

Amid enrollment decline, high schools step up recruiting

By Richard A. Kiley

As both public and private schools struggle to maintain consistent enrollment despite a widespread decline in the student population, the eight Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Rochester are turning to new means of recruiting potential students.

According to Sister Katherine Wahl, OSM, coordinator of the newly formed joint-recruitment team for the area high schools, the approach has been two-pronged.

"We're working with Channel 31, MTP Productions and the Flynn Agency to develop our television and radio presentations," said Sister Katherine, first assistant to the principal at Cardinal Mooney High School. She noted that the use of television is designed to overcome negative impressions the public may have on the use of discipline in the Catholic schools — including endless jokes about students getting their knuckles rapped.

The advertising campaign, however, will not entirely replace such traditional approaches to reaching students as open houses and mass mailings.

Enrollment at Aquinas Institute is "just about the same as last year," according to Dennis Sadler, who has been assistant principal for academics for the past four years.

"Right now our registration is 787, and we're anticipating being around 810 or 812 when school starts," said Sadler, who added that the student body could fluctuate by 10 or 12 students either way. "Our freshman class is smaller than last year, but last year's class was 262 and that has been better than others," he said.

Sadler said school officials are expecting another year or two of smaller classes, but that "if we can pick up some students here and

there and hit 200 (per class), we'll sit pretty well."

Citing lean classes in the elementary schools' sixth, seventh and eighth grades, Sadler said the ad campaign will prove most important the next few years.

"We have to encourage kids who've been in the Catholic elementary schools to continue with that, and make kids in the public schools more aware of us," Sadler said.

According to Brother Edward Boyer, CSC, principal of Cardinal Mooney High School, this year's senior class (which is approximately 345 students) is the "last of the big classes for awhile."

Brother Edward said Mooney's administration is still waiting to see what effect the phasing out of Greece Arcadia High School will have on the enrollment at Mooney.

"There is some concern as to what is happening there. I can't say there has been a significant shift from Arcadia to Mooney because the students still have Greece Athena and Olympia to choose from," said Brother Edward, who will begin his second year as Mooney's principal this fall.

Brother Edward hopes that cooperation among the high schools will eventually rub off on the elementary schools — which are mostly run by different religious congregations.

"Eventually there will have to be more dialogue, especially if the declining enrollment continues," he said, likening the current situation to the crunch colleges experienced some years ago. "I think we find ourselves where the colleges were 15 or 20 years ago, and we need to build endowment funds to help us take care of present and future needs of the school," Brother Edward explained.

McQuaid Jesuit High School, is also bracing

for a five-year enrollment drought, according to Roger Bunce, assistant principal.

"Our enrollment stands at about 800 right now, and we were about 830 last year," Bunce said. Although he expects the class of 1990 to have about 25 fewer students than the class of 1989, Bunce said the school will not make any drastic changes in its recruitment procedures.

"Our projections show there will be a decline in enrollment, but we will continue to keep the same teaching standards we've always had, and do the best job we can with the students we have," he said.

Sister Magdalena Kellner, who recently returned to teaching after three years as director of student affairs at Nazareth Academy, said Nazareth's enrollment is steady in grades 10, 11 and 12, but down in the freshman class.

"Our freshman class has about 116 students right now. Last year we had 146 freshmen Sister Magdalena said. "We still get late registrants, however." She said the school should be able to "weather the storm until 1990."

Toward that end, Our Lady of Mercy High School recently hired a recruitment director to boost enrollment among freshmen, according to assistant principal Kathleen Wisner.

Wisner said the school has also begun to introduce itself to girls at an earlier age. "Students are making up their minds on where to attend school at much earlier ages than when I went to school," she said. "Students are also much more involved now in the decision of where to go to school. It's not just the parents making the decision."

While Rochester-area schools step up their advertising and recruitment efforts, the diocesan high schools outside Monroe County are not nearly as concerned about declining enrollment.

John D. Fahy, director of student activities at DeSales High School, notes a gradual increase in the number of students entering the Geneva school.

Although a financial crunch nearly forced DeSales to close its doors eight years ago, that crisis was averted by overwhelming support from the community as well as the persistent and successful fund-raising efforts of students, Fahy said.

He credited current principal Edward J. Tracey for putting the school back on its feet. "He's an old pro," said Fahy, who has been with DeSales for seven years. "We have a situation here where the teachers run the classrooms, he (Tracey) runs the school and the Board of Education backs his decisions," said Fahy. He noted that parish support has also enabled DeSales to compete for students with the public high schools.

At Elmira's Notre Dame High School no change has occurred between last year's enrollment figures and this year's total. Sister Mary Walter Hickey, Notre Dame's principal, does foresee some decline in the student population until the year 1990, but hopes that Elmira's now-brightening economic outlook will help offset the drop.

Acting on a suggestion made by a consulting group, the school has hired a former graduate to serve as recruitment director.

In addition to parent information nights and open houses, Sister Mary Walter said the school will be working more directly with religious education classes and the local media.

"We could lose up to 50 more kids until the 'golden year' (1990)," Sister Mary Walter said. "Until then, we just have to be more aggressive in attracting kids to the school."

President of Catholic parents' federation discusses group's efforts, invites newcomers to join

By Jean S. Gilbert

President, Rochester Chapter

State Federation of Catholic School Parents Introductions are in order as we begin another school year. We welcome back those of you who are "veterans" and especially welcome those of you who have children in our Catholic schools for the first time. By

reason of their enrollment, you are members of the Federation of Catholic School Parents.

We are the Diocese of Rochester's Chapter of the New York State Federation of Catholic School Parents, one of the very few statewide parent organizations in our country. Our purpose is to help parents

Superintendent sees advantages, challenges

By Brother Brian M. Walsh, CFC
Superintendent of Schools

It is with a sense of pride that I write for the first time a superintendent's commentary on the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Rochester. The pride I feel stems from the encouragement and support I have received from pastors, parents and school personnel; the quality of the schools; the excitement of the changes taking place; and the opportunity I have to serve the Church of Rochester, from which I have received so much.

It is said that all beginnings are difficult. My beginning has been made easier by the following:

- the consistent support for Catholic schools from the people of the Diocese of Rochester;
- the quality of the administrators we have in the schools and in the General Education Office;
- the ongoing curriculum development through which each of our schools meets the challenges involved in providing quality Catholic education;
- the extensive planning for the future that

each of our schools is undertaking;

- the continuing collaboration and cooperation that has produced new configurations in some of our schools.

My beginning also shows that the challenges of the future are:

- increased planning and collaboration to strengthen the Catholic schools and to provide for better use of our resources;
 - the need to find new ways to finance the schools in order to address the real need to improve faculty salaries and benefits, as well as programs in the schools;
 - working with our administrators, faculties and parents in providing answers to this question, "What learning styles, faith experiences and service to others will help our students be the Catholic Church in the new millennium?"
- As we start the journey of the 1986-87 school year, may the signs of the Holy Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control — be in the relationships we form, in the work that we do, and be part of the heritage of Catholic schools we give to our youths.

participate fully as equal partners in the decisions that affect the education of their children, in the schools themselves and in diocesan, state and national issues. We actively encourage policy-determining boards in each school, and the educational/fund-raising activities of Home School Associations as essential vehicles for parental involvement. Each year, we conduct workshops on effective leadership for members of boards and parent leaders of Home School Associations throughout the diocese. Please call us if you would like to schedule a workshop.

The 1986-87 school year is off and running. We have expanded our executive committee, and new members will represent all areas of the diocese. Preparations for the seventh-annual Marathon for Catholic Schools is well underway. Save the date —

Saturday, Oct. 4 — and join us at one of our major sites: Highland Bowl in Rochester or in Geneva, Newark, Waterloo, Canandaigua or Auburn. Mini-marathon for kindergarten through grade four will be held at your local schools. The gross revenue raised by 48 schools in the 1985 marathon was \$145,000. If you would like to have more information on how your school can participate in the Marathon, call us.

The Rochester chapter will be the host of the 1987 Parents' Convention set for May 1-3 at the Rochester Plaza Hotel. Many exciting topics and speakers are on the agenda. Information will follow as our plans unfold. The convention is a must for all parents of children in Catholic schools.

If you would like information about the marathon, the convention or the federation, please call (716)225-2714.

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Open House	For sixth, seventh and eighth graders Thursday, October 23rd, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Entrance Exam	January 10, 1987 • 8:30 a.m.