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Ex-Millville priest named in alleging child sex abuse, cov

Group helps victims

By GARY MILLER Staff Writer

When the three alleged sexual abuse victims from Millville went public Thursday, they became the tip of an iceberg being called the "most significant moral crisis of the century the church is facing."

That is according to Barbara Blaine, president of Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, or SNAP, who said that there are more than 100,000 victims like the three who accused the Rev. Joseph F. McGarvey, a former St. Mary Magdalen pastor, of sexually abusing them in the 1960s and '70s.

SNAP was first formed by Blaine in January 1990 to provide support to victims of priest abuse. "We really underestimated the number of victims," said Blaine. "We thought we'd have maybe 30 or 40 people across the country. We figured we would be able to get together for a weekend, talk it out and get on with our lives."

But Blaine, who said she was abused by a priest in Toledo, Ohio, while in high school, said she found out that sexual abuse by priests is much more common than she had originally expected. "My story is common all across the country," Blaine said. "We get together to talk it out, and we find we're all saying the same thing."

Blaine said it is common for victims to go to church officials with their accusations, only to have



Alleged v says famil

By JEAN JONES and GARY MILLER **Staff Writers**

A Millville man said his f: has been devastated by al tions made public Thursday his son was sexually abused than 20 years ago by a priest Mary Magdalen Church in lville.

Steven M. Stolar and his so so named Steven, have j three other current and fo Millville residents - includ priest - in a lawsuit alle widespread fraud and se abuse of young parishioners i late 1960s and early 1970s

The Rev. Joseph F. McGa a former pastor of St. Mary dalen Church now livin Audubon, and the Rev. Willia O'Connell of Providence, were named Thursday as d dants in a lawsuit accusing two of conspiring to create a dren's sex ring between Rho land and New Jersey from 1! 1972

"When this happened, it v devastating time for our (family because of my son's b ior, because of Father Movey," said the elder Stolar, spoke reluctantly when cont at his Millville home Thu night.

"We didn't know what wa matter," he said. "It was a ble time. There are hundre maybe thousands - of people were the victims of these prie

Other plaintiffs in the cas former Millville resident the Gary Hayes of Henderson, and current Millville resi Terrence Smith, and Alfia H

them silenced.

"The church kept saying they never heard any accusations of abuse about him so there must be something wrong with me," she said. "It turns out they've known since the early '70s about the allegations.

"I went to the church in 1985 and it took until 1993 to have him re-

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Alfia M. Hayes of Millville hugs her son, the Rev. Gary R. Hays, formerly of Millville, after a news conference Thursday in Philadelpia. They joined three other Millville residents in a suit accusing a former local priest of child sexual abuse 20 years ago.

> their problems denied or buried. "We tell people to learn from our pain and not to go to the church to find healing," she said.

moved from the ministry."

That was one reason for starting

SNAP, Blaine said, to give victims

somewhere to go without having

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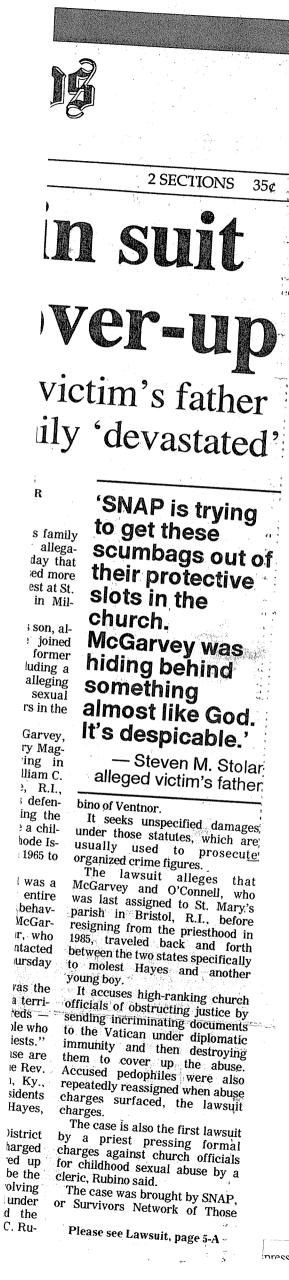
"When you go to the church, you become a victim. It's really a form

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the Rev. Hayes' mother.

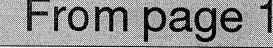
The suit, filed in U.S. Di Court in Camden, also ch: that church leaders covere the abuse. It is believed to b first class-action case invo sexual abuse by priests filed t racketeering statutes, said plaintiffs' attorney Stephen C



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Lawsuit

Abused By Priests. SNAP President Barbara Blaine said the plaintiffs tried to solve the problem privately but the Roman Catholic Church repeatedly interfered.

"They never wanted it to come to this and they worked real hard to avoid public disclosure," Blaine said of the plaintiffs. "They want-ed to solve it privately. But they felt like they were pushed into a corner. It was with a lot of pain and sadness that they made that choice."

The parents are filing suit because of the emotional hardship the abuse caused their families.

"SNAP is trying to get these scumbags out of their protective slots in the church ... (McGarvey was) hiding behind something almost like God. It's despicable," the elder Stolar said.

He said he did not know about the abuse of his son until recently.

"We never knew anything about this problem until about three weeks ago," he said. "Gary Hayes engaged Mr. Rubino and somehow Terry Smith got into the picture and my son got into the picture.

"We never suspected what was going on," Stolar said. "Back in those years, you never imagined something like that. Tom Smith and his wife didn't know what was happening to their son and Gary's family didn't know what was happening to him. Three weeks ago, it

all came together." "There was a terrible, terrible , amount of upheaval in our family that McGarvey caused," he said.

The younger Stolar, 39, said he wishes he could have come forward earlier.

"It's hard for me to explain how I let my parish priests take advantage of me for so many years," Stolar said in a statement released to the media. "But I know they were wrong and I wish I had come forward sooner.'

Hayes, ordained in May 1990, said he was saddened by the imhave on fellow priests. He said he had no choice but to file the lawsuit.

"I am seeking justice in the courts because I could find no justice in my church," Hayes said at a news conference Thursday at a Philadelphia hotel. "I would like to see children able to come to church and not have their innocence violated."

He said that despite what happened, he still plans always to be a priest.

"This is the church that he dedicated his life to," said SNAP's Blaine. "He wants that (alleged abuse) out of his church."

"We were lured in with a false sense of security," said Smith, 39. "We were putting our faith in the church. The church betrayed that trust.'

McGarvey is on a leave of absence from his current parish in Runnemede, said the Rev. Carl Marucci, spokesman for the Camden diocese, who declined further comment.

A spokesman for the National Conference of Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference in Washington, D.C., also declined comment on the lawsuit.

The lawsuit also accuses four bishops -- including the Rev. James T. McHugh, the spiritual leader of the 374,000 Catholics in southern New Jersey's Camden diocese - of fraud and conspiracy for covering up the abuse. McHugh was not available for comment Thursday.

The lawsuit seeks to have the court certify a national class action suit for victims and their parents from the two dioceses. It also seeks to create a national registry of known priests who have molested children.

Four other New Jersey priests employed by the Camden diocese were also named as defendants involved in the cover-up.

The Associated Press contributed pact the high-profile case will to this article.

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of 'revictimization.' " SNAP is also trying to get the church to cooperate better with ¹²the victims, Blaine said.

"We're trying to get bishops to sign a covenant saying that they would not attack victims that come forward," she said. "We're convinced that bishops don't do it out of maliciousness."

Instead, Blaine feels the coverups are part of the defense because the church officials don't know how to deal with the problem.

move a priest from the priesthood," Blaine said. "He's not very

concerned with the children of the American Catholic Church.' Upon hearing this week's state-

ment, she said, "Maybe he'll be changing his record.'

The pope's comments are not the only change by the church regarding abusive priests, according to Blain.

"Diocese after diocese has set up numbers to call, but victims don't feel that there's been anything different," she said. "Learn from our pain, don't go to the church. "The bishops are turning their moral judgement over to their attorneys. What they don't realize is that is not in the best interest of the victims or the church." Blaine said the Rev. Gary Haves, one of the three alleged victims in the Millville case, tried futiley to get help from the church before going public and filing the suit.

"I think that they have been ignorant of the effect it has on the church and they've been at a loss of what to do with their priests," vshe said. "We can provide them information about the priests because in many cases we've grown 'up with them."

The irony of the new allegations is that they come fresh on the heals of a statement earlier in the "week by Pope John Paul II asking ¹² visiting American bishops to pray i for clerics and their victims involved in sex scandals in the United States, saying the incidents risk undermining public trust in priests.

Blaine said that statement is a "big turnaround from the former "papal stance on abuse by priests."

"It's definitely a change from "the statement he made a few months ago, because he said being ha pedophile is not a reason to re-

"It hurts him that he has to make this so public and make just one more instance of disillusionment against the Catholic Church," she said.

Blaine urged anyone who has been abused by a priest to call SNAP at (312) 483-1059.

"Our purpose is to provide support and healing and our goal is to help the victims," she said.