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April 22, 2018

Youth Program Celebrates 25 Years of Serving the Poor

WHAT: 25th Anniversary of Founding of Y.E.S. to be Celebrated Throughout Week
WHEN: Sunday, June 24 to Friday, June 29
WHERE: Saginaw

SAGINAW — Twenty five years ago, a group of generous and faithful women from Mid-Michigan started a unique program called Y.E.S., which helps high school teens learn about and fight poverty through the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching. Y.E.S. stands for Youth Encounter Service. It is a weeklong service outreach program. This year marks the 25th anniversary of its founding.

Over the past 25 years, Y.E.S. has brought about tremendous change in the community. Dozens of homes on Saginaw's East Side have experienced beautiful and helpful improvements. In addition, the hearts and futures of Y.E.S. participants have been transformed in unimaginable ways.

"We wanted to give young people and adults an experience of meeting the poor and working with the poor," said Leona Sullivan, who co-founded Y.E.S. during her time as director of the Office of Christian Service of the Catholic Diocese of Saginaw. "People's attitudes change when they have a personal encounter."

Many parents of Y.E.S. participants observed their children were changed by the experience. "Parents used to ask me, 'What did you do?' after their children were transformed during the week of Y.E.S.," said Leona Sullivan.

One thing that hasn't changed since its founding is a commitment to prayer. Each day, participants pray together throughout the day.

"Prayer reminds us that everything that we do, we do for Jesus," said Terri Grierson, director of the Office of Christian Service of the Diocese of Saginaw. "God calls us to love him with all of our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. During the week of Y.E.S., we have the unique opportunity to answer God's call to love others."

The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the founding of Y.E.S. will be celebrated primarily by serving with joy during the week of service. In addition, the cofounders of Y.E.S. have been invited to join this year's participants for a celebratory dinner on Thursday, June 28.

More about Y.E.S. (1993-2018)

In addition to learning about and fighting poverty during the week, Y.E.S. participants learn how to more deeply empathize with those in need, visit several outreach organizations, collaborate with fellow Christian organizations and learn about Catholic Social Teaching. More information about Y.E.S. is available at <https://bit.ly/2taLmVb>

The Catholic Diocese of Saginaw was established by Pope Pius XI on Feb. 26, 1938. Today, it includes 6,955 square miles across Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Midland, Sanilac, Saginaw and Tuscola counties. In 1938, The Most Rev. William Murphy, the first Bishop of Saginaw, dedicated the entire diocese under the patroness of Mary of the Assumption.

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