

St. Brigid's boat floats ... halfway

The youth group of St. Brigid's Church in Nazareth tied for second prize for the most original boat in the *Float Your Boat* Festival which took place on September 10, in the Lehigh Canal, at Sand Island in Bethlehem.

The festival was sponsored by the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and the National Canal Museum in Easton.

Participants were required to paddle a biodegradable boat down a 250 foot stretch of the canal.

The youth group had constructed an eight foot boat with a Viking design as part of the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem *Children's Sabbath/Cruising to Equity* program last fall.



Jamie (front) and William (back) Baldree kept Moe afloat for some 125 feet.

Left to right, John Julian, Jim Baldree (parent), William Baldree, Sarah Baldree, Jamie Baldree, and Cheryl Schramm (youth group coordinator)



Photos by Mary Jo Julian

Nicknamed Moe, the craft was built from a refrigerator carton, and served as the collection point for monthly donations of items for the needy throughout the spring.

The boat was formally acknowledged by both Bishop Paul Marshall and visiting Bishop Walton Empey of Ireland during the church's tenth anniversary celebration last October.

Although Moe was not meant to be seaworthy, Dean Bob Schenkel, priest in charge at St. Brigid's learned of the festival and suggested this might be a fun and a fitting ending for the vessel.

Dean Schenkel's wife, Anne, youth group coordinator Cheryl Schramm, and several youth group members and parents joined him in offering cheers and encouragement as Jamie and William Baldree paddled the boat halfway down the length of the designated area.

Although Moe sank before reaching its destination, Mayor Callahan of Bethlehem expressed amazement that a boat of that size had floated at all, and cited "Divine Intervention" as well as the spirit and resourcefulness of the crew.

The Lehigh Canal, built in 1829 by the Lehigh Coal Mine Co., transported anthracite coal from Jim Thorpe to Easton, and then onto Philadelphia via the Delaware Canal, completed by 1834. Over the next century, the railroads edged out the canals. Today people walk and bike next to the canals, canoe in the water and, in some places, fish.

Mary Jo Julian is a parishioner at St. Brigid's, Nazareth.