



## **Coloring their world Focolare youth in El Paso, Texas**

*By Mary Adams*

On Texas' westernmost border stretches the desert town of El Paso. There a dozen or so teenagers, and as many middle school children meet monthly as a Focolare local community.

"Everyone here tries to treat everybody kindly; no cliques, no judgments, because we're trying to live by the Gospel," says Ana, 17.

These youth also gather three times a month to "color" with love those areas of their city grayed by loneliness, indifference and poverty. They keep company with the elderly who may be lonely, defend the dignity of human life, plant trees to beautify bus stops and schools, and participate in the worldwide Run 4 Unity, a Focolare sports relay.

When Chiara Luce Badano, a young Italian girl from Focolare, was beatified last September in Rome, five El Paso youth were there. Returning home, they shared with whoever would listen the conviction branded in their hearts: "Just because you're young, doesn't mean you can't be a saint."

Picked up by the El Paso newspaper, proclaimed in youth gatherings to more than 100 young people and aired weekly over Radio Guadalupana on their youth program, this challenge goes forth to meet a modern-day Goliath. Broadcasting from neighboring Ciudad Juarez, the teens' program addresses also all those engulfed in Juarez's maelstrom of terror and violence.

"We have the hope that the drug cartels and dealers will recognize what they are really doing and start over a new life," says Ana.

"It is really possible," says José, 15, affirming that longing for peace in the hearts of all peoples. "Everyone just has to put their own part in it. If you put your part in it, then people start noticing that this guy is actually doing it. Maybe I should do mine too ... If we go one at a time, and then spread the word to your friend, pass on the word, at least it will be a start."

— *With Sandra Castro*