

# Annual appeal

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and was acute among those who had pledged 50¢ to \$30.

Of the 22,938 former donors who did not make pledges in 1985, nearly 72 percent — or 16,719 individuals — fell into the \$30-or-under bracket. Projecting from this group's 1984 pledges, the 1985 appeal failed to garner a potential of more than \$250,000 from this group alone.

Combine this with the figures for those who pledged \$31 to \$100 in 1984 but did not contribute in 1985, and the donor attrition in the small-donor category — 50¢ to \$100 — comes to a staggering 97.26 percent of the total donor loss. The total of potential pledges in this bracket is nearly \$600,000.

By changing the TGA format, organizers hope to bring the small donors back into the pool. "I would hope that we could recoup half of what we lost," Father Moynihan said.

"We've done a lot of evaluating," he said, noting that the TGA Priests' Advisory Committee has been working on the 1986 format since January.

Father Moynihan pointed to the pledge cards themselves as one aspect of the 1985 campaign that may have discouraged small donations. The lowest figure printed on last year's cards was \$100. This year, suggested gift levels will begin at \$30, and the cards will be printed with blanks allowing donors to

write in smaller gifts, he said.

Because of the negative impression created last year, no consultant will be employed for this campaign. "I think the idea of using a consultant turned people off, even though the consultant did a lot of worthwhile things," Father Moynihan said.

The consultant, a representative of the Martin Moran Company of New York City, worked in the appeals office five days a week, from July through September, he noted. Father Moynihan said the duties of the consultant are now being carried out by the various committees and by personnel at the diocesan Pastoral Center, who are contributing their efforts while also handling their normal workloads.

Another abandoned aspect of the '85 campaign is the series of Bishop's Receptions, the means by which potential donors in high-income brackets were encouraged to pledge \$500 or more. These gatherings "were not attended as well as we expected," Father Moynihan said. In addition, "they acquired the misnomer of 'cocktail parties,' which they were not. I think, apart from that, they somehow or other created the impression that we were becoming elitist, selective and discriminatory."

This year, in-hall gatherings will be used to solicit all donors, regardless of the sizes of their previous pledges. Father Moynihan said many people found last year's format "too impersonal" and that they missed the social aspect of the in-hall gatherings.

Although the in-hall pledge collections are



Father James Moynihan, right, and appeal general chairman Thomas Schoenwetter.

the focus of the 1986 appeal, the format leaves pastors a variety of options for adapting the campaign to their parishes. One of these options is to have Pastoral Center personnel come into the parishes for Masses to talk about the need for TGA funds.

"Pastors are the best judges of what works in their individual parishes," Father Moynihan said. "We have tried to allow flexibility within parishes in the overall design of the appeal."

This year's campaign officially begins

October 1 with the mailing of brochures to all prospective donors. In-hall solicitation will take place in late October and early November.

In conclusion, Father Moynihan said: "I just hope that everybody will understand that we apologize for any offense we may have given — and we hope that we can regain the confidence of our diocesan, that we can learn from past mistakes by incorporating the very best aspects of all our past appeals."

# Blue Suspenders

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Sister Chris, 35, sings lead vocals, while Sister Eileen, 38, and Sister Diana, also 38, sing back-up and play acoustic guitars. Sister Beth, 43, plays drums and electric bass guitar.

Sister Diana, a teacher at Nazareth Academy, taught herself to play in high school. "My three best friends played guitar. It was the '60s, and the thing to do was sit around the yard and play," she recalled. So with the first paycheck she earned from working at Star Market, Sister Diana bought a guitar.

By imitating her friends, she learned basic chords. When she entered the Sisters of St. Joseph novitiate, Sister Diana taught fellow novice Eileen Curtiss everything she knew. "Then she (Sister Eileen) really took off and learned all these intricate bar chords," Sister Diana said. Sister Eileen returned the favor by teaching the chords to Sister Diana.

The only band member with formal musical training is Sister Beth. A former music teacher at Nazareth Academy, she now supervises grounds and maintenance at the congregation's motherhouse. "The rest of us stumble along by ear and by feel," Sister Eileen said.

Nevertheless, members agree that their skills complement one another. "Eileen has a sixth

sense about music, which makes things a lot easier," Sister Chris said.

"Tobey (Sister Diana) is really, really, creative," Sister Eileen said. "She hears chords and rhythms in the music and can stand back and kind of artistically put things together."

In addition to her musical training, Sister Beth brings methodology and teaching skills, as well as mechanical expertise, to the group.

"Chris has a good strong voice," Sister Eileen said. "The rest of us have true voices, but not strong."

Although they have a long history, the Blue Suspenders are still learning how to adapt their music to particular audiences. At nursing homes, they do "golden oldies." At congregational events, they include songs with religious themes.

From the "familiar, sing-along stuff" of the early 1900s and the '20s, the group's repertoire has expanded to include "a mixture of folk, pop, 'issue' music, and a touch of bluegrass," Sister Chris said. Issue music, she explained, is "things that would address justice issues." These days that includes mostly peace songs and Latin music.

They have found receptive audiences, and Sister Eileen believes their success stems from a comeback enjoyed by music with a message. Groups such as Peter, Paul and Mary and individuals like Joan Baez are on tour again, she

noted. "There's still an audience. Maybe people are looking for that again."

"The most fun to sing are things that people get engaged in, whether its by singing, clapping or dancing," Sister Chris said. "Those songs are a real, real effective way of getting a message across."

Last January, with encouragement and assistance from other local musicians, the Blue Suspenders decided to invest in their own sound equipment. Members of Miller, Mulligan and Dolan, a local folk group, helped them organize their own benefit to raise money for equipment.

The decision to invest was not taken lightly, and neither is the group's commitment to performing. "From June to May, we hemmed and hawed over this quantum leap," Sister Eileen recalled.

"Our primary reason for purchasing sound equipment is to perform at benefits. We're open to anybody," Sister Chris said.

"It's really scary, wondering what happens if this doesn't work out," Sister Diana said. "At least we'll always have sound equipment."

But according to Sister Chris, the group "seems to be taking off pretty well." In fact, the Blue Suspenders are taking off so well that

members are beginning to wonder if they can keep up with the demand. So far, they have tried to limit commitments to once a month and set a regular practice schedule.

"We are concerned about that," Sister Eileen said. "The four of us try to get together and decide what we want to do. We want it to remain fun. We don't want it to become a burden."

"It's a major investment of time," Sister Diana said. "I could handle once a month, but what if it does go beyond that? I don't like saying no to anybody."

"There's a real ministry we're just beginning to find," she added.

Audiences are occasionally surprised when Sister Diana announces that members of the group are also members of a religious congregation. At one concert this spring, listeners told Sister Diana they didn't have any idea that sisters would sing anything other than church music.

"Maybe there's a little bit of surprise at times," Sister Eileen said. "On the other hand, it enables people to see another side of what they've traditionally defined as a sister. We're not always teachers or nurses. We have a lot of sides to our lives, too."

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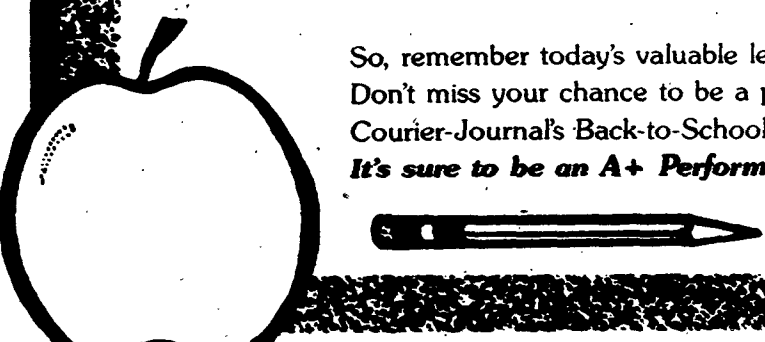

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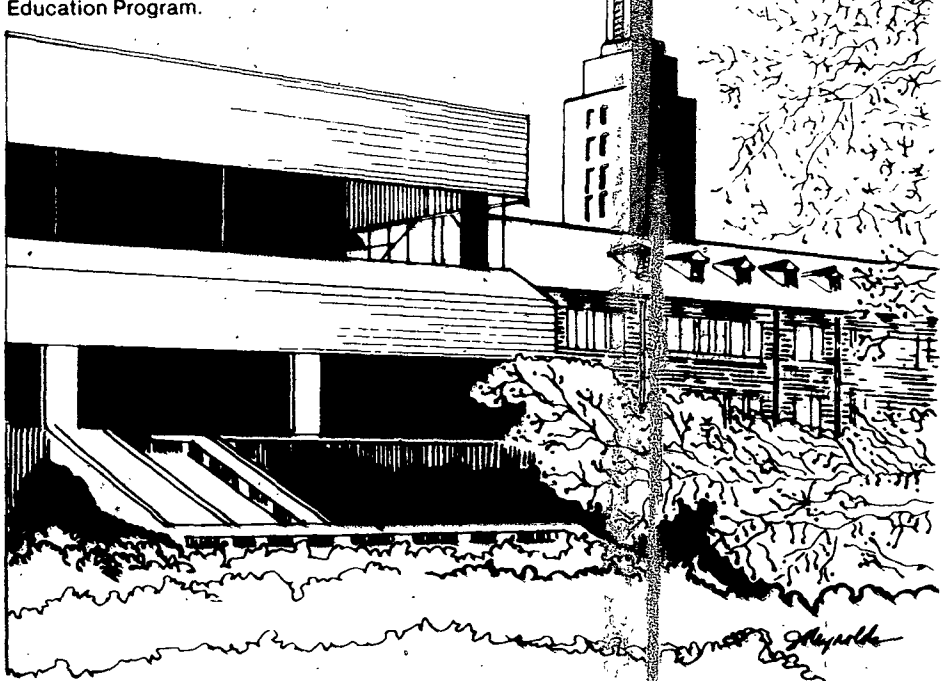



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