

Strumming up faith



CR/Owen Sweeney III

Dawn Miller (left), Michelle Smetanick, Christine Portier, Evan Ponton and Bryan O'Keeffe of St. Peter the Apostle, Libertytown, youth band SPY, warm-up before their performance at Mass Jan. 8.

St. Peter band helps youth tune in to religion

By JENNIFER WILLIAMS
Staff correspondent

If it weren't for youth minister Dawn Miller asking teenager Evan Ponton to join the St. Peter the Apostle, Libertytown, youth band, the 16-year-old Linganore High School junior says he probably never would have gotten involved in the group for young people.

"Now I've gotten really involved and I play at every Sunday evening Mass," he said.

The St. Peter Youth or SPY band as it's called, formed more than seven years ago and actually includes both adults and teens, according to Ms. Miller, who plays the guitar and writes music.

She said that at the end of 2005, the group, which performs contemporary Christian music, released their third CD titled "Not Afraid" in honor of Pope John Paul II. About

400 copies of the \$12 CD have already been sold.

The group's first CD, "Silver Angel," was a four-song disc dedicated to a teenager in the group who died.

SPY has performed at the annual Archdiocesan Youth Pilgrimage and at area coffee houses.

Ms. Miller, who took up guitar playing as a teen, said she can relate to young people's enthusiasm.

"Music is a very important thing to teenagers," Ms. Miller said. "As a teen, I listened to music constantly, and it's the same thing today. There's just so much about music."

She said if she can get teens into music with a positive message like praising God, then she feels she's doing her job.

Ms. Miller said the group, which includes a keyboard player, drummer, harmonica player, guitarists, a bass player and a few singers, practices

once a week in addition to performing at Mass.

Evan, who has played bass since he was in the sixth grade, said everyone in the band is "really fun."

"The adults are great musicians and have really boosted my musical ability," said Evan, who also plays for his school's jazz band as well as a band outside of school. "I got to meet a lot of people and move closer to God. It's really helped open me up."

Recording a CD is a "very cool thing" for young people to do, Ms. Miller said.

"It was a very special thing and something they'll remember forever," she said. "They put a lot of creative energy into it and used those gifts that God has given them."

To order a copy of the CD, contact Dawn Miller at 301-898-5111 or e-mail Dmarie1@hotmail.com.

CR/Owen Sweeney III
Bryan O'Keeffe
of St. Peter the
Apostle, Liberty-
town, youth band
SPY practices
some chords.

