

College Conferences Jam-Packed with Dedicated Pro-Life Students

BY Holly Smith

Story after story about the January 23 March for Life inevitably commented on the huge number of young people participating. Indeed, for the past few years, the steady movement of youth into the pro-life ranks has not only enraged pro-aborts and flummoxed the media, but their growing numbers have also visibly changed the face of the pro-life movement, most obviously at events like the annual March for Life.

Hundreds of college students came to the nation's capital a few days before the March. Many of these young people traveled a long way to be in Washington, D.C. They wanted to educate themselves further on issues respecting life, to network and share ideas with other pro-life college activists, and to listen to some of the leaders of the right-to-life movement.

On January 21, the Saturday before the March, American Collegians for Life (ACL) hosted its 19th annual conference, which drew over 500 college students representing more than 90 colleges, while on January 22 Georgetown University held its 7th Annual Cardinal O'Connor Conference on Life.

In addition to presenting a workshop at the ACL conference, National Right to Life hosted an information table at each conference.

More importantly, NRLC was able to distribute thousands of pieces of educational literature, from brochures and bumper stickers to manuals and newspapers—all useful and powerful information when used on our nation's campuses. Judging by the intelligence, dedication, and compassion of the students present for these college conferences, there is no doubt that those materials and our future are in good hands.

Dr. Nigel Cameron, a world-renowned bioethicist, opened the ACL conference with a general session on "Bioethics in the 21st Century." Megan McCrum, a sophomore at the University of Mary Washington in Virginia, said, "The keynote address by Dr. Cameron was a great challenge for us to expand our knowledge of all the interconnected life issues—stem cell research, cloning, and euthanasia."

Other general sessions and workshops addressed nuts and bolts issues such as how to recruit on college campuses, while others offered ideas for club activities. And there were the topics all pro-lifers should know more about, including the impact of state laws on abortion and alternatives to abortion.

McCrums told NRL News, "Many from the Mary Washington group were pleasantly surprised to see how many different areas the pro-life movement was involved in, and gained many new perspectives at the conference."

Austin Ruse, founder of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, and his wife, Cathy Cleaver Ruse, senior fellow for legal studies at the Family Research Council and the former spokeswoman for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pro-Life Secretariat, also spoke. They concluded the event with well-received remarks as the recipients of the "Defenders of Life" Award for their pro-life work at the national and international levels.

Sunday marked another successful and sold-out college conference. Over 300 pro-life students converged on Georgetown University for its O'Connor Conference on Life, sponsored by GU Right to Life, GU Knights of Columbus, and University Faculty for Life.

Campus pro-life groups sent delegations of various sizes, ranging from a dozen or so students, such as those from the University of New Hampshire and Fairfield University in Connecticut, to an inspiring 53 from Saint Louis University. Regardless of the size of the contingent, they enjoyed keynote addresses from Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, S.V., superior general of Sisters of Life, and Jennifer O'Neill, actress, model, and spokeswoman for the National Silent No More Campaign. "Close-up sessions" were presented on topics including the psychology of euthanasia, campus activism, adoption, embryonic stem cell funding, and the positive impact of state-level pro-life legislation.