

Micah 6:8 instructs, energizes youth

Some 32 high school students have returned to their communities with plans for a social justice project, thanks to training they received at Micah 6:8.

Micah 6:8 – named for the Bible passage that says the Lord requires us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God – is a social justice weekend that lets students experience social issues and then gives them tools to address those issues through advocacy and service.

“It’s the two feet we want them to walk with,” said Kellie Reynolds, youth minister from St. Stephen, Bradshaw, who is the project coordinator for Micah 6:8, an offering of the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. This year, Micah 6:8 was Feb. 15 to Feb. 17.

Saturday’s agenda focuses on experiential learning, surprising students with situations that simulate real-life social problems.

“They have some good conversations afterward,” Ms. Reynolds said.

On Sunday, the youths, working in teams, pick an issue and then develop a project that will have both a direct service and an advocacy component. The team decides where they’ll do the project, perhaps in their parish or school, and how. After the weekend, they undertake the actual project.

Kristin Witte, coordinator of pastoral care with the archdiocesan Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, said the weekend goes beyond simple training and gives students “the practicum of being program planners. How do we take this great issue and bring it to the other young people in our community?”

Ms. Reynolds said students learn how to apply the church’s teachings on social justice to their project, and frame it in terms of what the church does.

Last year, a team of students from St. John’s Catholic Prep, Frederick, focused on

the ongoing conflict and resulting starvation in Darfur. The project not only raised funds for Darfur, but educated students at their school. The team working on that project grew so much it evolved into a social justice ministry arm of the school's youth ministry. They sent a team again this year, including a student who is from Africa's Ivory Coast.

The weekend, while intense, offers plenty of fun as well, including social activities.

"It's a high-energy, engaging weekend," Ms. Witte said.