

Students pass life message at March

By *Jessica Steeley* on February 2, 2017 [Comment](#)



From left, Everest Collegiate High School senior Clare Nalepa, Faith Formation Director Jill Swallow, and senior Alex Legg participated in the March for Life. *Photo by Jessica Steeley*

BY JESSICA STEELEY

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For Clare Nalepa, the March for Life last week in Washington D.C. was personal. “My biological mother, who got pregnant at 17, chose life,” said Nalepa, a senior at Everest Collegiate High School in Independence Township. “I wanted to pass the message on by marching.”

She and her classmates marched to the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court, where Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973, legalizing abortion across the United States.

“We don’t support it, we don’t want that and we’re here to protect the innocent children who can’t protect themselves,” said Nalepa, who hopes the march shows women with unplanned pregnancies they’re not alone and they can have a support network care about them and their child.

“It can really touch some people and, especially me as a young male, I want to try and send a message to other men saying life is sacred,” said fellow senior Alex Legg. “I’m trying to send out a message, you need to be smart with the decisions you make and life is really precious. You can’t just be giving that away.”

Nalepa, who marched last year, Legg, who’s attended four marches, and the other Everest students stood up for what they believe in on Jan. 27 during the March for Life on the National Mall in Washington.

This is the second year of the school-sponsored trip to D.C. for the march, said Faith Formation Director Jill Swallow.



The Everest students march in the National Mall. *Photo provided*

Fifty students and six chaperones from the school staff went this year.

“As a school we really wanted to offer the students this opportunity because I think, especially being a small Catholic school, it’s really awesome for the kids to see there are hundreds of thousands of other young people who believe in this,” Swallow said.

Nalepa said people from all walks of life attend the march, and she believes young people protesting is especially moving because people view the millennial generation as detached from reality.

“It’s a really cool message – we know what’s going on in the world and we’re not just sitting around and not doing anything about it,” she said. “We’re taking a stance on it.” She said it isn’t a “cushy trip,” but describes the march as a way to show the nation they can make a difference even within their own country.

Everest’s March for Life trip is open to students in grades eight through 12 and has become a popular school event, with a waiting-list of students signed up to attend the march this year.

“We’ve tried to encourage the students to take a really positive approach, to be pro-life in even everything we say while we’re there,” Swallow said. “It’s not a march of condemnation for people who have made that choice.”

The students agree, saying the march is peaceful and filled with positivity.

The day of the protest, young marchers wake up early to attend a youth rally at the Verizon Center, a sports venue in D.C., Legg said.

“Just seeing all the people fill up the arena, it’s unbelievable. There’s more people than you’ve ever met in your life,” Legg said, “and you’re thinking all these people share the same views as me, this is amazing.”

There’s so much excitement during the march, Nalepa said, adding it was cool to see so many people joining together peacefully for a unifying cause.

“It’s very overwhelming, you flood out of the doors of the Verizon Center and it’s just people everywhere,” Nalepa said. “It’s a very exciting atmosphere and you can like feel everyone else’s excitement to be there and to be doing the march.”

The March for Life has happened annually since 1974, recently drawing in an attendance of over 600,000 people, Legg said. “It’s a really powerful experience to be there with all these other people who also share your views and want to fight the same fight you’re fighting.”

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