

Parents' group plans protest of school plan

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Employees of the diocesan Pastoral Center may be treated to a noontime protest demonstration Tuesday, June 19, if members of a parents' group opposed to school reorganization have their way.

ACE, the Alliance for Catholic Education, plans to use a telephone drive to recruit Catholics throughout Monroe County for a march on the center, 1150 Buffalo Road in Gates. The strategy was discussed by 17 ACE supporters gathered for a meeting Wednesday evening, May 23, at the Marketplace Inn, Henrietta.

ACE chairman John F. Wagner Jr. said organizers want at least 200 people to commit themselves to the protest, which will respond to the governance and finance plans approved earlier this year by Bishop Matthew H. Clark for Monroe County's Catholic schools.

Wagner noted that ACE will abandon its protest plans if fewer than 200 people are able to participate in the protest because, he said, such a number is needed to show how many people in the diocese oppose the current school-reorganization process.

The reorganization plans, in part, call for each of the county's quadrants — northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest — to establish a governance board by July 1. These boards will assume administration

of the schools from the parishes at which they are located.

The plans also call for 60 percent of the cost of quadrant schools to be borne by tuition and school-based revenues, with the remaining 40 percent coming from parish support.

ACE has opposed the plans since their release and in March offered a counterproposal calling for a one-year moratorium on implementation of the plans.

Members of ACE have complained that the governance plan gives parents no formal role on the quadrant governing boards, and have charged that the diocese could use alternative means of financing the schools. One alternative, their counterproposal argued, would be a springtime Catholic Schools Appeal modeled after the fall Thanksgiving Appeal.

At the planned June 19 protest, ACE organizers will also survey participants to see if they will agree to decrease their weekly contributions to their individual parishes at a rate proportionate to the tuition increase school parents will have to pay this fall. Such a move would send a signal to pastors that their parishes will suffer if they aren't willing to speak out against the governance and financial plans, organizers said.

Diocesan officials have previously stated that the governance and finance plans will be implemented as planned on July 1.

Lack of enrollment boost may pose deficit at Seton

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Seton Junior High School is facing a lower than anticipated enrollment in the fall because some students whom school officials had expected to come to the Brighton school will instead attend the new Northeastern Catholic Junior High.

As a result of this lower enrollment, the school — located in the same building as Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary School — faces the possibility of a deficit, acknowledged Seton principal Christopher Meagher.

But, Meagher cautioned, the deficit is not definite, and the school may still be in the black for fiscal year 1990/91.

"It's still too early to tell," Meagher said. "The budget (for a school year) is usually not finalized until July."

Seton will finish the current school year in the black, Meagher added.

The school had originally projected an increase of 20-30 students because of the closing of Blessed Sacrament Junior High at the end of the current school year.

However, diocesan officials allowed Blessed Sacrament students to choose either Seton or Northeastern — located in a wing of Bishop Kearney High School in Irondequoit — for the coming year. Fewer students than expected chose Seton, which

meant that enrollment there will not increase as much as officials had hoped, according to Meagher.

As part of the decision, sixth-grade students from St. Boniface and St. John the Evangelist on Humbolt St. — which formerly served as feeders to Blessed Sacrament — will also be allowed to choose between the two junior highs for the coming year.

Enrollment at Seton this year is 86, and 82 students have already registered for the 1990/91 school year. Meagher predicted that next year's enrollment will be at least as large as this year's.

A plan for reorganizing Catholic schools in Monroe County called for Seton, along with a proposed junior high program at St. John of Rochester, Fairport, to serve as the junior high schools for the Southeast Quadrant. Students from St. Boniface and St. John the Evangelist — both located in the Southeast Quadrant — were slated to go to Seton.

But the proposed junior high program at St. John's, Fairport, faced opposition, and

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John F. Wagner Jr., chairman of the Alliance for Catholic Education, and his wife, Helen Ann, listen to comments during a meeting of ACE supporters on Wednesday, May 23.

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