

Essex high school promotes respect for life

Every time students gather for lunch at Our Lady of Mount Carmel High School in Essex, they come face-to-face with vivid reminders of the sanctity of human life.

Nine large color posters displaying the development of an unborn baby are posted along one wall in the cafeteria. Each placard contains phrases like “my heart started beating today” or “mommy felt me kick today” – indicating a fetus’ growth for a particular month.

The awareness campaign was one of the first projects of a new Respect Life club started at the school in January. The 10-member club, believed to be the first prolife organization in the school’s 48-year history, also sponsored fundraising activities for pregnant women and a baby shower that garnered donations by just about every student in the school.

“I think we’ve changed a lot of opinions about abortion,” said Lea Linton, a 16-year-old junior and president of the Respect Life club.

“Sometimes you hear that it’s only tissue,” she explained. “It helps when we can see that it’s a human life.”

Lea said her club’s awareness campaign will help promote a culture of life, especially if a student, friend or family member is ever faced with a crisis pregnancy. A big part of the organization’s message is to remind young people there are alternatives to abortion, she said.

“A lot of people have abortions because they think they can’t afford the baby,” she said. “We want to give people support.”

Three young women in the area and one from Frederick benefited from the students’ baby shower. Throughout the year, students have also been encouraged to “spiritually adopt” an unborn baby in danger of abortion, naming the child and praying for him or her daily.

Becky Drinks, a theology teacher and moderator of the club, said she was encouraged by the strong support for the club. Next year, she expects members will participate in prolife marches and symposiums and expand their advocacy to include other prolife concerns such as supporting people with autism.

“Young people are becoming more prolife, especially when they realize so many of their generation have been killed by abortion,” said Ms. Drinks.

The pastel images on the posters were painted by Linda Brenegan of the archdiocesan Respect Life Office. Thousands of posters have been distributed to parishes and schools throughout the country.