

Parents form federation chapter

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When Cardinal Mooney High School closed last June, Jim Landers thought it was time he did something to save Catholic education in the diocese.

"At that point, I decided I needed to do something to get ahead of the game and to prevent something like what happened at Mooney from happening here," said Landers, whose two children attend St. Thomas the Apostle School.

Landers is one of seven members of the newly restored diocesan chapter of the New York State Federation of Catholic School Parents. After 13 years of existence, the old federation disbanded amid controversy in June, 1987.

At the time, federation leaders complained of a lack of enthusiasm for the organization among school principals and of a lack of participation by school parents. The former leaders also criticized the diocesan education office for not fully supporting the activities of the federation.

Brother Brian Walsh, superintendent of schools, hopes to demonstrate serious diocesan interest in the new federation by establishing Sister Joseph Gilmary Russell, assistant superintendent of personnel, as a liaison between the schools' office and the federation. No such liaison existed before, he noted.

Brother Walsh also said the new chapter would be a "wonderful vehicle" to keep school parents informed of current education legislation relevant to the Catholic school system. The federation will also encourage Catholic school parents to write their state and federal representatives on legislative issues, Sister Russell said.

Wishing to preserve the services provided by the old federation, the diocese queried area Catholic school parents about their interest in forming a new chapter. Seven interested parents initially met last November with Brother Walsh, and James McAuliffe, former assistant superintendent for public affairs.

At the November meeting, Brother Walsh suggested that the seven parents form the executive committee of the new chapter, said Linda Zaleski, chapter president. Since then, the committee has drawn up a three-page constitution, which calls for federation members to establish a communications network among Catholic school parents; promote home-school associations; address issues as a representative of Catholic school parents; and work with diocesan officials.

The new chapter will concentrate on lobbying on behalf of diocesan schools, Zaleski said. She said, for example, that federation members will urge the state legislature to grant tuition tax breaks to Catholic school parents.

The state federation is considering whether to campaign for a state-wide voucher system that would give parents a choice of educational options for their children. According to Marie Dolan, president of the state parents' federation, the voucher system would give parents as much as \$2,000 to send their children to any local school, whether public or private.

Such a system would especially benefit Catholic school parents who might otherwise be forced by a lack of funds to send their children to public schools, Dolan commented.

The new chapter has a start-up budget of \$2,000 — funds left over from the former federation. Unlike the previous organization, which divided its efforts between lobbying and raising money for diocesan Catholic schools, the new federation chapter will stick solely to legislative work — at least for the next few years, Zaleski said.

She also noted that the old federation's major fundraiser, the annual Catholic Schools Marathon, would not be resurrected. In seven years, the marathons raised almost \$640,000 for participating schools. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds funded the federation's activities, but since a minority of the Catholic schools participated in the marathon, federation members regarded the set-up as unfair,

Brother Walsh commented.

"This was difficult for people — how so few had to fund so many," he said. "Every family benefited (from the federation)."

To help finance the new chapter, each Catholic school's home/school association will be asked to pay dues according to a per-student basis. Zaleski estimated annual dues at \$1.50 per child, but added that the final figure might be lower, depending on how much the diocese eventually contributes to the federation. The diocese has not determined its financial contribution, Brother Walsh said.

The Rochester chapter must pay a membership fee of \$5,700 to the state federation, Zaleski said, explaining that the state funds help support a full-time lobbyist's salary. Dues collected locally will also be used to pay the chapter's expenses.



Brother Walsh acknowledged that collecting dues from the home/school associations may be difficult this year because schools budgets are already set. This could cause some initial tension between principals and the new chapter, he said.

According to the organization's constitution, all Catholic school parents are already members of the new chapter. The document also directs each principal to name two parents to serve as liaisons to the chapter.

The organization's first meeting is tentatively planned for later this month at Bishop Kearney High School, Zaleski said. Chapter members have invited Dolan, the state president, to speak at the meeting.

Diocese to aid areas ravaged by hurricane

Archbishop May, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has requested that every diocese try to offer relief to the communities hardest hit by Hurricane Hugo two weeks ago.

Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Charleston, S.C. received the brunt of the hurricane's wrath.

Any community or individuals who wish to contribute funds are asked to direct them to: Disaster Relief Fund, Office of the Propagation of the Faith, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y., 14624.

Father Robert Bradler will collect and forward all funds donated by the diocese. Call 716/328-3210 for information.

Charismatic Mass planned for Penfield church Oct. 13

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center is sponsoring a diocesan-wide Charismatic Mass at St. Joseph's Church, 43 Gebhardt Rd., Penfield, on Friday, Oct. 13.

Praise and worship will begin at 7:30 p.m., and the Mass will follow at 8 p.m. Principal celebrant for the Mass will be

Father William A. Moorby, parochial vicar of St. Joseph's Church in Weedsport. Father Moorby has served as spiritual director of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Center for the past two years.

Healing prayers will take place at the conclusion of Mass. Call 716/924-1655 for information.

Priests in Southern Tier to host pilgrimage abroad

Two priests in the Southern Tier will host a 12-day pilgrimage to Austria, Germany and Switzerland, beginning July 23, 1990.

Father Elmer J. Schmidt, pastor of St. Ann's in Hornell, and Father Robert J. Kanka, pastor of St. James the Apostle in Trumansburg, will lead the tour.

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