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# Retreat to move forward

## New approach involves whole school in retreat

By Amanda Hudson | News Editor

**M**arian Central Catholic High School students in Woodstock experienced their school, teachers and classmates in a whole new way during a two-day, all-school-at-school retreat March 4 and 5.

Retreat leaders included 47 senior students who were chosen to lead discussion groups, provide directions and order, coordinate games, decorate, and provide technical assistance with things like sound and spotlights. Some also gave talks and helped with other details.

Senior Allison Jewell says she drew on her experience of the school's Kairos retreats to assist her as a leader at the all-school retreat.

"It's not just a retreat for them, it's also a retreat for us," she says, "so while we help guide these kids along, we're able to grow in our faith as well; it's really nice."

"The organizational process was really fun, (including) decorating

the whole school. We got to stay overnight on Tuesday, so we got to have a really nice bonding experience.

"It's been really great. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

The most meaningful part for team member Paul Serdar was leading the small reflection groups and "just talking to the kids about whatever ... it's interesting hearing from their perspectives. They have a lot of personal information that they're sharing, so it's good for them to talk about it."

Sophomores, Samantha Miderski and Abigail Reiche say they enjoyed the witness talks given by the retreat leaders about God at work in their lives.

"It's cool to hear how other people have similar experiences to us ... It's just been cool to listen to their stories," says Miderski.

Reiche agrees, saying the most meaningful part for her was "hearing what other people go through in our school and how you can relate to it."

Freshmen Peyton Thomas found it surprising, "how all of us, like, (are) coming together like as one, as a group."

His classmate, Noah Maurer, called the retreat "peaceful," and was surprised about having fellow students as speakers.

Bennett Eckstein, a junior, says the in-school retreat "doesn't really feel like a retreat. It feels more like we are finding out how other people have had God affect their lives, but in a school manner, like we're all one family instead of split up."

His classmate Dylan Radazzo also notes how it was "different because



Marissa Neuzil and Reagan Kelly



Dylan Radazzo and Bennett Eckstein



(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)

The Revival retreat at Marian Central included times of reflection and silence.

it's been at school ... normally split up into grades ... now ... all kind of wrapped around being here at Marian."

This year the all-school retreat replaces the one-day retreats held at area parishes throughout the year, says Father Jared Twenty, Marian's coordinator of spiritual activities.

Difficulties with that approach included that he was at those retreats for 20 days last year instead of at the school, and Marian teachers had to keep track of what students missed which classes. The school's Kairos retreats, he say, will still be held twice a year at Bishop Lane Retreat Center for the juniors wishing to participate.

Senior students have experienced past and present systems. Two who were not retreat leaders say they appreciated this different approach at this time of their lives.

Marissa Neuzil says she enjoyed sharing the small group reflections with underclassmen.

"I did like it," she says. "I like getting to know younger classmen." Small group times were a favorite part of the all-school retreat for her along with "Mass, because I play violin for Mass."

Reagan Kelly liked having the chance "to just kind of relax and just have two days to just kind of sit back

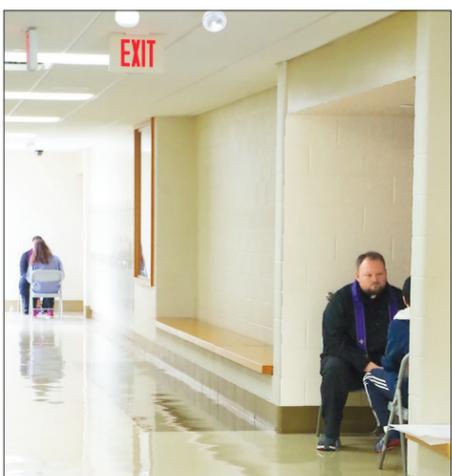
and reflect, especially with all the stresses we have right now, especially being a senior; college is just around the corner... And just enjoy the time with the rest of our class and the whole school; just get to know each another a little bit better in the small groups."



Kate Roaden, Samantha Miderski, Abigail Reiche



Bishop David Malloy wound up the retreat by celebrating Mass for the Marian Central students.



Several priests of the diocese were available for some hours of confession opportunities for students and teachers.