

## Elmira

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many people have now forgotten about the original purpose of Catholic education.

"Catholic schools were founded to help poor, inner-city Catholic children receive an education equal to that of kids in other areas," the priest said. "Some people seem to have lost sight of that."

The presence of Catholic schools is still strong in and around downtown Elmira following a second consolidation in 1986, which created a three-building configuration under the name Holy Family Catholic School System.

The present system consists of Holy Family Primary School at St. Mary's (primary through third grade); Holy Family Intermediate School at Our Lady of Lourdes (grades four-six); and Holy Family Junior High (grades seven and eight), which was moved from St. Patrick's to St. Casimir's.

According to Sister Patricia Carroll, SSJ, principal at Holy Family Junior High, the three remaining Catholic schools did experience a "slight drop in enrollment" after the second phase of consolidation, but "it was less than we thought it would be."

"Many parents chose to stick with the system," she said. "There was a lot of controversy over the changing of the name (to the Holy Family Catholic School System)," Sister Carroll said, adding that some people were also upset when the junior high was moved from St. Patrick's to St. Casimir's.

All Saints Academy in Corning was also founded in 1986, although not as part of the reconsolidation plan. It was formed when Corning Catholic School North and Corning Catholic School South consolidated.

Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM, prin-

cipal of Elmira's Notre Dame High School said Notre Dame was not "officially involved in the reorganization plan," either, but that school officials watched the consolidation plan closely. Sister Carroll estimated that about 60 percent of graduates from Holy Family Junior High continue their education at Notre Dame.

Although economic conditions in the region appear to be improving, Elmira's Catholic schools have experienced a gradual erosion in enrollment during the last several years. Tuition costs and a decline in the number of school-aged children is blamed for the drop-off.

According to Sister Hickey, Notre Dame's enrollment dipped to 315 last year, and the number of students registered for the coming school year is about 310.

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schools in the southwest, we're facing situations where buildings are almost too full," he remarked.

Enrollment is growing in the northwest as well, remarked Patricia Glogowski, chairwoman of the quadrant's planning board. That region's board also opposed the original reconfiguration plan, but currently has adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the final community schools plan, she said.

Glogowski hoped that Pickett's remarks about greater flexibility in quadrant governance are embodied in the revised plan. "We're looking to keep the governance at the school level with the quadrant board as the overseeing body," she said.

Mum's the word from the Southeast Quadrant Planning Board, according to Edward A. Maruggi, a representative from Corpus Christi School in Rochester. The planning board is declining comment on its activity until the revised community

Intensive recruiting efforts appear to be paying off, however, at Elmira ND. Last year's freshman class had just 65 students, but there are already 86 incoming freshmen registered for this September. "Our ultimate goal is to register 90 freshmen," Sister Hickey said.

Sister Carroll said enrollment in the Holy Family School System was around 515, down from 530 in May, 1989. Holy Family's enrollment in its pre-kindergarten program has been on the rise, according to the principal, who noted that parents now must place their children on a waiting list for the program.

Despite the decline in enrollment in Elmira-area Catholic schools, Sisters Carroll and Hickey see better days ahead.

"Things were really tough around here

in 1969, but look we're still here 20 years later," said Sister Hickey, who credited Notre Dame's survival to the formation of a board of governors for the school, successful fundraising activities and the hiring of a new recruitment director. "We're here to stay," she asserted.

A successful consolidation plan has strengthened the Holy Family Catholic School System, said Sister Carroll, who added that people need to think of long-term advantages when reorganization is necessary.

"If we're planning for today, the pain of consolidation is going to be acute," Sister Carroll said. "But looking five or 10 years down the road ... it's necessary (in order) to stay academically competitive."

schools plan is released. Currently, the planning board is preparing for a meeting with pastors of parishes with schools on Aug. 29, he said.

## Finger Lakes

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In order for this dialogue to take place, however, representatives from all the parishes must meet. One of the problems faced by the four groups in the cluster and the cluster itself is that some parishes have not been regularly represented at the meetings. The June session of the cluster committee, for example, was attended by representatives from only eight of the more than 30 parishes in the region.

Duprey pointed out that in the Seneca-Yates group to which he belongs, "We have had little participation from any parishes other than those with schools." This lack of input, he said, makes it difficult to develop an accurate overview of Catholic

education in the region.

Mona Mattuzzi of St. Mary of the Lake, Ontario, is among those charged with improving parish representation. "I think that one of the things I hope to do before September is to contact each parish and find out why they have not been represented," said Mattuzzi, who will be working with Debbie Smith of St. Gregory's, Marion, to help coordinate cluster meetings.

Despite the problems encountered to this point, Duprey said he approves of the direction the diocese is taking in addressing the future of Catholic education. He applauded the idea of a cluster governance board to help create consistency across the region and to allow "decision making at a level close to those affected," he said.

Duprey added that he was pleased to see that the cluster committee appeared ready to begin the task of actually developing a plan.

"Sometimes I think we get too concerned with all that flowery policy," he said. "Let's find out what our problems are and fix them."

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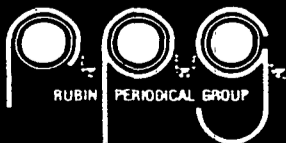
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