

Ray retires after 12 years as campus conscience

Matthew Deutsch
news editor

After 12 years as director of Cooperative Campus Ministry for YSU, the Rev. James E. Ray will retire on June 30.

Ray, who is 65, will be honored at a retirement dinner and "roast" at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 18, in the Ohio Room of Kilcawley Center. A community reception for Ray and his family will precede the program at 6:30 p.m.

From noon to 2 p.m. on Thursday, people from the YSU community will attend a reception in Ray's honor in Buckeye Suites I and II of Kilcawley Center. Before the reception, at 11:50 a.m., there will be a gathering at the Peace Pole for reflections, led by Ray.

Ray, a Presbyterian, was born in Pittsburgh and moved to Columbus, where he received a B.A. in speech from Ohio State. He

then moved on to Chicago, where he earned his master's degree in divinity from McCormick Seminary. Ray said he gained valuable experience while working in the Windy City.

"I was able to get more insight into the inner city and the needs of the people in the inner city," he said.

Ray began his campus ministry career in 1963 as a minister at the University of Illinois. That same year, he participated in the March on Washington, displaying his advocacy of civil rights.

From Illinois, Ray went back to Pittsburgh, where he served for 11 years as campus minister at the University of Pittsburgh. He also served as director of the Program for Female Offenders in Pittsburgh, a private organization which operated with government and corporate funding. The program provided assistance to women through skill and



Dr. Jim Ray

job development released from the county jail and state prison system.

Ray came to YSU in June of 1983. He said one of the reasons he chose the University was because of its close proximity to Pittsburgh, where his daughter lives.

While at YSU, Ray has been involved in numerous projects,

groups and activities. He was responsible for erecting the Peace Pole at the center of the campus in 1985. According to Ray, the first pole, which was wood, was stolen within a week. The second one, constructed out of aluminum and fastened securely to the ground, has remained in place.

In 1990, Ray, along with Michelle Murphy of the multicultural student service staff, helped to create the Racial Awareness Program (RAP) at YSU, which is now the Coalition for Diversity (CFD).

According to its pamphlet, the CFD is an organization of people "who believe that each individual has inherent worth and deserves an opportunity to live a meaningful life, free from restrictions or mistreatment based on socially ascribed labels."

Ray said that the CFD focuses on minority recruitment and reten-

tion in the areas of gender, age, disability and race. The last area is the one that is of most concern to Ray.

"The whole racial picture in our country is not as healthy as it should be," he said.

The CFD is not strictly a student organization and is open to anyone on campus. The group holds regular meetings on Thursdays. On May 18 and May 25, there will be CFD meetings from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the Gallery of Kilcawley Center. The CFD also holds a "Boar's Head Lunch" every Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church on the corner of Wick and Lincoln Avenues.

Ray was also involved with the formation of the Global Awareness Committee. The committee stemmed from a workshop that Ray conducted with several

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faculty members concerning world hunger.

In addition to the committee, the Center for International Education was also created, due in large part to the efforts of Dr. James Scanlon, provost, and Dr. Silvia Hyre, coordinator of the foreign language lab and director of the Center for International Studies.

According to Ray, the formation of these organizations is the indication of an ongoing trend at YSU.

"There's a lot more of a global emphasis on campus," said Ray.

In 1983, Ray and Father Ray Thomas, director of the Newman Center at the time, started the Non-Traditional Student Organization (NTSO). According to Ray, the organization has had its problems the last few years, mostly because of the fact that the group's meeting place in the basement of Dana Hall is no longer available to them. Ray stressed the fact that non-traditional students (defined as students 25 years of age or more) are an asset to any university and should have all the services and opportunities available to them as other students.

"One-third of the students here are non-traditional," he said, "and they have different problems than traditional students."

Ray said he believes his greatest accomplishment as a campus minister at YSU was the personal support he was able to give to people, on and off campus.

He said an incident that stands out in his mind was when he and Sister Mary Ann Montavon, director of the Newman Center, talked with members of a sorority house after one of their sisters died of cancer.

"I've been pleased to be here as a Christian member on this campus to provide a model of how we should be caring, giving and forgiving of one another," said Ray.
