

## **RESPECT LIFE NOTES XX, DECEMBER 2007**

RESPECT LIFE NOTES XIII (11. 2006) described successful efforts to build a culture of life but closed saying that such “an endeavor...is...as is almost self-evident, far from completion.” That conclusion, is of course, still valid; during and since that time, however, further progress has been made—by people in different walks of life, from different countries, and of different faiths.

A very recent example would be the screening of the Mexican and U.S. produced, life-affirming feature film, *Bella*. Another would be that of a 16 year old Baptist and Jr. in a Stafford County, VA high school, Stephanie Hoffmeier, who in September, filed a law suit against the County schools because authorities at her school, Colonial Forge High, refused to let her organize a student club. After the suit was filed, school authorities reconsidered and in Oct. The “Pro-Life club” was officially recognized (*Washington Post*, 11.6.07: A1, A12).

In other spheres, we note that in the November 2006 Congressional election, pro-life candidates from both major parties continued to win seats in both houses; a notable example for Washingtonians was former Redskins Quarterback, Heath Shuler (D-NC) who won a seat in the House of Representatives. In April the Supreme Court upheld the partial-birth-abortion ban law passed by Congress in 2003. On Nov. 6 of this year, New Jersey voters rejected a ballot question calling for the state to borrow \$450 million for embryonic stem cell research.

In other parts of the world as well, we find efforts to create a culture of life. In Sydney, Australia, St. Aloysius College, a Jesuit secondary school, formed the Benenson Society (named after English, Catholic convert Peter Benenson, founder in 1961, of Amnesty International, AI) after AI in August abandoned its neutral position on abortion and decided to support it in certain cases. In the U.K., on Aug. 15, members of the youth and student division of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), a major U.K. pro-life organization, conducted a silent protest outside the Chinese Embassy in London. The protest was directed against China’s one-child policy under which, forced abortions and sterilizations are carried out.

A final example is found close to home: Currently, Georgetown University Right to Life, Georgetown University Knights of Columbus and University Faculty for Life are preparing the eighth annual Cardinal O’Connor Conference for Life to be held at Georgetown on Monday, January 21, the day before the March For Life. The conference includes Pro-Life speakers (one of whom this year is Eduardo Verastegui, lead actor of *Bella*), networking exhibits, breakout sessions, a holy hour and closing prayer. The event each year connects and educates college and high school students in pro-life matters who come to Washington for the March from throughout the country.

Such efforts are encouraging, but much more, of course, remains to be done.

Frank Zapatka, St Ann’s Respect Life Committee Coordinator