

Passion Burning Brightly in Rochester

By Ed & Leonor "Leo" Rivera

Among the first entries to the GREAT COMMUNITY SEARCH were three Rochester circles. Where there are flames, there has to be a fire! We encouraged Ed & Leonor Rivera and Fr. Jack Murray, the Rochester ecclesial team, to submit an entry for the entire Encounter. The greater Rochester Area is our stellar community for this month. For more information contact leoanded@aol.com.

We call our area Rochester/WNY. It includes the Dioceses of Rochester & Buffalo. It is a large geographical area that requires driving some distances to get to core meetings and events, but somehow our sharing groups keep growing in size and number. You can find a list of our eleven cores here: <http://wwme-wny.org/community.htm>. We are also reaching out to Buffalo, NY with the help of the Erie, PA community.

We have an annual event called the Lovers Ball that brings everyone together for a formal evening of dining, dancing, dialoguing and renewing our vows. It's like a wedding reception for all that attend. We have often had local TV news coverage of the event. There are pictures here http://www.stmichaelscore.org/2004_photos.html

We think that one of the main reasons this area has been strong for all these years are the couples that have been involved for many years. They are scattered throughout the community and they help keep the momentum and enthusiasm going. They guide the cores as leaders, supporters and dreamers. When we started our leadership we were overwhelmed by the couples that came forward to offer help and ideas. Three former Teams put on a Parish Retreat that they presented beautifully.

We scheduled 6 Weekends for 2006. Two of the 2006 Weekends are in collaboration with surrounding areas (Erie, PA & Syracuse, NY).

We have regular Community Enrichment Meetings planned by Mike & Kathy Williams. They have been Encountered 18 years and married 40 years and are a great inspiration to everyone. They invite all the core leaders and community to come to the Enrichment each month. They also involve the community in inviting activities. They obtained all the weekend lists for the last several years and at a community meeting we hand addressed postcards inviting those couples to come attend a Weekend again or to invite someone.

Another community bonding vehicle is our Couple Power Newsletter. David & Claire Hall are the editors. They do an awesome job. The newsletter is web based. Issues can be found here <http://wwme-wny.org/couplepowers.htm> We write a regular article and so does our priest as well as the Community Leaders. Cores also contribute articles, information and event information.

We are also blessed to serve in leadership as an ecclesial team with our priest Father Jack Murray. He celebrates 50 years as a priest and 25 of those Encountered this year. He hosts monthly team enrichments in his home. He has also hosted a Community Picnic and Pool Party the first Saturday in August for as long as we can remember.

Among the core groups, the three that submitted their own sharing circles for the Great Community Search were Image & Irondequoit, St Michaels, and Emmanuel. Barb and Dave Silva nominated Image & Irondequoit in gratitude for the help they received after her heart surgery. Meals were brought to their house every other day for a month! They said that this kind of thoughtfulness and generosity was common in their core group.

St. Michaels was nominated by Pam & Pat Clark. In their words, "The sense of family and togetherness that each couple gives to St. Michaels makes it a wonderful community. We feel so Blessed to be Core Leaders. We can describe this feeling as a beautiful sunny day where everything is crisp and clear. It is like fresh baked Chocolate Chip cookies and that wonderful smell when you come home. That is the key for us; our Core is a big part of our home life. Each couple/each person has made us a better couple and has had a big part keeping our marriage strong."

Emanuel was nominated by core leaders Sandy & Dan Hilsdorf who were proud to share that their community won the "Dialogue Challenge" last year. The leadership is shared by 2 couples who complement each other. One couple attends Community Enrichment and forwards all communications from Community to the CORE. The other couple schedules group meetings, social events, conducts the 'business' portion of the meetings. In their words "We are like a family in that we are there for each other in the good times and the bad. We have a vested interest in the lives of our other members, and help each other out."



The pictures are from the boat trip in 2004, the 'prize' pizza party dinner for winning the "Dialogue Challenge" and from the convention in Towson, MD last summer.

Our area is truly awesome and we are proud to lead it!
Lionor "Leo" & Ed Rivera
Worldwide Marriage Encounter