

Teens will fast 30 hours to draw attention to hunger crisis

By **JILL BODACH**
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Norwalk teens are starving for attention.

On Feb. 10-11 more than 120 Norwalk middle and high schoolers will forego food for 30 hours to bring attention to the crisis of world hunger.

The 30 Hour Famine is a national program created by World Vision, an organization designed to bring public attention to the crisis of world hunger. According to World Vision, each day, 29,000 kids die of hunger or hunger-related illness worldwide.

For the past four years, St. Philip's Youth Group, under the direction of Kali DiMarco, have hosted a 30-hour Famine in Norwalk.

"Something like this really opens their eyes to how much they have and the ways in which they think of food," said DiMarco, facilitator of the St. Philip Youth Group. "When they stand in front of the fridge and say there is nothing to eat and they're starving, that isn't really true."

The first year, there were just 29 participants. Last year, there were over 100, an increase that DiMarco called "overwhelming" but credits the teens with creating.

"Something like this really opens their eyes to how much they have and the ways in which they think of food. When they stand in front of the fridge and say there is nothing to eat and they're starving, that isn't really true."

Kali DiMarco

Facilitator of St. Philip Youth Group

"Generally, I think kids really want to make a difference in their world but they are underestimated a lot of the time," DiMarco said. "They are wonderful — they just need a venue to be wonderful."

Most teens who participate in the famine would be reluctant to call themselves wonderful but would not hesitate to call their experience with the famine wonderful.

"When you go through a struggle like this with other people you become bonded to them in a way you ordinarily wouldn't be because you're going through something so difficult," said Mike Pappa, one of the youth organizers of St. Philip's famine.

Pappa — who has participated in the famine since the first year — said he was nervous about participating in the famine initially.

"I'm a guy who likes my food so I wasn't sure if I'd make it through the 30 hours," Pappa said. "But it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

Brendan Giolitto has taken part in the famine for three years and said his own hunger became secondary to the overall experience each year.

"This is something my friends and I do together each year and you end up having so much fun and sharing the experience with so many new and old friends that you really aren't focused on the lack of food," Giolitto said.

According to statistics from World Vision, it takes just \$360 to feed a child for an entire year. Famine funds raised in fiscal year 2006 totaled \$11.6 million. The goal for 2007 is \$13 million.

Last year, Norwalk's 30 Hour Famine raised \$13,000 for World Vision and \$2,000 for the Manna House Soup Kitchen, making them the highest fundraising group in the state. DiMarco said the goal for this year is to meet last year's total.

To donate or participate in the Famine, visit www.30hourfamine.org or call 1-800-7-FAMINE or call DiMarco at 847-4549.