



A Publication for the Parishioners and Friends of **NOTRE DAME OF MT. CARMEL CHURCH, Cedar Knolls, NJ**

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Ministry Showcase 2010: Passport to Faith, Family & Joy!



Parishioners walking through our gathering space during the first two weekends in October were pleasantly surprised to see it transformed into a festive travel-related motif. Why were there suitcases with balloons attached scattered throughout the area? What were the posters and displays all about? The underlying message was an invitation to further deepen our faith journeys through service in parish ministry.

The last Notre Dame Ministry Showcase Weekend was held in 2005. Since then the number of active ministries has expanded to more than 70 – too many to effectively feature in one weekend. And in those five years, the parish has grown to over 2,200 families, many of whom were surely not aware of all the various opportunities to serve here at Notre Dame.

Pastoral Associate Jean Pankow says that this year's Ministry Showcase took nine months of planning by a "team of extraordinary people." Members included Michele Ciottone, Patty Gant, Pat Gawdun, Maryann Johnston, and Susan Kerwin. As early as January, 2010, selecting a date for the Showcase proved to be a challenge! The parish calendar was so full that the first two weekends in October were the only slots available in 2010.

Jean reports that the planning team explored a number of different themes for the Showcase, with the unanimous choice being **ND Ministry: Passport to Faith, Family & Joy!** The

team felt that this reflected beautifully that our faith life – both as individuals and as a parish family -- represents a true *journey*, dynamic and always moving forward. The theme also reinforced how important involvement in ministry is to that journey.

The planning process itself was a journey, giving our parish ministries a chance to work with their members and with each other in creating their displays and illustrating their messages on posters and handouts.

The Ministry Showcase, a significant undertaking for all involved, had two important goals: first, to create awareness among parishioners of the many different ways to

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Our Parish's Newest Author: A.J. Cunder

As language arts specialists lament the gradual deterioration of writing skills due in part to prolific texting and little reading, eighteen-year-old parishioner A. J. Cunder



offers positive proof that literary talent is not only alive but flourishing among our youth. A graduate of Whippany Park High School,

Anthony Joseph (A.J.) Cunder is the author of the 500-page science fantasy novel *The Silver Talon*. He is presently a freshman at Seton Hall University, where he is one of sixty in the Honors Program at the university.

The Silver Talon tells the story of young hero Arius and his dragon who travel through the perilous mazes of the mystical land of Farahdin and clash with the evil Contemno, the wicked usurper of the throne. Intrigued by the sophisticated charting of the narrative and its lively prose, Notre Dame's Father Justin commended the author for his handling of the moral basis of the conflict. A. J., he said, created another world of honesty and loyalty in which

a Jesus figure stands up against wickedness. Father Justin described A.J. as a sensitive and thoughtful young man who had used his God-given talents in a positive and entertaining way.

When not writing or studying, A.J. is a volunteer firefighter and also has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do. He practices sword fighting with his friends and loves anything to do with medieval times. A.J. intends to major in English and continue writing. "There will probably be more books to follow *The Silver Talon* in the series," A. J. promises. "I'm already about sixty pages into the sequel. The most rewarding part about writing is seeing other people who enjoy my



writing." One special proof of his gratitude is his decision to donate proceeds from the sale of his novel to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. He himself has lived with Type 1 diabetes since the age of one-and-a-half.

Women's Cornerstone: Still Touching Hearts!

There's no greater reward for ministry leaders and our parish family than to hear glowing comments from participants in significant ministry events. Here are several from the recent Women's Cornerstone retreat in October:

"Cornerstone 2010 came together thanks to the Holy Spirit. We laughed, cried and loved it all. I truly enjoyed this journey with Jesus and my sisters."

"Being involved with Cornerstone Ministry has opened my eyes to the love of Christ and how HIS love has enabled me to be a better mother, wife, friend and sister to people close to me and to all women within our Christian community. Cornerstone was God's gift to me, allowing me to take time out and examine my relationship with the Lord in all facets of my life."

"I came to the Cornerstone Weekend to attend a retreat; little did I know how powerful the Holy Spirit works at Notre

Dame. Our hearts and souls came alive and have changed everything. We are true disciples of our dear Lord."

"For me, Cornerstone is the one place and the one ministry in our church where women come to know God and each other in deeper and more meaningful ways. A place where God, as well as the women present, meet you where you are, lifting you to a much better place-spiritually, emotionally, and

physically! It is an incredible ministry, touched by the hand of God and warmed by the hearts of the women."

"My Cornerstone weekend gave me the opportunity to listen to stories of faith born from struggle and challenge. I especially loved the Healing Room. The 'hands on' prayer truly went to my heart and soul. All the women who worked on the weekend put so much effort and faith into making it special."

