasional news contributors.

“I’m promoting everyone’s events,” he said. “I’m not partial to one group or another. I don’t want to be partisan, just show the news in the pro-life arena.”



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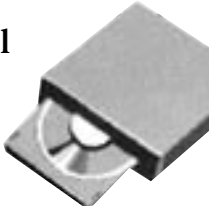
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Little Flower helps bring little ones home

Little Dominic was 3 1/2 years old but he didn't look it.

He spent his days confined to his crib in a Bulgarian orphanage, where he survived on a diet of yoghurt and potatoes.

No one gave him a spoon or helped him eat, so he fed himself as best he could, no easy matter for a child with Down Syndrome.

Little wonder that he was malnourished, and that he fit into clothes for an 18-month-old child. He also suffered from severe ear infections.

When an American couple came to the orphanage and saw Dominic, their hearts went out to him. But Bulgaria, like many countries, requires a second visit before a couple may adopt.

The couple returned for the second visit four months later. Dominic's face lit up with pleasure; he remembered that these were the people who had shown him love.

Dominic's adoptive parents brought him to their home in Florida, where a doctor treated his ear infections and, properly fed and abundantly loved, he put on weight quickly.

"Now he just loves to sit in his mother's lap and hear her say how much Jesus loves him," said Suzan Sammons.

Suzan, along with her husband Eric and Rob and Kathleen Judge, are founders of the Little Flowers Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helped provide the \$6,500 that Dominic's parents needed to complete the adoption.

"We're not an adoption agency; we don't do home studies," Suzan explained.

"Our primary job is to raise money to help pay the costs of adoption of hard to place children."



Rob (with daughter, Ellen) and Kathleen Judge join Joan Andrews Bell and her two adopted daughters (in stroller) at a picnic.

Children may be "hard to place" because they have handicaps or are older children, or they may be sibling groups that the adoption agency doesn't want to break up.

The cost of adoption for U.S. couples escalates when the children are from foreign countries.

"The fees charged by adoption agencies are very reasonable," said Suzan.

But the "in-country" fees are often high, and the usual requirement for two separate trips adds to the cost.

Paradoxically, it is often the less affluent families who are more open to adopting a special needs child, because they are the people who place less emphasis on material things, Suzan noted.

Suzan, Eric, Kathleen and Rob were all active in the pro-life movement during their college years, in the 1980s and early '90s. Through their

activity, they met pro-life activist Joan Andrews Bell.

In 2002 Rob told the others that Joan and her husband Chris wanted very much to adopt two little Russian girls. They were 3 and 4 years old, but looked like 2- or 3-year-olds, due to poor nutrition. Each had a club hand, and one was unable to walk.

But the Bells did not have the money to pay for the adoptions.

The four friends, now married and with families of their own, gave Joan and Chris the money to adopt the two children.

From that experience came the idea for the Little Flowers Foundation.

"We talked to different adoption agencies and found there was definitely a need for financial help for couples wanting to adopt children with special needs," said Suzan.

In addition to giving financial aid,

Little Flowers also helps find homes for hard to place children.

“When we learn of such a child, we send an e-mail out to our data base of over 100 couples who want a special needs child,” said Suzan.

Little Flowers, named for its patron, St. Therese, the Little Flower, looks for good Catholic homes that will meet the spiritual needs of the child.

“We’re not trying to give a child just a roof over his head and good meals,” said Suzan.

“Part of our application process is to determine that this is a couple that will teach the child the Catholic faith.”

Since it began four years ago, Little Flowers has helped 19 families adopt 37 children, giving out almost \$100,000 in grants.

Ninety-five percent of the children adopted are from foreign countries, including Russia, China Guatemala, and the Ukraine.

“We have a family of 11 from Maryland now trying to adopt a Liberian baby,” said Suzan.

Liberia has many orphaned children, some of whom have been badly injured during its 14-year civil war.

“The families that adopt these kids have heroic virtues,” said Suzan. “In



Suzan and Eric Sammons relax with their children (from left) Lucy, Peter, Maria and Anna in their Gaithersburg home.

Liberia, you do have to go to pick up the child, and it’s a dangerous place.”

In June 2005, another Maryland family broke Little Flowers’ record for the largest sibling group ever adopted. With \$8,500 in LFF aid, the couple adopted a family of seven brothers and sisters from the Philippines.

Also in 2005, Little Flowers gave a \$4,000 grant to help a Texas couple adopt Ruslan and Inessa, a brother and sister from Russia.

“Russia has so many orphans right now,” said Suzan.

Sadly, many of the children raised in Russian orphanages are poorly educated.

“So many of the boys end up in criminal pursuits, and many girls end up in prostitution. That fuels the number of abortions.

“When you take a child out of that cycle, you’re not only saving their lives, you are, hopefully, helping to break the cycle of abortion.”

For more information on the Little Flowers Foundation, see their website, littleflowers.org.

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Friends remember Hoffman's hutzpah for life

Deacon Monti Montalto called him "the button man."

"Every year he would buy a thousand of these pro-life buttons," said Bob Hoffman's wife Barbara.

The 2 1/2-inch wide, red-and-white metal buttons said simply, "I'M PRO-LIFE." Bob always wore one, and when anyone commented on it, he would fish one out of his pocket and offer it to them.

Bob died on December 2 of congestive heart failure, after suffering a series of strokes over the years that left him down, but far from out, his pro-life friends recalled.

They remember him as an outspoken and dedicated pro-lifer who never wavered or backed down on his pro-life beliefs.

"He had hutzpah," said Mike Hargadon; "he wasn't afraid of speaking out.

"Right after some state legislators caught flak in Annapolis for calling abortion a second Holocaust – it wasn't a politically correct thing to say – Bob bought a sign that said, 'Abortion: The Silent Holocaust.' He carried that sign everywhere. He could pull it off because he was Jewish!"

In the early 1990s, Bob, along with Hargadon, Montalto and Dan Bartolini, started the Central Maryland Life Issues Conference in Randallstown, where Bob lived.

The organization's aim was to encourage pro-lifers to become involved in political activity in a community that was heavily liberal and whose elected officials were almost all pro-abortion.

"Every year we gave out the Jonah Award – for people who did things they didn't really want to do but knew they *should do* – people who ran for office or led pro-life or-

ganizations or activities," said Montalto.

Hoffman headed the conference for years.

"He had a rabbi give a talk at the Life Issues Conference on how the Torah said you were required to defend life," said Hargadon.

"To him it was very simple: you did not kill innocent life. He wished more Jewish people would get aboard the pro-life cause."

Bob didn't hesitate to "give his two cents worth," as Barbara put it, often in letters to *The Sun* or the *Owings Mills Times*.



Robert Hoffman's friends remember him as a dedicated and outspoken pro-lifer.

"Bob called a spade a spade," said his friend, Vince Perticone. "He would write letters calling [pro-abortion Congressman] Ben Cardin 'a disgrace.' He said that, remembering the Jewish Holocaust, Ben should be ashamed to take part in *this* holocaust."

He would also chastise pro-abortion State Sen. Paula Hollinger in his letters, said Montalto.

"He'd say that because she was a nurse and was Jewish, she should

have known better – that this was a real, live unborn baby.

"He would say, when a woman gets pregnant, she doesn't go out and buy a bird cage or a dog house!"

In late 1993 Bob retired from his auto salvaging business in Finksburg, which he had operated for many years. Six months later, he suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed on one side and confined to a wheelchair.

"They said Bob would never walk again, but he was determined he would," said Perticone.

After physical therapy sessions, "He got to the point where he could walk with a cane, but not very far," said pro-lifer Ken Kondner.

But Bob was not one to let his handicap impede his activities.

And, though firm in his Jewish faith, he didn't hesitate to join his Catholic and Christian friends in the fight against abortion.

When his Catholic friends were outraged that the Catonsville Knights of Columbus Council was renting out their hall for a fund-raiser for pro-abortion State Sen. Edward Kasemeyer, Hoffman helped organize a demonstration, then joined the 30 or 40 protesters in front of the hall, brandishing his "Abortion: The Silent Holocaust" sign from his wheelchair.

"When they opened the Planned Parenthood office on Reisterstown Road, Bob was there," said Deacon Monti.

Monti and Barbara helped a determined Bob get from his wheelchair to his walker, so he could get up onto the small grass plot to join the sign-waving protesters and a seminarian kneeling to pray the rosary.

He would ride on the bus from Holy Family Church in Randall-

stown to the Annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., where he would “march” in his wheelchair, giving out his pro-life buttons along the way.

Kondner took him to the Annapolis March for Life six or seven years in a row.

“The last time they went to Annapolis, it must have been the coldest day of the year,” said Barbara. “I have a picture of Bob and two others – I called them the three popsicles!”

At Defend Life’s Face the Truth Tour in Westminster, said Ken, “Bob didn’t want to stay in his wheelchair with his sign – he stood up as long as he could.

“Bob enjoyed going to those demonstrations. He was also very supportive financially of people in office or candidates who were pro-life – people like [State Sen.] Andy Harris and [Delegates] Bill Frank, Joe Boteler and Pat McDonogh.”

He was very active until about three years ago, when he caught pneumonia, said Barbara.

“I took him to Northwest Hospital. Then he went to Good Samaritan for rehabilitation. He went home, but he was in such pain, he said to take him back to the hospital.”

Bob’s appendix had ruptured, poisoning his kidneys. He never walked after that, and had to be confined to a nursing home, where he underwent dialysis.

Hargadon, who visited him at the nursing home, saw that Bob was clearly getting weaker.

“But he would tell me, ‘We got to rent a hall and raise some money for Project Gabriel!’



Bob Hoffman attends a March for Life in Washington, D.C. Ken Kondner stands behind him.

“But he wasn’t going anywhere,” Hargadon concluded sadly.

Bob died a few days short of his seventieth birthday.

“One of God’s pro-life champion warriors has passed away,” said Perticone.

“We all love Robert, our faithful friend and comrade in America’s cultural war. May God reward him for his love, generosity and his many selfless efforts standing in the gap for the protection of all human life.”

BODY, from page 6

giving of self.

We all know about “body language,” she said. “There is no more powerful body language than sexual union.”

But what happens when this sexual union occurs outside of marriage?

“It’s a lie,” Healy asserted. “It means, ‘I give myself to you – as long as my feelings last, or until someone better comes along.’”

“You are treating that person as an object. It transforms the giving of self into the grasping for oneself.”

Our modern culture tells us that wedding vows restrict our freedom and cramp our style.

But John Paul says they really channel “all my energy, all my life to you, because I love you.

“Thank God for the Church’s teaching on sexuality!” said Healy. “It’s not about saying no; it’s about saying yes.

“We don’t need to fear the demands of love. We only need to fear the hardness of heart that resists the demands of love.”

Dr. Healy, the author of *Men and Women Are from Eden: A Study Guide to the Theology of the Body*, is a part-time professor of Scripture at Ave Maria University.

A graduate of Notre Dame University, she holds a master’s degree in Theology from Franciscan University and a doctorate in Biblical Theology from the Gregorian University in Rome.

Dr. Healy has made a vow of consecration to God as a lay person. She serves as Council Chair of Mother of God Community, a lay Catholic Community in Gaithersburg.

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Movie Review**‘Bella’ is a wonderful heartwarming sleeper**

By Diane Levero

The Toronto International Film Festival is an annual event in which hundreds of thousands of moviegoers view new movies from all over the world.

The ten-day Festival, held in September, has a major impact on the award season: its winners often go on to victory at the Academy Awards.

At the 2006 Festival, the winner of the prestigious People’s Choice award was a sleeper of a film called “Bella.”

The voters, who had 261 feature films from which to choose, picked “Bella,” which has no big-name stars, over films starring Brad Pitt, Sean Penn, Russell Crowe, Dustin Hoffman and Will Ferrell.

This was despite the fact that the Festival’s own website describes the Toronto filmgoers who voted as “discriminating and sophisticated” (translation: they’re liberal), and “Bella” is a pro-life film.

On January 19, along with 15 or 20 other guests, I attended a private screening of “Bella” at the home of Ken Ferguson, one of its promoter, in Great Falls, Va.

Ferguson told us that he and executive producer Steve McEveety recently formed a production company called Mpower. The company’s name, a play on the trendy term, “empower,” actually stands for Mary-power.

“This is our first movie,” he explained. “It’s a very low-budget movie.”

An understatement if there ever was one: “Bella” was made for \$4 million, an unheard-of low for a feature film. It was filmed, mostly in Manhattan and on the Jersey Shore, in 24 days.

Ferguson was the producer of National Geographic’s surprise hit documentary of 2005, “March of the Penguins.”

McEveety’s production credits include “Passion of the Christ” and “Braveheart.”

For its producers, director and lead actor, “Bella” was a labor of love, performed by conservative Catholics responding to a plea from Pope John Paul II.

“He begged us to get involved in art,” and offer the public an alternative to Hollywood’s steady diet of sex and violence, said Ferguson.

The male lead in “Bella” is Eduardo Verastegui, who was “a huge heartthrob” in Mexican TV soap operas, said Ferguson. “He left all that behind because he became a

**Eduardo Verastegui stars in ‘Bella.’**

devout Catholic.”

The director, Alejandro Monteverde, who also co-wrote the screenplay, was born in Mexico and moved to the United States as a teenager. He has directed several short films, documentaries and commercials, but this is his first feature film.

Like Verastegui, Monteverde is also a devout Catholic.

“Alejandro is a wonderful human being with a big soul,” said Ferguson.

To be honest, I went to see “Bella” in a wary mode. I don’t like “preachy” films, no matter how well-meaning they are.

“Bella” is definitely pro-life, but it’s not preachy or sappy.

It is also, as Ferguson cautioned, “the kind of movie you have to see without knowing where it’s going.”

Which means I will not outline the plot here. But I will make a few observations.

The opening scene, a close-up shot of some seagulls on the shoreline, has a trenchant voice-over by Verastegui.

“My grandmother once told me,” he says, “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.”

(Incidentally, ladies, Verastegui is *beyond* good-looking; he is breathtakingly handsome.)

The movie is gritty and real. It doesn’t shy away from the nastiness of life. But it is not dark and depressing – far from it.

One final comment: key to the movie are two en-

See BELLA, page 15

Pro-Life Training Program Series

Peering into an anti-lifer's brain

By Janet M. Baker

In the first part of our study of the anti-life mentality, we touched upon its humanistic roots. Hopefully, we all took opportunities to study the humanist website, americanhumanist.org, and to learn from their rather frank admissions about their beliefs.

We noted last time that the humanists formally reject the notion of God as a Divine Person; furthermore, they deny the existence of a transcendent ethical code that derives from the will of God. By rejecting God, they deify themselves and thus become their own golden calves, buttressed by varying versions of “plastic Jesus’s.”

Most pro-lifers, on the other hand, do pursue authentic spirituality. We don’t remake God and the tenets of our Faith to suit our individual proclivities. We strive to live according to God’s explicitly stated commandments.

Do we fail? Of course we do, but we acknowledge those failures and take responsibility for them and amend them (and make frequent use of Confession). We don’t justify them by saying our sins are really just manifestations of our own personal “spirituality.”

Of course, the anti-lifers do precisely that – or, more accurately, they try to do that. However, they do find such attempts thwarted by the example of pro-lifers who do not tolerate such shenanigans. That is a key reason why they hate us, and hate true religion. We make it difficult for them to anesthetize their own seared consciences.

Their current efforts to ban God from schools, from the prayers of military chaplains, etc., stems from their resentment of our witness. This past January we saw an attempt by some in the U.S. Senate to keep grassroots conservatives from lobbying their legislatures. This squelching attempt was so

egregious that even the ACLU did not support it.

So do anti-lifers have any sort of moral code? Well, they do try to maintain a façade, if only to quell their consciences. This brings us to the second characteristic of the anti-life mentality: the embrace of situational ethics. (As an aside, just to demonstrate the sad state of Catholic education even in the 1970s, my Catholic high school taught a course to sophomores in “situational ethics.”)

Another term for it is “moral relativism.” It’s nothing more than an attempt to disconnect freedom from truth. A person hoodwinked into this thinking believes that truth depends on the circumstance of the moment. This is not difficult to understand, especially when we consider that the humanistic underpinnings involve a rejection of God, and thus of objective truth.

Therefore, they have no standard of truth and do not know what it is. Their only guide-posts (such as they are) are “tolerance” and “nonjudgmentalism.” In other words, “if it feels good, do it.” Sound familiar? Of course, “it” can be anything under the sun – sexual sin, abortion, euthanasia, you name it!

Now when we pro-lifers come along and oppose them, objective truth again becomes defined and we incur the wrath of the anti-lifers as they toss their much-vaunted “tolerance” aside and come at us with a vengeance.

Here’s how to have a little fun with a “moral relativist” if the topic should ever arise. At some point, he/she will state, “There is no objective truth.” You can then ask him/her if the statement that he/she just uttered is objectively true! In doing so, you make apparent the inherent paradox of his statement. That paradox only exists because of the attempt to deny reality.

I had a similar situation when some of us counter-protested the NOW march in April 2004. We were standing on the sidewalk, with the pro-aborts marching down the street. A young man, obviously distressed by my poster of an aborted baby, came from the crowd to “educate” me.

He tried to convince me that there was no such thing as right or wrong. I then asked him if it would be wrong if someone were to come up to him, conk him over his head and make off with his backpack. He was stumped. He uttered that it would be unpleasant and he immediately scurried off. Poor young fellow – obviously a product of John Dewey’s humanistic public education!

A third characteristic of the anti-life mentality is that it cannot distinguish between true freedoms and counterfeit freedoms. In light of their humanistic foundations that are built on sand, that only makes sense. We’ll delve more into that next time.

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BELLA, from page 13

chanting little girls, each about 4 years old.

Of course, all little 4-year-old girls are enchanting. But “Bella” captures that enchantment on film in a way that will steal your heart.

Normally, a picture that wins in Toronto goes on to win an Academy Award, said Ferguson.

“This film will not win an Academy Award,” he predicted; “it won’t even be nominated. Hollywood hates it.”

Film critics at the Toronto Film Festival lauded, instead, “Death of a President,” a movie depicting the assassination of President Bush.

“All of Hollywood wanted that movie to win” the People’s Choice Award, said Ferguson.

As an independent film with no major distribution company to see that it is widely distributed, getting “Bella” shown on screens across the country is problematic, he admitted.

“But I don’t mean to sound pessimistic,” he added. “There is a lot going on behind the scenes. This movie *is* going to get distributed.”

“Bella” is set for release in theaters in April.



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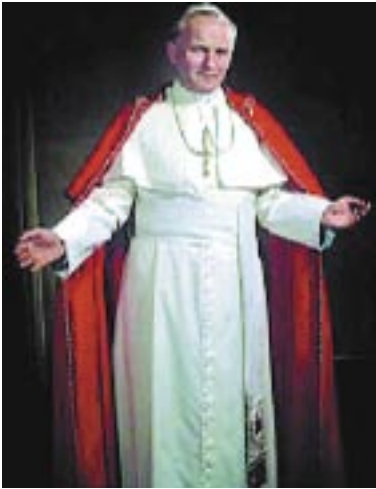


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