

## Making the Most of Parental Involvement

*"Dad" Thomas R. Labagh, Executive Officer*



Parents have an important role to play in their son's DeMolay career. As Advisors, we need to do everything we can to encourage parents to participate in all that DeMolay has to offer to them and their family. Parents of DeMolay members can be active in almost every aspect of the DeMolay program, but some will want to be more active than others. Some will drive, some will coach, some will work at fund-raisers, some will become Advisors while others will just attend to watch their sons as they grow in the program.



The key for a good relationship between Advisors and parents is to communicate well with ALL parents about the Chapter program, regardless of how involved they choose to become. As parents, they have a right to know everything about the activities that their sons are asked to participate in. More importantly, they have a right to ATTEND every meeting, program and function when their sons are in attendance, without exception-including Advisory Council meetings.



Parents who become involved in DeMolay learn that there are other adults they can rely on to care about and relate to their sons. Sometimes, teenagers become distant from their parents, thinking "they don't understand me anymore." This isn't unusual during a time when young men are testing their independent boundaries. Advisors can often help a young man bridge the gap between total reliance on their parents, and the independence that they seek, but sometimes fear.



Some parents have difficulty with their sons' struggle for independence, and hold on



tightly to the child, not recognizing the need to allow room for growth. "Cutting the apron strings" is one of the hardest tasks of parenthood. It is scary to let go-to give a child the freedom to stretch their wings like a bird and fly from the nest. DeMolay Advisors provide a great safety net for young men who are testing their limits through the activities of the DeMolay program. "Letting go" is easier, knowing that there are caring adults to whom they can turn when being independent isn't all that they expected.

DeMolay also provides a network of other parents who are dealing with the challenges of adolescence. Some young men handle their "growing pains" well, but many do not, and the whole family feels the "pains" as they try to find a place for themselves in an adult society. Parents can often find comfort and practical suggestions from those who have already experienced this, or who are coping with it at the same time. Advisors can prove to be an invaluable resource for parents. Advisors can support parents in their struggle to raise their sons. Advisors can help parents "connect" with their sons. Advisors can provide an attentive ear and wise counsel. Advisors can provide an extra pair of eyes and ears to observe the changes in their sons, and watch out for signs of trouble. Most of all DeMolay Advisors can give parents assurance that when their sons are at DeMolay functions they are in a safe and healthy environment.