

(Photo provided)

Marmion Flannigan Rifles Win Commander's Trophy

Marmion Academy's Flannigan Rifles Drill Team placed first in the Homer L. Clendenen Memorial JROTC Drill Meet held at Concordia Lutheran High School in Ft. Wayne, Ind., on March 19-20. Led by this year's Team Commander John Callahan of Geneva and Executive Officer Jake Miller of West Chicago, Flannigan Rifles won the event for the 11th time, taking the coveted Commander's Trophy to Aurora for the third consecutive year. Units and individuals of the team took additional honors.

Helping

IN AURORA

Rosary SADD Club leads collection for Mutual Ground



AURORA—Rosary High School's Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) club collected supplies to help

Mutual Ground in Aurora in its work with victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Rosary homerooms and faculty donated items on a wish list to "fill-the-box" for Mutual Ground.

The project was part of SADD's recognition of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

In addition, the club also worked to raise awareness by creating public service announcements and leading morning prayer.

Mutual Ground is a non-profit organization providing programs that focus on safety, healing and prevention for domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

SADD moderators are Kim Baleskie and Lisa Sustersic.



(Photo provided)

Rosary students display items collected for a domestic violence shelter

Tell us what Works of Mercy your school or youth group is doing. Write to youngobserver@rockforddiocese.org.

VOCATION CORNER

Sunday is World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Although we ought to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life everyday, Sunday is a very special day because it is the annual World Day for Prayer for Vocations. It is a day to recall how prayer has borne fruit in our own lives and to joyfully pay it forward for men and women throughout the world who have yet to discern their call.

So too it is a day to be filled with gratitude for all that God has done in our lives. It is a day to thank God for creating us out of love and in turn for having

a plan for the lives of every soul that walks this earth.

When I was a seminarian, I remember that complete strangers would frequently come up to me and tell me that I was in their prayers. This gave me so much joy and confidence because I knew that I had a whole army of prayer warriors backing me up as I continued forward in my desire to follow God's will each day.

Sunday you have an opportunity to be a part of this army for billions of people throughout the world,

who either do not know yet what God is calling them to or don't even know that they should be striving to follow God's plan in their lives!

So I ask you to **pray, pray, pray** in a special way Sunday and know that it would not be a bad idea to keep it up Monday and Tuesday and the next day as well.

Happy World Day of Prayer for Vocations!

— Father Keith Romke, Diocesan Director of Vocations
Write to him at kromke@rockforddiocese.org.

How will I know?

Discernment house helps women hear the call in their hearts

By Amanda Hudson | News Editor

"Sometimes people will ask me what is the point of the Nun Run and other vocations events," says Father Keith Romke, diocesan director of the Vocations Office. "My response is always the same: without them I might not be a priest as I am a product of our summer vocations camps!

"I guess you could respond by asking why kids go to baseball, engineering, or art camp and I think the reason would be the same: because it gives them joy and just maybe they'll fall in love with it and enjoy it for the rest of their lives!"

This year the seven participants in the annual Nun Run had a chance to stop at a special place for considering vocations, the Mater Redemptoris House of Formation in La Crosse, Wis.

Mary Pat Davies, 23, of St. Thomas Parish in Crystal Lake says, "I really liked the formation house. When I went on the Nun Run, I didn't know there was something like that ... It was really interesting to me, interesting that people there who were not in a religious community, but still were being educated in preparation for that. It was also very nice they were working together as a community as well."

MaryMalia Shroka, 22, of Aurora, who was on this year's Nun Run saw the house of formation as a "very fruitful way to ease (your) way into the discernment process."

While there, the women from the Rockford Diocese received individual formation direction from Sister M. Luka Brandenburg, formation director at a unique, pre-novitiate formation house that is geared for women who are discerning God's call.

The Mater Redemptoris House of Formation is a project of the Diocese of La Crosse and the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George (FSGM).

"We spent two and a half years experimenting ... with retreats, education," says Sister Luka. "About

2016 Nun Run agenda

The annual Nun Run provided by the Office of Vocations for the Diocese of Rockford headed north to Wisconsin, March 17-20. Seven women ranging in age from 20 up to 43 took part.

The women and their diocesan chaperones first visited the Cistercian Monastery in Prairie du Sac, Wis., then headed to La Crosse where

they met the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

They also toured the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the chapel at St. Rose Convent, met with some of the sisters, got up for early morning (3:50 and 4:50 a.m.) prayers and drove through a surprising couple of miles of significant snow.



(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)



LEFT, BELOW:

Another way young people in the Rockford Diocese learn about vocations is the annual Here I Am Lord conference offered for 14 years by St. Patrick Church in St. Charles.



(Photo provided)

Women who took part in the Nun Run this spring pose with sisters at Mater Redemptoris House of Formation in La Crosse, Wis.

and in Catholic schools, and that allows the sisters to determine their schedule.

The fundraising itself ended up being a part of the formative process. The women discover "it's not just me and Jesus," Sister Luka says, "It's me and Jesus and the Church."

As they explain their goals to potential donors, the women must clarify their story and, Sister Luka adds, it makes them take the whole process a lot more seriously.

"It has worked out very, very well, better than I anticipated," she says.

Four FSGM sisters staff the Mater Redemptoris House of Formation. There are six women going through the process this semester (maximum room for seven).

The ministry follows an academic year, from September to May, with 15-week semesters.

The formation house also provides:

- Educational retreats for middle school students and high school students to introduce religious life;

- Discernment retreats for young adults that run two to three days, providing direction on how to take the first steps in exploring a possible religious vocation;

- Spiritual direction for college-age women who are trying to discern in general what to do in life.

Sister Luka also provides consultation service to religious communities upon request.

The community is at work writing up a program for dioceses who want to begin a similar program, and they have become a source for up-to-date information about religious congregations all around the country.

"I tried to kill the aspirancy program three times, but it kept coming back," Sister Luka says. "God has been good in leading us. We've been very successful in getting the young ladies ready to enter the convent."

Info: www.altonfranciscans.org/apostolates/formation or materredemptoris@gmail.com

It has worked out very, very well, better than I anticipated!

—Sister M. Luka Brandenburg, formation director at Mater Redemptoris House of Formation

three years ago, (it became) a live-in program for college-age women who were interested in, but not ready for, religious life. That's the group we're targeting."

Usually, she says, the women are simply too young or not yet mature enough to be accepted into a religious order's novitiate.

Some are home schooled and have never lived away from home. What the house of formation does is pre-novitiate formation to help the women "get ready for convent life," Sister Luka says.

"Part of it is having a very structured lifestyle," she explains. "They pray with us ... have assigned chores ... do volunteer service with Catholic Charities" and take classes in "different things that people need to know how to do."

As formation director, Sister Luka works with individual women on any particular needs they

have. Each woman has a spiritual director, seeing an area priest for moral formation.

Initially, the women would pay room and board and had to get a job, Sister Luka says, adding that the arrangement, "made it difficult for us to do what we're doing."

She and other sisters went to the National Evangelization Teams (NET) Ministries to find out how they work with people in order to accomplish their ministry. Now the women who come to Mater Redemptoris for a year must first raise \$5,000 for the diocese, which supports and maintains the program.

During the year, the women do volunteer service for Catholic Charities

YO on the record

By CHARLIE MARTIN | CNS

Given Coldplay's global reputation, you wouldn't think that they would feature dancing, singing and guitar-playing chimps in the video of their recent release "Adventure of a Lifetime." But hey, whatever sells, right?

The song invites us to consider what adventures we want in our lives. The song's character says that "I feel my heart beating ... like I'm alive again." While he does not say what diminished his sense of feeling alive, he clearly attributes his personal renewal to a relationship.

He says that "everything you want's a dream away" and that "we are diamonds taking shape." Moreover, he adds that "if we've only got this life, this adventure, oh then I want to share it with you."

How all of this will work out for them as a couple remains unknown. However, for the rest of us, it's important that we remain feeling alive. As the song suggests, sometimes a new relationship can energize us, but ultimately, how we live is up to us. What can one do to create a personal "adventure of a lifetime"?

Like most expansive questions, there is not one answer, but I would offer these suggestions for living with adventure and meaning.

First, explore opportunities outside of your familiar environment.

I don't mean solely geography, but also explore mental and spiritual opportunities. For example, if you want to have a career in science, that's fine, but explore different areas. Push past the familiar. Take a course in an area of study that doesn't fall into your major. Try creative writing or psychology.

You may still end up being a scientist or an

engineer, but you may also discover the joy of writing poetry or become someone who understands better why people act as they do.

Also, feed your passions.

God gave you immense gifts and abilities. Let these inner strengths guide you toward your deepest interests.

Don't settle for a small vision of what your life can be. You are on this earth to enjoy who you are but also to make the rest of us better. Think about how your natural interests can also become a service for others.

For example, if you are good with technology, play around with creating new apps that could help others. Maybe you could start a tech company that markets your app and thus spreads the value of the app around the world. Think big when it comes to making a positive difference for our world.

Give your love away freely and openly.

All love comes from God and thus is based in an infinite supply chain. Expand how kind, how generous and how forgiving you can be. Our modern world has brought humanity to a

Adventure of a lifetime



Sung by Coldplay
© 2015, 2015, Parlophone Records
(Observer photo / www.parlophone.co.uk/artists/coldplay)

Turn your magic on To me she'd say Everything you want's a dream away We are legends every day That's what she'd tell me	(Alive again) Oh, you make me feel Like I'm alive again Said I can't go on, not in this way I'm a dream that died by light of day Gonna hold up half the sky and say Only I own me I feel my heart beating I feel my heart underneath my skin Oh, I can feel my heart beating 'Cause you make me feel Like I'm alive again Alive again Oh, you make me feel Like I'm alive again	<i>(Repeat refrain.)</i> We are diamonds Taking shape We are diamonds Taking shape If we've only got this life This adventure oh then I ... And if we've only got this life You get me through And if we've only got this life In this adventure oh then I Want to share it with you With you With you Yeah I do Woohoo Woohoo Woohoo
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tipping point. We are either heading toward more destructive violence or upward toward compassion and understanding.

As today's followers of Jesus, we know which way we want to see the world tip: love, love and then love some more! Life is a tremendous gift from God. Value it greatly and live it boldly. You are called into an adventure of a lifetime.

Send comments to Charlie Martin at chmartin@hughes.net or at 7125W 200S, Rockport, IN 47635.

(Observer screenshot/S. Boehlefeld; CNS photo/handout)

Women's Online Magazine Debuts



A screenshot (above) shows some of the stories in Aleteia For Her, a new digital magazine for "the modern Catholic woman." Cynthia Dermody (left), editor in chief, says of "For Her" magazine fills a void not met by popular women's fashion and lifestyle magazines. Aimed at women, 25-55, the staff also intends to evangelize for the Catholic faith according to its website. Find it at <http://forher.aleteia.org>.

At the Movies

The Boss

O (Universal)
R After a prison stint for insider trading, a disgraced businesswoman (Melissa McCarthy, who also co-wrote the script) moves in with her former assistant (Kristen Bell) and the secretary's preteen daughter (Ella Anderson). While minding the youngster, she strikes on the idea of staging a comeback by starting a for-profit version of the Girl Scouts to market her long-suffering hostess' outstanding brownies. But her plan is threatened by the ex-lover-turned-rival (Peter Dinklage) whose tip to the authorities brought about her downfall. Dead-end subplots and trashy humor alternate with failed attempts at a more serious tone in director and co-writer Ben Falcone's dim star vehicle. McCarthy's character makes a thorough nuisance of herself, inspiring more grimaces than giggles.

THIS FILM CONTAINS slapstick violence, pervasive vulgar humor, drug use, an implied premarital encounter, rough and crude language.

Meet the Blacks

O (Freestyle)
R A sloppy assemblage of tasteless

jokes, rampant profanity and lewd sexual behavior comprises this wretched comedy, directed and co-written by Deon Taylor. An African-American family relocates from Chicago to an all-white gated community in Beverly Hills, California. The patriarch (Mike Epps) hopes for a better life for his wife (Zulay Henao) and kids (Bresha Webb, Alex Henderson). But, unbeknownst to them, he's also running away from a string of unpaid debts and

spurned lovers in the Windy City. In a comic take on the horror franchise that began with 2013's "The Purge," the clan is soon under siege from gun-toting neighbors and angry creditors, all taking advantage of an annual 12-hour event during which any crime may be committed with impunity. **THIS FILM CONTAINS** bloody violence, strong sexual content, drug use, profane, rough and crude language. — Catholic News Service

— A Theatrical Play —

"Born British, Died American"

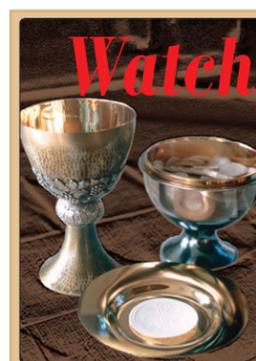
Travel back in time and eavesdrop on Ben Franklin and his daughter as they work on his memoirs.

Tickets:
\$12.50

Sunday, April 17th, 3 p.m.

Historical Hain House, 149 Hilltop, Lake in the Hills, IL 60156

Info: 847-567-5476 or www.bornbritishdiedamerican.com



Watch 'Catholic Mass'

Sundays at 6:30 a.m. on WREX-TV, Channel 13 in Rockford

or you can watch on the Web at <http://observer.rockforddiocese.org>.

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