

High-LI creates young leaders

For seven, fast-moving, uplifting days, 60 young people from across the Archdiocese of Baltimore advanced their ability to lead during the High School Leadership Institute at the Monsignor O'Dwyer Retreat House in Sparks.

"It takes courage to lead, humility to serve and faith to do both," was the group's motto for the week, said Todd Bakalyar, a 17-year-old Sacred Heart, Glyndon, parishioner.

He and rising high school sophomores, juniors and seniors participating in the program sponsored by Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry spent the week of July 8-14 developing effective leadership schools, gaining confidence and building friendships.

In the past High-LI has had two, 10-day sessions with about 30 youth each. This year, the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry offered one session for 60 youths. The young people were divided into three groups: Acts 29, Source and Summit and Emmaus.

The purpose of Acts 29 is to help young people acquire skills in organization, empowering others and program planning. There are only 28 chapters in the Acts but this will show that the Acts of the Apostles will continue on, said Scott Miller, coordinator of adolescent faith formation.

"We are the future and we need a voice," said Anuli Duru, 15, a parishioner of St. Joseph, Fullerton. "This helps us not only to be great leaders and followers but to be God's people."

The Source Summit group focused on youths who feel called to liturgical roles. They learned to understand prayer and worship, styles and origins of prayer and devotion and music in liturgy. Mary Scott, 15, said she learned so much while setting up for liturgies, planning the music and selecting prayers.

"We need to spread the right message and you can learn that here," said the

parishioner of St. Philip Neri, Linthicum Heights.

Young people called to peer ministry were put into the Emmaus group where they planned icebreakers and warmers, learned retreat skills and pastoral care of self and others. Taylor Penn, 16, said after her experience at Cornerstone she was ready to sign up for a week at High-LI. She said her experiences have taught her the importance of public speaking and how her leadership skills mesh with other people's skills to create something great.

"God is good all the time, all the time God is good," Taylor, a student at Archbishop Spalding High School, Severn, said was her personal motto for the week. "I like the passion that is behind those words."

Mary Bosley, 17, and Patrick Fise, 16, attended High-LI last year and are grateful that the program was changed because now they are able to come back for a second time. Mary, a parishioner of Sacred Heart said that many people view leaders as those who stand in front of a crowd and those that are the loudest, but this camp helped her to see the service part of being a leader.

"People our age don't have as much discipline but this is a preparation for the real world," said Kyle Maddox, 16, from Calvert Hall College High School, Baltimore. "Outside of leadership and speaking skills is the listening skill and you don't realize what a great leader you can be if you just listen."