Building a Strong Foundation through Catholic Education in the Syracuse Roman Catholic Diocese

VOL. 3, 2011
Dear Friends of Catholic Education:

Welcome to our third edition of Pillars magazine, as we continue to spread the good news of Catholic education here in the Diocese of Syracuse.

As you review this magazine, I encourage you to recognize the many wonderful stories that are contained within the walls of our schools across the diocese. Moreover, I challenge everyone reading this edition to pass on the good news to a neighbor, friend, parishioner — or even a stranger. Marketing experts tell us that the most effective marketing vehicle that we have is word of mouth, and it is my sincere hope that this edition of Pillars will serve as a point of conversation in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our parishes and our homes, so that the important work that we are doing in Catholic education will be known throughout Central New York.

Catholic education remains a powerful ministry in our Church, as it seeks to pass on the important traditions and teachings of our faith. Besides the family, it is the single most effective vehicle in the faith formation of young Catholics. That is why our diocese at large has a vested interest in seeing our schools grow and remain vibrant for years to come. With your help, we can do this.

Enjoy this edition of Pillars, and please know that our students, staff and administration remain grateful for your prayerful support now and in the coming years.

Peace and all good things,

Christopher Mominey
Superintendent of Schools
Vocation, Lessons in Life
Born of Catholic Education

BY MOST REV. ROBERT J. CUNNINGHAM

In 1990, the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, issued a document entitled “Ex Corde Ecclesiae,” which spoke of Catholic education, especially at the university level, as being born “from the heart of the Church.” Long before that document was written and published and on a much smaller scale, I knew that the Catholic elementary school I attended was a school with a heart. In fact, I realized that for many, the school was the heart of the parish. In the 1950s, which I know many will consider “ancient history,” much of a Catholic family’s life revolved around the parish and the school for its liturgical, educational and social needs.

By today’s standards, parents would be upset with the ambiance of my Catholic school education, an education which I consider a gift without comparison. When I was in elementary school, the sisters frequently would have 60 children in a classroom without any teacher aides or assistance. Classrooms were always overcrowded and some of them were created out of a less than desirable space. Despite obstacles and inconveniences, those teachers and those classrooms created a happy and productive learning environment which produced not only lifelong friendships but good citizens and active members of the Church.

Without fully realizing what was happening, students in Catholic schools were immersed in Catholic traditions. We marched all the way through the academic year in line with the Church’s liturgical year. To this day, the memories are vivid: daily Mass celebrated by the pastor before the start of each school day, rosary devotions in October, praying for the souls in Purgatory in November, preparing for Christ’s coming throughout Advent, Christmas pageants and parties, prayer for Christian unity in January, the blessing of throats in February, Stations of the Cross on the Friday afternoons of Lent, Holy Week Liturgies, the joys of the Easter Season, May Crowning and processions during Mary’s month, and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in June. All of these provided invaluable lessons in the ways of our faith and enduring memories for a lifetime.

Academic subjects were surely taught, but in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways we learned the primary lesson: what it means to be a Christian, a Catholic, a follower of Jesus. While parents always retained the primary responsibility for the education of their children, the Catholic elementary school was a priceless resource and a staunch help to parents in this sacred task.

My boyhood pastor, Msgr. Charles A. Klauder, oversaw the entire parish complex and was present to students on a daily basis. He was at Mass each morning, on the playground at noon, handing out...
report cards in school, encouraging us to do better, suggesting what we might want to do with our lives, reminding us to help people in need in our own small way. My Catholic school education from first grade, through the subsequent years of high school, college, seminary and graduate school, has been a magnificent blessing. It gave me a firm foundation for life through the human knowledge and skills which it offered and the Catholic faith and practice which it nurtured.

Catholic education works best when it presents essential role models to young people. That is what my Catholic education did for me. I am profoundly grateful to have known and experienced the good example of many dedicated teachers.

It seems to me that it was on the first day of class that Sister Mary Cecilia began teaching lessons that would carry us along on the journey of life. There were some pictures that were quite common at the time in our classroom: guardian angels watching over children, Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson reminding us of our country’s formation. And there was that first catechism lesson: “Who made you?” And the answer, “God made me.” “Why did God make you?” “God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this life and to be happy with Him forever in the next.” Simple lessons, designed for a 1st grade mind, but a strong foundation to remember in the course of our lives.

It was within the confines of my Catholic elementary school and under the direction of an outstanding pastor and teachers who were authentic witnesses to our Catholic faith that I learned the basic lessons of life. It was here, as well, that the seeds of my vocation were born. Once those basic lessons are learned and once we have discovered God’s plan for us, all other things fall into place.

Of course, there were other lessons learned and not all days were happy ones. There were the lessons for good order: be polite, no running in the hall and the consequences for not promoting good order and respect. We were taught to read carefully the directions on a test, avoid split infinitives and dangling participles, pray and support the missions and sacrifice for the Catholic Charities Appeal. We might not always have had the words to express our faith, but we knew we were called to live a special life of love of God and neighbor. We did it within the enclosed environment of the Catholic school and parish and were convinced that we were the luckiest people in the world.

Today, I have many friends because of friendships that began in grade school. I remain in regular contact with them. I remember with affection the teachers in the school and the pastor and priests in the parish who served us and nurtured our gift of faith. What a blessing those years were!

Catholic school education has changed since I was in elementary school. Many of you reading this may not recognize the school and activities that I have described. But the significance of a Catholic school education and the enduring value of Catholic school teachers as role models, mentors and witnesses to our faith, have not changed. My prayer is that our students today will experience the joy and blessings of the excellent Catholic education that our schools provide. Changes in society and in parish life, population trends and financial challenges will undoubtedly lead to different school configurations and models. The timeless message of Catholic education, however, which springs from the very heart of the Church, will continue to form and mold young people today into disciples of Jesus, good citizens and active members of the Church.
Next year will bring an end to one family’s connection to a Catholic school that stretches back over 50 years. Since 1956, the Dwyer family has continually had at least one student — and often several — enrolled at Blessed Sacrament school in Syracuse. The last Dwyer will graduate in 2011.

This connection began with Joseph and Mary Ellen Dwyer, who raised their family in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse. Joseph was a union carpenter and Mary Ellen stayed at home with the children. And there were a lot of children: Mary Pat, Anne, Bernadette, Joan, Rosemary, Joseph, Martin, P.J. and Julie. Each of the nine Dwyer children attended Blessed Sacrament.

While differences in age meant that not all siblings were in Blessed Sacrament at the same time, in 1965 there was a Dwyer in 8th, 7th, 6th, 4th and 3rd grades, as well as one in kindergarten. Two babies destined for Blessed Sacrament were still at home and one more was yet to be born.

Mary Pat Salanger was the first Dwyer to make her way through the school doors on James Street. “I came here for Kindergarten in 1956 and went all the way through — the school went to 8th grade at the time,” she said.

Salanger also sent each of her four children to her old school. “I wanted them to have a religious foundation. I wanted them to be able to talk about God in school and build a basic foundation for good morals,” she said.

Salanger said there was even a spell of a few years when her children and her sister were both students at Blessed Sacrament. “My youngest sister was in 7th or 8th grade when my oldest was in 1st grade,” she said.

Joan Buckley, the fourth oldest Dwyer sibling, said she can remember her sister, Mary Pat, and her mother attending P.T.A. meetings together.

Buckley also recalled having to wear her sisters’ hand-me-down uniforms. “I don’t think I ever had a new one until they changed the style,” she said. Until then, she said, it was the solid navy blue jumper with the Blessed Sacrament patch over the heart and a pocket for the matching navy blue beanie to wear during Mass.

Bernadette Timmins, the third oldest of the Dwyer siblings, said her parents were devout Catholics who had benefitted from Catholic schools themselves and wanted to share that with their children. “It was very, very important to them,” she said.

Keeping the family together was also important to Timmins’ mother. “We went over there every Sunday for dinner and sometimes she would have 25 people and sometimes she would have 45. She never knew how many were coming, but she always had enough food,” Timmins said. “At Shotwell Park, the whole neighborhood would be filled with cars and the neighbors would say ‘Oh, I see the Dwyers are over for dinner.’

Timmins now teaches at Bishop’s Academy at Holy Family in Syracuse. She said she enjoyed her time at Blessed Sacrament and loves being a part of another Catholic school. “I love that we can talk about God and what Jesus would do,” she said. This foundation of faith was supported by nearly every aspect of her time at Blessed Sacrament. “You got it all day long. It wasn’t just from your parents. You’d see what the nuns had given up, so they could live for God and devote themselves to God. They wouldn’t have to tell you anything. You could just see it by watching what they would do.”

Julie Brien, the youngest Dwyer sibling, said she liked the idea of her children attending the same school she did. “We went to church there, and I grew up there. We felt it was safe, and it was traditional,” Brien said. “We thought the smaller sizes of the classes would be good for them, and it was good having the Catholic values.”

Brien sent her children to Blessed Sacrament until her family grew too large for their house and needed to move to a bigger home in the suburbs. “It’s kind of sad that we’re finished with the era,” Brien said.

But even though the final Dwyer student, P.J.’s son Riley, graduates this spring, a member of the family will still be coming to the school each day.

Mary Pat, the first Dwyer to attend Blessed Sacrament, is the supervisor at the school’s cafeteria. “Andrea (Polcaro, Blessed Sacrament’s principal) has made it very easy to work here. She’s very understanding if you have kids and you need a little time to do this or that. There are lots of good people, and I really enjoy it,” she said. “We’re all like a family here.”

Jennika Baines is the associate editor for the Catholic Sun.
Ian Quinn doesn’t really like to talk about his volunteer work at the Samaritan Center. It’s not that he isn’t proud of his weekly commitment to the downtown Syracuse soup kitchen, but, at his young age, the 7th grader at Bishop Ludden Junior/Senior High School considers talk of his work to be “bragging.” It’s that very selfless nature that has made Quinn a standout volunteer at the Samaritan Center for the past three years.

Quinn began volunteering at the Samaritan Center in 2007 as a 4th grader at Bishop’s Academy at Holy Family. He and his mom, Gail Page, were looking for a volunteer opportunity they could do together on a regular basis. Page and her husband, Joe Quinn, wanted to expose their son to a more diverse community, as well as find a cause that would welcome a young boy as a volunteer. The Samaritan Center seemed like a good fit.

“I was a little nervous at first,” said Quinn, who spent his first day passing out bread to the hundreds of guests who filed through the Samaritan Center kitchen for what is often their only hot meal of the day. “But once I met all the guests and saw how nice they were, I wasn’t nervous anymore. Nobody in our community should go without a meal.”

Three years later, Quinn and his mom can still be found at the Samaritan Center most Monday afternoons serving food, passing out trays, washing dishes and sweeping up. The guests there know Quinn by name and often look out for him, asking about his grades or the sports he’s playing or inquiring about him on the rare occasion that he’s not there.

His dedication to the Samaritan Center goes far beyond his Monday ritual, however, and he is always thinking of ways to bring in donations to help feed those in need. In 5th grade, Quinn asked his principal at Holy Family, Helen Chajka, if he could hold a dress down day to raise money for the center. His classmates and their families responded enthusiastically to Quinn’s request and quickly raised $550.

In 2009, while helping his parents plant a vegetable garden, Quinn had another idea. Why not ask his neighbors to plant an extra row of vegetables in their gardens to donate to the Samaritan Center? He did just that, putting a collection basket outside his front door each Sunday for the neighborhood bounty of tomatoes, peppers and other fresh vegetables.

“It’s a simple thing anybody can do,” said Quinn, whose harvest for the Samaritan Center weighed in at 156 pounds by the end of the growing season.

Quinn’s next project is a garage sale, planned for the spring, with all proceeds benefitting the Samaritan Center. In fact, he is encouraging others to have garage sales on the same day and donate their proceeds, too. He hopes it can become a yearly event.

“Ian and his family have become treasured members of the Samaritan Center family,” said Mary Beth Frey, executive director of the Samaritan Center. “Ian, in particular, is a role model for all of us — whether
volunteering at the soup kitchen, convincing his neighbors to grow vegetables for those in need or simply sitting down to share a conversation with one of our guests, the kindness and compassion he feels toward others shines through. We are all better for having him in our lives.”

Quinn plans to continue volunteering at the Samaritan Center. He hopes he can convince some of his fellow students to do the same. “It’s important that kids volunteer,” he said. “I’d like it if other people did it, too. I know other kids would have a good experience. A little can make a big difference.”

Caroline K. Reff is a free-lance writer and public relations consultant in Syracuse, NY.

Bishop Ludden student Ian Quinn has been volunteering weekly at the Samaritan Center since 2007.

Christian Service A Way of Life in Catholic Schools

Schools in the Diocese of Syracuse perform countless hours of Christian Service each year. Here are some of the outstanding projects some of our students are working on:

St. Mary’s School, Cortland: It was a sweet holiday season at St. Mary’s School in Cortland, as students and faculty participated in the annual Catholic Charities Cookie Bake-off, designed to fill Christmas food baskets for the needy with yummy treats. St. Mary’s made the project a friendly competition, too, with classrooms competing to see which could bake the greater number of cookies.

St. Thomas Aquinas School: St. Thomas has a Christian service project that lasts all year long. Called the “Giving Tree,” the initiative asks families to contribute based on monthly themes. In October 2010, for example, the students collected dog and cat food for a local animal shelter. In November 2010, the “Giving Tree” was loaded with non-perishable food to be included in Thanksgiving baskets for the needy. And, in December, families at Samaritan House received soap, shampoo and toothpaste donated by the St. Thomas community.

St. John the Evangelist School: Second grade students at St. John the Evangelist School befriended 10 orphans in Haiti, following the devastating hurricane that struck the island in 2010. St. John students have put the names of the orphans on prayer cards that are used at daily prayer. During the month of October, the 2nd graders donated their allowances — $100 — to send to the Haitian orphanage, along with a class photo.

Holy Cross School: Students from Holy Cross School, Dewitt, developed a special partnership with students at the Cathedral Academy at Pompei during the Christmas season. CAP students visited Holy Cross for prayer, lunch, fun-filled activities and Christmas goodies. Holy Cross students also donated snacks to CAP’s after-school program.
According to About.com, “Digital natives are people who have grown up in the digital world using technology as a way of communicating, recording, educating, and understanding society. Digital natives speak the language of technology and are as comfortable with technology as past generations have been with pen and paper.”

Teacher and Integrated Technology Specialist for the Southern Tier, Christine Horowitz is on a mission — to convert these digital natives, students, and their teachers in the Catholic schools into believers of integrating technology into core subject matter. In the summer of 2010, Horowitz attended a week-long seminar entitled “Intel Teach – Developing 21st Century Skills in the Classroom” funded by the Intel Corporation through the New York Institute of Technology, Islip, NY. Intel Corp is noted for its generosity in funding teacher training in the use of technology. The grant in total amounted to approximately $19 million. The Intel® Teach Program improves teacher effectiveness through professional development, helping teachers integrate technology into their lessons and promoting students’ problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration skills.

The course Horowitz took had a STEM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The 15 participants used the week to learn techniques on how to integrate technology into core subject matter in a meaningful way by developing a unit plan. During the training, Horowitz created a Cold War unit appropriate for a joint 8th grade social studies/ELA (English Language Arts) effort, integrating Cold War material with current events. The lesson used Cold War ideology and events as a launching point for how political groups, local communities and individuals can be vehicles of change. Each student used an online application to create a comic book in which the super hero overcomes an obstacle in today’s society. Another lesson used music editing software in a 7th grade social studies class, where students produced songs from historical slogans, such as “Remember the Alamo,” “Hey, Hey LBJ” and “I am not a crook.” Students developed lyrics that contained facts surrounding the historical event, sang their created lyrics to karaoke versions of their favorite pop songs and merged their voices with the tunes using music editing software.

As a result of the seminar, Horowitz is now considered a master trainer, meaning it is her responsibility to train other teachers. In turn, these adult pupils will be expected to train others. Since her return, Horowitz has conducted workshops for teachers and staff, including an inservice at Seton Catholic Central High School, Binghamton, called, “Effectively Integrating Web 2.0 Applications into the Classroom” and a Google Tools Workshop at Seton Catholic at All Saints, Endicott. Daily, Horowitz can be found assisting various teachers with one-on-one training, as well as lending tech support to four school labs. Her favorite task, though, is engaging her students, who are forever hungry and enthusiastic for the creative learning that integrative technology allows.

Selection for Intel Camp participants was based on geographic location and the number of people each person could reach with the training. Horowitz services five schools, grades K through 12, teaching...
social studies, and acting as the system’s integrated technology specialist, as well.

“I think the skills I developed are going to be extremely beneficial to our teachers, as there is a push by everyone from the corporate world to the Armed Services. It is a goal of the Syracuse Diocese to make sure our teachers and staff are proficient in the technologies in which our students are so well-versed. We shouldn’t be competing with cell phones, iPods and virtual reality games. We should be embracing and using what is familiar to our students in order to reach them effectively. This course taught me how to be able to integrate technology, so that it’s engaging and prepares our students for the future.”

Camille Muscatello is on staff in the Alumni and Development Affairs Office of the Catholic Schools of Broome County.

Christine Horowitz shares what she learned at “Intel Teach – Developing 21st Century Skills in the Classroom” with students at Seton Catholic Central High School.
Class of ’10 Receives $26 Million in College Scholarships

Last year, seniors from the five Catholic high schools who made up the Class of ’10 received more than $26 million in scholarships to attend over 200 colleges and universities across the nation. This figure does not only include financial aid but also merit based scholarship funds that reflect the outstanding achievement of our Catholic school students. Now attending college, several members of the Class of ’10 shared their appreciation for the opportunities afforded them by their Catholic school education.

“Coming from a large family of eight, it was necessary for me to earn scholarships in order to attend a college of my choice. I was attracted to DeSales University by its nationally acclaimed physician assistant program and the fact that it is a small Catholic college. However, I knew I would only be able to attend school there if I earned some scholarships. My education at Bishop Ludden gave me the ability to qualify for such scholarships, allowing me to attend DeSales University. At Bishop Ludden, I knew the teachers well and got personal attention and extra help from them. I was able to rearrange my courses so I could take courses that challenged me, and the service and faith core of the school allowed me to grow in my faith and was of important notice to the PA program director and the scholarship committee at DeSales. In addition to scholarships, DeSales awarded me a Catholic School Grant, which recognizes the sacrifice that parents make in order to send their children to Catholic school. I am extremely grateful for my Catholic education, without which I am certain I would not have been able to achieve my goal of attending DeSales University.”

—Melissa Buttner, Bishop Ludden Junior/Senior High School, Class of ’10, attending DeSales University
I truly believe that my four years at Seton shaped me to become the person that I am today. Although I am still growing as an individual, Seton provided me with a strong foundation academically, as well as morally, to build upon for the rest of my life. Without the lessons I learned in the classroom, on the court, and even in the stands, I would not have developed the characteristics that qualified me for the scholarships I received for my entrance into college. I received an athletically based scholarship, and two merit/academic scholarships. The education that I received at Seton ultimately allowed me not only to get into the colleges that I got into, but also to face the challenges and revel in the successes of my life. I am having a wonderful experience at Boston College and feel confident that the foundation I have received at Seton has made the transition to college much easier.

—Haley Farrell, Seton Catholic Central High School, Class of ’10, attending Boston College

The overall Seton Catholic Central environment was a factor in the college scholarships I received. Both the encouragement of the faculty, staff, and students and the high standards that Seton Catholic Central upholds helped push me to my highest achievement potential in high school. The scholarships that I am currently using toward my college education would not be present if it were not for the solid foundation I gained as a part of a Catholic education. The rewards I am receiving cannot be attributed only to the work I have put in over the years but also to the structured, faith-based, and well-rounded environment that I was privileged to be a part of throughout my entire education.

—Emily Edwards, Seton Catholic Central High School, Class of ’10, attending Stony Brook University

We all know college is not a cheap thing. There were many stresses that went through my head when college started to get closer. I even stopped dancing, so I would have time to get a job. This was a very tough decision for me, considering it has been my life since I was 3. College was a priority to me, so I did whatever I could to help my parents out. When I had an opportunity to apply for a scholarship, I took it. I was so thankful to receive a scholarship. It helped me relax and be able to look forward to the whole college experience. Throughout my childhood, I was always taught morals. Most of my values were learned through the Catholic faith. I feel like people giving out scholarships look for respectful students who really show a passion for continuing their education. I was always taught, not only from my parents but also from Notre Dame, that you can be very intelligent, but you also have to be respectful and have good characteristics like a role model would.

—Francesca Grimaldi, Notre Dame Junior/Senior High School, Class of ’10, attending SUNY Oswego
Melanie George and Lawrence Denson have many things in common, but the most important factor is that their success has been determined by the high quality Catholic education they have received in the Diocese of Syracuse. Both were educated in Syracuse Catholic schools and benefited from scholarships provided by the Guardian Angel Society.

"Catholic education has played a great part in my success," said George. "It set my core foundation of life and personal skills."

George's and Denson's commonalities include having successful careers in the world of finance in New York City and starting their education at the former Cathedral School. They also both live in Brooklyn, NY, and graduated from high school and college at the same time.

Melanie George was born in White Plains, NY, George moved to Syracuse with her mother when she was 7 years old. After attending Syracuse’s Franklin Elementary School for one year, George was able to transfer to Cathedral School because she received a scholarship from Fr. Champlin’s Guardian Angel Society.

Founded by the late Msgr. Joseph Champlin, the Guardian Angel Society helps educate children of diverse cultural, religious and economic backgrounds in the Diocese of Syracuse through tuition assistance. When the Guardian Angel Society began, it benefitted students at the former Cathedral School. Today, that support goes to students and alumni from the Cathedral Academy at Pompei (CAP) on the city’s North side.

George continued to receive tuition assistance from Guardian Angel while in high school. After graduating in 2004, George attended Georgetown University, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in finance in 2008.

Soon after, George began to work at Citibank in New York City as a financial analyst, the position she holds today. She said she really enjoys her job. "I love the business aspect of it," George said. “Every day is different and I'm constantly learning because the economy has changed drastically.”

George said that she initially wanted to become a lawyer. While in high school she was interested in politics and served as senior class president. She liked to debate issues. "I liked to pursue a point," George said. But when George was a college sophomore, her career aspiration took a turn toward finance. She had enrolled in an economics course, which she enjoyed very much. "I liked the quantitative aspect of business,” she said.

George said that the care shown to her by her teachers as she progressed through the Catholic school system greatly influenced the way she interacts with people today. "I'm always wanting to help people — especially on the job,” she explained.

She credits Champlin for playing a major role in her upbringing. In addition to helping her throughout elementary and high school, he purchased George’s textbooks for her during her first year at Georgetown University.

Both George and Denson kept in touch with Champlin by telephone while attending college, and they met for dinner with him whenever they travelled back to Syracuse.

Lawrence Denson's path in life has also led to success. He has worked as a credit derivative analyst at Goldman Sachs in New York City since 2008. Denson also owns a part-time business that provides employee benefits to companies’ employees, particularly in the field of will preparation.

Denson truly enjoys his job at Goldman Sachs. He described the atmosphere as fast-paced and competitive. "I love it — there's always something to do," he said. "It's very challenging because there's a level of excellence that you have to work toward every day.”

Working hard is something that Denson has done from an early age. His father emphasized the importance of discipline in the attainment of his goals. “He always said, ‘Give it all that you’ve got,’” said Denson.
Even when he attended Cathedral School, he was encouraged to work hard. As a 4th grader, he was instructed to write “effort brings success” across the top of each of his papers.

Denson believes that several characteristics of Catholic education have contributed to his success. The first is the discipline of wearing a uniform to school every day. “I have to do that now,” he said. “I dress for success.” The second one is the close interaction between teachers and students. “I felt that they cared about me and my education,” Denson said.

Denson graduated in 2008 from the University of Notre Dame with a bachelor’s degree in finance. Today, he feels extremely grateful for the scholarships he received from the Guardian Angel Society throughout his school years, and he intends to help others receive the kind of help he was given.

“My goal for the future is to be active in the non-profit organizations that have helped me out in the past — places like the Guardian Angel Society, the NAACP and On Point for College,” said Denson.

*Claudia Mathis is a staff writer for the Catholic Sun.*

Bishop’s Academy at St. Charles holds its Annual Apple Pie Sale each November to raise funds for the school. In 2010, a team of parent volunteers and parishioners, led by parent Christine Prowak, made over 500 delicious home baked pies.
The “cyber world” touches our lives every day, as we purchase products and services on the Internet, communicate via email, navigate social networking sites, seek information and perform our jobs. The cyber world is now and is here to stay. While cyber attacks by viruses, the vulnerabilities of computer networks, and the tragic events of cyber bullying fill the media, educators at Rome Catholic School have responded by constructing a Kindergarten through grade 12 cyber pathways curriculum to meet the demands of this technological age and challenge students to thrive in the cyber world safely.

The events of 9/11 brought to center stage the importance of safeguarding America from crippling internet-based attacks by terrorists against U.S. power grids, airports and other targets. In 2003, then President George W. Bush made cyber security a focal point in his National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace. Computer experts at the Air Force Research Lab (AFRL) in Rome, NY, under the direction of Dr. Kamal Jabbour, the lab’s principal computer engineer, developed a 10-week Advanced Course in Engineering Cyber Security Boot Camp for the military Reserve Office Training Corps. The successful completion of this program became the model for a similar course Jabbour and his team would develop with Syracuse University’s Engineering and Computer Science Department for a high school curriculum. Funding for this project was made possible through a congressional grant obtained by U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, then chair of the House Science Committee.

In the winter of 2006, in partnership with AFRL and Syracuse University, the initial 20-week high school course was piloted at Rome Catholic, which enrolled thirteen students in a four-day-a-week, 45-minute class.

“Besides teaching teenagers to protect their digital assets, the course opens their imaginations to the challenges in cyberspace, and seeks to pursue a college education in computer engineering and a professional career in cyber security” explained Jabbour.

Four short years after the initial high school-level cyber security elective, the next logical step in the process, according to Sandra Engle, technology integration manager for Rome Catholic, was to expand the cyber curriculum. Soon, Cyber Security I, II, III, Cyber Life Skills and then Cyber Juniors and Cyber Kiddies courses completed a K to 12 “cyber pathway” education to further equip Rome Catholic students to succeed in a rapidly changing job market.

The pathway begins with “Cyber Kiddies,” a Kindergarten through 4th grade program. Classroom teachers, along with Engle, introduce cyber security using age appropriate terminology and accomplish National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for grade level computer competency. Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade get an initial exposure to cyber ethics and making the right choices in regards to computer safety rules in the home and at school. Students set up links to safe sites on the school website and use cyber-safe school subscription databases, such as NetTrekker and Castle Learning Online, for doing Internet projects. Third and 4th grade students explore cyber governance, intellectual property rights, and learn about information sharing devices such as AlphaSmarts, PDAs, and iPods and the “Avenues of Attacks” with email viruses and trojans. Cyber Juniors in grades 5 through 8 build upon the Cyber Kiddies program by discussing the impact of cyber bullying and the use of social networking sites. Cell phones, identity theft and appropriate uploads to YouTube accounts are covered, as well.

Cyber Security Education Prepares Students for Challenges of Cyber World

BY JENNIFER BALOG
High school students have a catalog of cyber studies to pursue from the initial cyber security elective, Cyber Life Skills, to Cyber Security I, II and III for students following a career track in cyber technology.

“I believe one of our most powerful links to the cyber pathway curriculum is our Parents as Cyber Partners’ Program,” said Engle. This monthly program connects students, classroom teachers, and parents in the world of cyber education. The program runs before the Parent Teacher Group meeting and is conducted by Cyber Security III students, who speak about current cyber threats and how to safeguard the computer. “We have now come full circle, with our students sharing what they have learned with our school community,” Engle added.

The final trail to be blazed in the cyber pathway is a cyber security articulation agreement (college credit) between Rome Catholic and area college cyber security programs. “This seems to be the final step in the pathway,” said Engle. “The technology staff and students have reviewed, updated and integrated new subject matter yearly into the cyber curriculum. We feel it is comprehensive and complete. Many of our graduates go on to major in cyber security or computer sciences at area colleges and receive their bachelor’s degrees in cyber security and information assurance.”

Jennifer Balog is the development coordinator for Rome Catholic School.
When the 2010-2011 school year began, the diocesan elementary schools and three of the five diocesan high schools began to utilize a new web-based student information system called MyStudentsProgress.com. By processing pertinent student information, the computer program facilitates communication among teachers, parents and administrators, while also helping administrators better manage their schools. It also enables the Catholic Schools Office to generate student data reports. By the end of the year, every school will be using it.

MyStudentsProgress allows parents and students online access to students’ assignments, grades and activities from any computer with a connection to the Internet.

Cheryl Canfield, assistant superintendent, is managing the transition to the new program. She said the change to the new online program has gone smoothly. “Everyone has embraced it very well,” she said. “It’s user friendly. It’s very clear. It’s pleasant to look at, and each page has standard formatting.”

The program includes 20 different modules, which are online notification or tracking portals to provide information for teachers, parents and administrators. Modules include access to a student’s homework assignments, report card, conduct reports, attendance, after-school activity schedules, lunches and lunch account balances, as well as school calendars and bulletins. In addition, teachers can process their grade book information online, and teachers and administrators can communicate with parents through group e-mail announcements. Student information is locked and can only be accessed by each child’s parents. The parents’ accounts are very secure with each page specially encrypted, similar to a bank web site.

Bishop Grimes Prep is the only high school using the program’s parent portal. Susan Nedza, director of guidance, described the system as “fantastic.” By using the parent portal, parents can keep track of their children’s progress. They are aware if their children haven’t turned in their homework or if they failed to make up a test.

Nedza said that many parents look at the information along with their children. “The students learn responsibility because it helps them to see the impact of their efforts,” said Nedza. “It’s an amazing tool. It keeps the communication open between home and school.”

Cheri McEntee, mother of Grimes 7th grade student Joseph McEntee, agrees. “I find it very helpful in keeping Joseph on track,” said McEntee. “He can see the impact of not handing in his homework very quickly, and it allows me to address this with him.”

Michael Powers, principal at Rome Catholic School, said that Rome’s teachers and staff have all been trained to use the new system. The teachers are currently tracking daily attendance and grades on the new computer system and using it to generate report cards.

“We’re learning it step by step,” said Powers. “I’m looking forward to utilizing it even more — to make our accountability easier and to clearly define how well our school is doing in general.”

Claudia Mathis a staff writer for the Catholic Sun.
$75,000 Donation Brings Science to Life at Notre Dame

BY JIM JONES

Notre Dame Junior/Senior High School students received a great surprise that is bringing state-of-the-art technology to both the biology and chemistry laboratories at the Utica-area school.

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Notre Dame school community recently received a donation of $75,000, which allowed for the purchase of the latest in mobile laboratory stations. Students are now able to work cooperatively on laboratory projects at the new stations, where they can examine microscopic cells, perform dissections, and learn about how organ systems work together within the body.

Sr. Anna Mae Collins, CSJ, principal, was overwhelmed by the benevolence of the donor. “Notre Dame has always been committed to the teaching and learning of math and science,” she said. “This puts us on the cutting edge, as we educate the physicians and research scientists of tomorrow.”

Biology teacher Mark Madden is thrilled to see Notre Dame students working in the new lab. “Our students are having greater interaction and a better learning experience. The mobile stations are much more functional, with water and other hookups right in each station,” he said. “The study of biology is interactive. Students are able to see more clearly what’s going on, as we work on these projects, as well as test enzymes, nutrients, and more.”

The donation also made possible the purchase of two ultra SMARTboards, which enable teachers to easily prepare multimedia presentations utilizing music, movie clips and more, and help students more easily grasp difficult science concepts.

Jim Jones is the development director for Notre Dame Junior/Senior High School and Notre Dame Elementary School.

Schools Develop New Web Sites

As part of a diocesan-wide initiative to provide the Syracuse Catholic community with up-to-date news and information, the Catholic Schools Office recently began implementation of new web sites for all of the schools. The project is part of Superintendent Christopher Mominey’s commitment to providing cost effective and strategically sound technology and technology services to all the Catholic schools within the diocese. School web sites will incorporate a content management system similar to that recently employed by the diocese in the redevelopment and redesign of its own new web site, according to Dominick Lisi, director of educational technology. The goal is to provide the schools with easy, centrally managed systems that will exemplify the Catholic School Office’s commitment to providing schools and their communities with effective means of communicating news, events and information. Schools began transitioning to their new web sites in November 2010. Web sites were developed by Syracuse Design Group, LLC, and are hosted by Visory Group, both Syracuse area businesses.
Lego have long been a childhood favorite, but put those colorful pieces together with some state-of-the-art technology and you’ve got a winning combination that is bringing robotics into the classroom at St. Mary’s Academy in Baldwinsville. The Lego Mindstorm Robotics Program is one of two dozen Program Enhancement Grants awarded for the 2010-2011 school year thanks to funds provided by the Syracuse Roman Catholic Diocese’s Heritage Campaign.

Barbara Jacques, principal at St. Mary's Academy, was thrilled to learn her school had received a grant. As the former principal at Rome Catholic School, Jacques is familiar with the robotics program, launched in Rome in 2008 and also funded by the Heritage Campaign.

“This is a tremendously successful program in Rome, and we are all eager to incorporate this kind of technology here at St. Mary’s, as well,” said Jacques. “I've seen first-hand how this technology can stimulate the minds of our students and enhance their academic success, so we're really excited to get the program underway.”

The Lego Mindstorm Robotics Program will help St. Mary's students become better problem solvers and enhance their research skills through the study of robotics, which incorporates elements of computer science and engineering. Students use Lego robotics kits to build an actual robot and then proceed to carry out their own experiments and investigations, while also learning important lessons in teamwork, creativity and imagination.

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2010-2011 Program Enhancement Grants
Bring Added Value to Schools

BY CAROLINE K. REFF

Heritage Program Enhancement Grants

The following is a list of Program Enhancement Grants awarded to our diocesan schools through the Heritage Fund:

**BISHOP’S ACADEMY AT HOLY FAMILY**

**Multicultural Art Exploration** ($650)

Students at Holy Family will participate in multi-culturally based art lessons to expand their knowledge of art as it relates to culture and ethnicity. Each grade level will create work from a different culture/country. The project will culminate with an art exhibit for the school community.

**Science Around Us** ($1,250)

Funds will be used to pay for four traveling science demonstrations provided by employees from the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology. In addition, the grant will allow for the purchase of science materials and manipulatives to reinforce the concepts presented to the students.

**Computer Curriculum Project** ($4,800)

In 2008, the Bishop’s Academy at Holy Family received a partially-funded grant to purchase software, and current funds will be used to renew that initiative. Software programs are designed to work on specific skills, develop student understanding of the computer as a tool, and provide the teacher with a means of assessing student progress.

**BISHOP’S ACADEMY AT MOST HOLY ROSARY**

**Leveled Literacy Intervention System** ($3,539)

The Bishop's Academy at Most Holy Rosary will purchase the Fountas and Pinnell literacy intervention system to supplement its reading program. The purchase of the system will help students identified as reading at a low level progress to their current grade level abilities.

**BISHOP GRIMES PREP**

**Power2Achieve** ($1,900)

Power2Achieve is a moral character development program that supports the development of 21st century skills needed by future leaders. The resources available through the grant funding will support the school's efforts to effectively and efficiently guide students’ moral development and growth of performance character strengths.
BISHOP LUDDEN JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
House System ($10,000*)
Bishop Ludden will use the funds to continue its unique House System program by purchasing materials that identify different houses and pay stipends to those who serve as house leaders.

BLESSSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL
Computers on Wheels ($8,000*)
This grant is a continuation of one received in 2008 and will be used to purchase netbooks and storage carts so that computers can be shared. In addition, Blessed Sacrament will be able to replace outdated technology and fully integrate technology into the curriculum at every grade level, while also allowing teachers to successfully differentiate the instructional needs of their students.

HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL, NORWICH
SMARTboard and Computer Technology ($7,500)
The technology program will be enhanced with the purchase of an additional Smartboard and 10 classroom computers to complete the technology needs of the school.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL
Ticket to Read ($2,500*)
Ticket to Read is a web-based reading intervention program that engages students in high-interest reading content and assists in improving reading performance and skills on an individual basis. The program also can be accessed from home for further practice. Funds will be used for the professional development component of the program.

NOTRE DAME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Fox in a Box Mathematics ($1,600)
Fox in a Box is a mathematics assessment tool used to determine specific student needs in order to provide early intervention services.
Interactive Whiteboard Applications ($3,000)
The funding allows for the purchase of interactive mathematics and English Language Arts Smartboard applications, as well as two wireless SMARTslates for grades 5 and 6. These applications allow for daily language review, daily math word problems, and daily paragraph editing for grades 3 through 6, as well.

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"We would not have been able to bring this robotics program to St. Mary’s without the funding made possible from the Heritage funds,” said Jacques. “We’re so excited to take this opportunity and watch it enhance our students’ learning and foster new ideas in the classroom.”

According to Debra Brillante, assistant superintendent, schools that received the 2010-2011 Program Enhancement Grants had to go through an application process with the Catholic Schools Office. Those schools that had received grant money two years ago through the Heritage Campaign had first preference in order to sustain already established programs. Schools wishing to introduce new ideas were encouraged to apply, as well, and almost every school received some amount of funding. During the application process, each school needed to show that its projects truly enhanced the current curriculum and was required to provide measurable data to show that similar projects had resulted in success at other sites. Field trips that happened only once were not eligible, as the grants are intended for programs, technology and other equipment that can be sustained for continued benefit of students and the schools.

“The programs that received funding are all outstanding and cover a wide-range of curriculum enhancing elements,” said Brillante. “These grants

**Montessori Pre-K ($4,000)**
Grant monies allow for the purchase of materials and supplies needed to open a second Montessori Pre-K program at Notre Dame. The second class will accommodate 20 more students annually.

**Rome Catholic School**

**Dimension M ($8,000)**
Dimension M is a new immersive approach to teaching mathematics being offered as a STEM initiative with funding through the Department of Defense and an educational partnership with Rome Air Force Research Lab. Funding will create a new math lab with 12 desktop computers and an overhead projector.

**WeDO Robotics for Elementary ($1,900)**
WeDO is an introductory robotics program for grades 2 through 4 with activities that cover math, science, technology and engineering, as well as language arts and literacy.

**TeTrix Robotics ($3,200)**
TeTrix allows high school students to develop and control powerful DC and servo motors and metal gears and will allow teams of students to develop an engineering system. It is a valuable tool for students hoping to pursue careers in the engineering field and is a direct link to the robotics program offered at SUNYIT.

**Alternative Energy MST Elective ($760)**
Funding allows for the creation of a junior/senior high school elective and the purchase of five kits that will be assigned to students on a rotating basis. Kits cover the areas of fuel cell cars, solar hydrogen, wind farm technology, and wind and hydro fuel cells. The course will culminate in an activity to design an advanced energy house and run an automobile on alternative energy.

**ST. JAMES MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**iPad Reader ($890)**
Funding was awarded to purchase a second iPad in order for students to work together on various projects.

**ST. MARGARET’S SCHOOL**

**SMARTboard Technology ($2,271)**
St. Margaret’s will use its funding to purchase a SMARTboard and installation materials, a projector and printer. The technology will allow for endless opportunities for teachers to enhance instruction through visual, hands-on, animate, multi-media lessons in all subject areas.
have enabled our Catholic schools to put several value added systems in place, giving our students greater access to technology and other state-of-the-art educational tools and instructional materials. The Heritage Grants have allowed us to fund programs that would not have otherwise been possible to create or sustain. We congratulate all of those schools who have received a Program Enhancement Grant for their initiative, and we look forward to seeing the outstanding results through this school year and beyond.”

**FUNDS BENEFIT STUDENTS, NOT BUILDINGS**

The 2010-2011 school year marks the second time the diocese has released Heritage funds to the schools for program enhancements. The first time was a $187,000 disbursement in 2008-2009. This year, over $590,000 were distributed to schools from Heritage funds, with $90,000 going to program enhancements, $225,000 going toward additional financial aid, and the remainder going toward marketing and development efforts to promote Catholic schools. The Heritage Campaign was established in 2000 by Bishop James Moynihan in an effort to preserve the heritage of Catholic education in the Syracuse Diocese. Thanks to the Bishop’s tremendous commitment to the cause and outstanding support from the community, the campaign exceeded its original $33 million goal by bringing in $51 million in original pledges. The Heritage Campaign also supports other functions of the diocese, including religious education and youth ministry, the efforts of Catholic Charities, retired priests, and parish facilities and programs.

“At a time when our public school counterparts are slashing budgets and discontinuing programs, we are happy to be able to say that we are adding programs, increasing financial aid and maintaining the high standards of excellence that exist in our 24 Catholic schools across the diocese,” said Christopher Mominey, superintendent of Catholic schools. “We’re infusing the system with money that directly impacts students. We’re not allocating this money for facility upgrades or salaries. In keeping with the intent of the Heritage Campaign, this funding goes right into the hands of our students in the form of exciting technology projects, SMARTboards in the classrooms, continued on page 20

“...and cover a wide-range of curriculum enhancing elements.”
—DEBRA BRILLANTE, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

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**ST. MARY’S ACADEMY, BALDWINSVILLE**

Lego Mindstorm Robotics ($3,835)
Through the Lego Mindstorm Robotics Program, St. Mary’s will introduce students to programming and basic engineering skills with opportunities to explore, problem solve and use multiple levels of learning in the field of science, mathematics and technology.

**ST. ROSE OF LIMA SCHOOL**

Learning Games for Language Arts ($990)
St. Rose will use grant funding to purchase language arts manipulative materials for hands on activities to enhance skills and concepts. The program will assist students in need of remediation and also will provide challenges for students who are high achievers.

SMARTboard Technology ($4,050)
Funds will be used to purchase SMARTboards, laptops, and projectors to enhance the St. Rose technology program.

**SETON CATHOLIC JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**

Power of the Written Word ($4,000)
Funds will be used to engage reluctant readers and creative minds by drawing students into reading through interaction with several professional writers.

**SETON CATHOLIC AT ALL SAINTS**

SMARTboard Technology and Learning Centers ($8,000)
Funds will allow the purchase of SMARTboard technology, computer monitors and learning center equipment, including iPods; and pay for teacher workshop expenses. The learning centers will promote student independence, allow students to learn through self-discovery, encourage responsibility and provide time and opportunity for classroom teachers to work with individual students on targeted skills.

**TRINITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Reading First ($10,000*)
The Reading First Program was initially instituted by the Oswego Public School District but was cut due to district budgetary restraints. Since then, Trinity Catholic has continued the program. The Program Enhancement Grant funding will be used to pay salaries and provide additional support for students who struggle with reading.

* Indicated total reflects some funds that remained from the 2008-2009 grant dispersal.
Mominey is particularly proud that the Heritage funds have enabled Catholic schools to distribute $225,000 in financial aid during the 2010-2011 school year — in addition to the already half million dollars distributed through the diocese’s Hope Appeal Campaign. This was the first year financial aid from Heritage was allotted to families in need.

“In these particularly difficult economic times, we are so thankful to be able to increase the amount of financial aid available to our families,” said Mominey.

“So many are so very committed to Catholic education but struggle to make ends meet. The Heritage funds have made it much easier for some to continue to send their children to our schools this year.”

“We are grateful to all of those who supported Bishop Moynihan’s belief in preserving the heritage of our Catholic schools by donating so generously to the Heritage Campaign,” Mominey added. “This generosity is taking the shape of exciting value-added programs within our schools and our students are reaping the rewards. It’s an exciting time, and we look forward to seeing the results in the achievements of our children.”

**Q/A with Bishop Moynihan: Heritage Campaign Continues to Benefit Schools**

Bishop James M. Moynihan was the key figure in establishing the Heritage Campaign for the Syracuse Roman Catholic Diocese. His intention was to preserve the “heritage” and quality of our schools, parishes and ministries, and he worked tirelessly to bring this vision to fruition. While the original goal of the campaign was $33 million, the Bishop’s commitment in reaching out to diocesan supporters resulted in over $50 million in pledges to support the Heritage Campaign.

Where did the idea come from for the Heritage Campaign?

It had been several decades since the last campaign for the diocese. Since then, we developed a number of important needs in the Diocese of Syracuse in the areas of schools, religious education and youth ministry, Catholic Charities, priest retirement facilities and the support of parishes. We put together a pastors’ advisory committee and a lay advisory board that reviewed our plan and made recommendations on how to move forward. The needs in the diocese had grown significantly and with the approaching millennium, we needed to gear up for the future. We prayed that God would direct us and motivate our people to support the campaign, as it would benefit everyone in the diocese, young and old.

We hired Community Counseling Services (CCS) and had our case study developed, deciding on “Preserving the Past — Securing the Future” as our campaign theme. CCS conducted a feasibility study to see if our established need of $40 million was realistic. The study came back with $33 million as an achievable goal in the following areas: $14.5 million for Catholic schools ($3.5 million for facilities and $11 million for an endowment); $2.75 million for an endowment for religious education/youth ministry; $3 million for Catholic Charities; $2.5 million for retired priest facilities ($2 million for endowment and $500,000 for facility improvements); $3.65 million for the 2000 Hope Appeal; and $6.6 million for parish sharing.

**Did it exceed your expectations and why?**

Originally, we thought $40 million would be an attainable goal, but after the feasibility study we scaled it back to $33 million. We not only achieved the $33 million, but the $40 million we originally thought, with up to $51 million in pledges! It was $51,145,000 in donor pledges to be exact! Upon completion of the pledge period, $47,094,000 had been pledged by 36,094 donors! It was an unparalleled success. Never before in the history of the diocese had anything like it been achieved. It was a tremendous experience for me. Personally, I had 90 donor dinners at my house and 95 percent pledged to the campaign.

How do you hope the establishment of these funds will help to further Catholic education into the future?

The Heritage Campaign raised the awareness of our needs to the parishioners in the cause of long-term evangelization. Nothing runs without financial and moral support. The two go hand in hand.

I would think that the success of the campaign and the fact that donors belong to these parishes will galvanize the parishes to be supportive of a pastor’s request for whatever the pastor asks of them. Pastors love our people and the people love our pastors. I so enjoyed the experience of the Heritage Campaign. I wish I were still doing it!
Military Family Considers Catholic School Home

BY JENNIKA BAINES

For the Murnanes, the concept of “family” is a little broader than it is for most people. Of course it includes siblings and parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It also includes the Navy, the branch of the military to which Michael Murnane has dedicated his career. But now the Murnane family includes the community at Blessed Sacrament School in Syracuse, as well. The school has become a new home and a place full of love and support for a family that has had to adapt to a life on the move.

“My son, Jack, will be 5 in December, and this will be his seventh move,” said Sage Murnane, also mom to 9-year old Molly and 7-year old Gracie.

As a military family, the Murnanes move every year or two and have had to cope with Michael’s overseas deployments. “We had deployments before we had kids and that was hard, and I learned a lot about myself,” Sage said, “but now with kids, it’s a whole different experience.”

While the military life has given the Murnanes the opportunity to meet new people, learn new languages and see beautiful parts of the world, this opportunity also comes at a cost. “My kids make friends easily, but they don’t make lifelong friends because they move so quickly,” Sage said. The children have cried at the prospect of having to start over at another school. Sometimes they found it difficult to leave their mother.

In 2009, the family was stationed in Rhode Island when Michael received his orders for yet another move, this time to Germany for three years, but then tragedy struck.

Michael’s father, Wilfred “Shin” Murnane, died unexpectedly. Before the family was to move to Germany, Michael was able to get temporary additional duty back in his hometown of Syracuse through the New York Air National Guard. The move would only be for a couple of months, but the family took the opportunity to move in with Michael’s mother, Carol, so the family could be together during a difficult time.

While the children had always been enrolled in public schools before, Michael had attended Blessed Sacrament in Syracuse and loved his time there. So Michael and Sage decided to enroll the children. They weren’t expecting the connection to be so deep and immediate.

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“Within two weeks all of my kids had friends — best friends even,” Sage said. “We had orders to go to Germany in October. We were supposed to leave at the end of the month, but we just fell in love with Blessed Sacrament.”

Family always comes first for the Murnanes, and they go to great lengths to stay together, but this time they made an exception. “My husband went to Germany to find a house, and the kids and I stayed here to finish the semester,” Sage said.

They stayed for the school’s Christmas show on Dec. 23 and then boarded a plane to Germany on Christmas day. Molly’s best friend had arranged for the message “We’ll miss you, Molly!” to be put up on the marquis of The Palace, a movie theater in the neighborhood. The first-grade teacher cried when she hugged Gracie goodbye.

“My kids had a very hard time leaving Blessed Sacrament after only four months,” Sage said. “I’ve never had that kind of experience with a school. It was phenomenal.”

Once the family moved to Germany, the relationship with Blessed Sacrament didn’t end. The children Skyped with their classrooms back in Syracuse. Packages and letters were sent back and forth. Then Michael was selected to serve as a provincial reconstruction team commanding officer, a role which will eventually take him to Afghanistan. The position requires training in Washington, D.C., in the few months before his deployment in the spring.

“So instead of moving our kids to yet another school for just a few months, we decided to come back here for two years,” Sage said. “We talked to the kids about it, and they all said they wanted to come back and live with Nana and go to Blessed Sacrament.”

Many of our Catholic schools embrace veterans and their families as part of the school community. Students from St. Thomas Aquinas School held a special Veteran’s Day assembly to honor those in the school family who are currently serving or have served in the military. Veterans were escorted into the assembly and seated by the students, followed by a reading of their names and presentation of special gifts. When the names of deceased veterans were read, 3rd graders entered the gymnasium holding the U.S. flag in a touching remembrance.
Sage said she couldn't believe how warmly her family was welcomed back into the Blessed Sacrament community when they returned this September. People hugged them after Mass. Fr. Kevin Maloney, parochial vicar, welcomed Michael back by name during communion, and the children found lots of “old” friends eager to play. “You would think we had been part of this school for years,” Sage said.

“The emphasis on family and community at Catholic schools helps ease the transition for children from military families,” said Blessed Sacrament Principal Andrea Polcaro. The school has a welcome committee that pairs parents new to Blessed Sacrament with parents who are more familiar with the school. “That way each new parent has someone they can call up prior to school starting if they have any questions,” Polcaro said.

There also is a new student pizza party where current students act as ambassadors and give tours. “Fr. Peter [Reddick] comes over and greets the new families,” Polcaro said. “It’s just an opportunity for our new students to feel really welcome in their new community.”

And it is this community, as well as family here in Syracuse, that Sage and the children will rely on when Michael is deployed.

“My kids are going to be okay, and I’m going to be okay because we have an amazing support group, but I worry about my husband not being able to see [the kids],” Sage said. Michael is an amazing father, she said, and being a good dad is something he loves to do. Tours away from the family are just as hard on him as they are on the children. “I look at him and I don’t know how he does it,” Sage said.

It was especially difficult when Michael missed Jack’s birth. “He was on a ship in ... somewhere,” Sage said. Michael is an amazing father, she said, and being a good dad is something he loves to do. Tours away from the family are just as hard on him as they are on the children. “I look at him and I don’t know how he does it,” Sage said.

For now, though, Sage and Michael love watching their children enjoy the kind of childhood they had. “The kids going to the same school where Michael grew up, staying in the same place,” Sage said. “We never thought we would have that.”

*Jennika Baines is a staff writer for the Catholic Sun.*

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**Students Serve Those Who Serve**

**BY JENNIIKA BAINES**

Catholic schools are supporting the troops, as well as the family members they leave behind in order to serve their country.

Julie Moss, a 7th grade U.S. history and 12th grade economics and government teacher at Bishop Grimes Prep also is an alumnus of the class of 2000. She said the school has been helping those in the military since the Gulf War.

But last year when Moss learned her husband would be deployed to Afghanistan through the Air National Guard, she spoke with Bishop Grimes’ spiritual life director, Josie Rabideau, and the school’s student council moderator, Patrick Kinne, to see if more could be done. They developed a project called “Serving Those Who Serve,” in which goods are collected to be sent to local troops who are deployed with Moss’s husband in Afghanistan.

“The collection took place during Homecoming, as a way to remind our service men and women of the support they have here in our community and to look forward to their own homecoming,” Moss said. “We had an overwhelming response.”

The school also has a Yellow Ribbon Club, which puts together care packages each month.

“Part of being a member of the Bishop Grimes community is learning about service and participating in our service projects,” Moss said. “The students learn the importance of serving others in our community, and service to others is part of our Catholic identity as a school.”

Francine Camino, a 5th grade teacher at St. Margaret’s School in Mattydale, said her school “adopted” her son Nicholas and the men and women serving in his squadron while he was in Iraq. Her son is a loadmaster on a C-130. He has been deployed three times since enlisting four years ago.

In 2008, St. Margaret’s filled 17 boxes with donated items like shampoo, socks, games and books. The students and faculty also sent Veteran’s Day letters and Christmas cards. “Some of these men are not home for the holidays,” Camino said. “You want to bring the comfort of home to their air base.”

In return, Nicholas flew the St. Margaret’s flag in Iraq and Kuwait. When he came home, he presented this flag to the principal and visited classrooms to answer questions and show the children some slides.

“They were just in awe because he came in his loadmaster’s uniform, and they asked him all kinds of questions, ‘What do you eat? How long do you fly? What’s your job like?’ stuff like that,” Camino said.

Nicholas has told his mother how much the letters and boxes meant to the people he served with in the Middle East. The outpouring of support has meant a lot to Camino, too.

“Your view on the world, it’s so different when you have a child in the military,” Camino said. “Something like this, it really brings a tear of joy to your eyes.”

*Julie Moss and her husband.*
When Christian Freeman, a junior at Bishop Grimes Prep, registered for Sociology 101 at Le Moyne College, he wasn’t even sure what the subject matter was about. But the course fit nicely into his already busy summer schedule, so he figured he would take a chance. His gamble paid off. Not only did Freeman learn about the many aspects of human interaction, but he also gained valuable skills to help him navigate the college experience through The Loyola Institute, a unique program offering students from Bishop Grimes Prep and Bishop Ludden Junior/Senior High School a taste of the Jesuit college experience.

Established just two years ago, The Loyola Institute was created by Le Moyne College as an opportunity for students to earn college credits and scholarships, as well as a way to encourage students and their families to extend Catholic education in the Diocese of Syracuse through to the college level. The program requires commitment: Students who are accepted must successfully complete one of two non-credit skills courses prior to 10th grade, one undergraduate course during the summers preceding 11th and 12th grade, and two undergraduate classes during the 12th grade, which often must be completed outside of regular school hours. There is a fee for each course, but it is significantly discounted for Loyola Institute participants. At the completion of the program, participants will have earned 12 college credits. Those interested in attending Le Moyne College after high school graduation must go through the standard admissions process, but, if accepted, they begin their college careers with a semester’s worth of courses already behind them — a savings of $12,500. In addition, Loyola Institute students are eligible for $10,000 per year in tuition scholarships for undergraduate students. Credits also can be transferred to many other colleges and universities.

After spending the summer of 2009 taking Success Skills for Critical Reading and Writing, Freeman attended the sociology class four days a week, two hours a day for most of the Summer of 2010. With another hour or two of homework each night, it was a significant commitment, especially since he was working part-time at his father’s landscape architecture firm and also trying to fit in some soccer, basketball and disc golf.

“One thing I learned this summer was dedication,” said Freeman, who attended elementary school at St. Rose of Lima and is a member of St. Matthew’s Parish in Syracuse. “When I first started the course, I thought the homework assignments of three or four questions wouldn’t take long at all. I quickly realized that three or four questions in a college course are like writing three or four short essays in high school. But it was worth it. You can’t just have fun all the time.”

The course also opened Freeman’s eyes to another aspect of college work — class debate. “We had some pretty interesting debates in sociology, and, at first, I really wasn’t prepared for that,” he said. “One of the students in my class considered herself an atheist, and I’m extremely Catholic, so we got into some interesting discussions in class. I’ve always been the first one to raise my hand in high school, but I really liked the chance to voice my opinion in the college classroom.”

Freeman isn’t sure what college he will attend after graduation, but he has a great appreciation for “the freedom of the college atmosphere,” and said he could “hang out at Le Moyne every day.” Right now, he is hoping to pursue a career in either writing, engineering or medicine, and, in preparation for that, Freeman intends to continue participating in The Loyola Institute until he graduates from Bishop Grimes Prep in the Spring of 2012.

“At college, the teaching style is different and the learning style is different, but I’ll be ready for that now,” he said. “I know The Loyola Institute is going to make me a prepared college freshman.”

For more information on The Loyola Institute, visit www.lemoyne.edu.

Caroline K. Reff is a free-lance writer and public relations consultant in Syracuse, NY.
No Place Like Home for Ludden’s Coach Donnelly

BY MARIA WALSH

The road to being the varsity basketball coach at Bishop Ludden was a natural one for Pat Donnelly, and, through victory and defeat, Donnelly has remained a steadfast presence on the Bishop Ludden court.

Donnelly graduated from Ludden in 1976 after playing on the varsity team in 1975 and 1976 and leading the team to the Section III Championship as captain. He continued his basketball career at SUNY Potsdam, where he played from 1977 to 1980 and captained the 1980 team. During his days at Potsdam, his team was the NCAA Division III Eastern Regional Champion twice (1979 and 1980) and was in the NCAA Division III Final Four and National Runner-up in 1979. Upon graduating from Potsdam with a degree in economics, Donnelly began his coaching career, starting with the East Syracuse Minoa junior varsity team and moving to the varsity two years later.

In 1987, Donnelly returned home to Bishop Ludden and has been there ever since, compiling an overall record of 419 – 194, with 11 Onondaga High School League (OHSL) championships and eight Section III championships. Donnelly coached the Ludden team to seven consecutive Section III Championships from 1993 to 1999 — a league record — and, in 1994, Bishop Ludden won the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSSPHSAA) State Championship, one of the highlights of his career. Along the way his teams also have won two NYSPHSAA regional championships and been in two NYSPHSAA Final Four tournaments. In 1994, Donnelly was named the NYSPHSAA Coach of the Year and in 1999 he was named the CNY Coach of the Year. And recently, in 2009, he and the Ludden team celebrated Donnelly’s 400th win as the varsity team defeated East Syracuse Minoa.

Although he is the basketball coach, his goal for his young players extends beyond the court.

Donnelly’s goal is to help prepare young men for life beyond Bishop Ludden, so he makes a point to get acquainted with the players’ families and get to know each of his players as individuals. He believes in reinforcing their parents’ rules, emphasizing the need for academic excellence in addition to athletic prowess, and, most of all, teaching his players to have integrity in all life situations.

When he’s not on the court, Donnelly also is employed with National Grid (formerly Niagara Mohawk), where he has worked for 29 years in the commercial and industrial energy efficiency services.

Over the years, Donnelly has been offered opportunities to leave Bishop Ludden and coach at other schools, but he has chosen to stay with his alma mater and continue on in the proud tradition of the Gaelic Knights. When asked to explain why he remains committed to Ludden the answers come easily — Bishop Ludden is family. While Donnelly and his siblings graduated from Ludden, he also has found family in the players he has coached throughout the years, and he continues those relationships with his players far beyond graduation. This summer Donnelly, and his wife Lori, attended four weddings of former players, and they regularly are invited to weddings, christenings, parties, golf outings and other milestones with the men whose character he helped shape. “Seeing my players succeed in life is the best part of my job as coach,” Donnelly said.

Maria Walsh is the development director at Bishop Ludden Junior/Senior High School.
Pillars
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