

Corning knows All Saints

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

CORNING — Today one would be hard-pressed to find a resident of the Corning area who has never heard of All Saints Academy.

But that wasn't the case just five years ago, when the school was formed through the consolidation of the city's two Catholic schools.

Efforts to promote the school and make it known in the community have succeeded not only in keeping the school alive, but also in boosting both enrollment and optimism about the school's future.

"Every year I've been here, I've always heard the comment that the school's going to close," said Vincent Moschetti, principal of All Saints since January, 1987. "This year is

the first year that I haven't heard that."

Further, Moschetti estimated that enrollment for the 1991-92 school year will be between 220 and 225 — up from 205 last year, and the highest figure since the 1987-88 school year.

The school's turnaround is a tribute to parents, the school board, the Home School Association and the staff of the consolidated Corning-Painted Post Catholic Community, Moschetti said.

Yet the situation was far from bright when Moschetti first arrived.

All Saints had been formed the previous year following the consolidation of Corning's two Catholic schools, Corning Catholic North and Corning Catholic South.

Enrollment in the first year after the merger was approxi-

mately 270. But people in the community had doubts that the school would survive, Moschetti said, and enrollment slid to 200 in the 1989-90 school year.

In addition to slipping enrollment, the school also suffered from a financial crisis. All Saints relied for funding on four separate parishes in the Corning-Painted Post area, and some of those parishes were battling their own financial woes, noted Lou Nessle, former president of the All Saints Academy School Board.

"My first year, frankly, we were preoccupied with keeping the school going," said Nessle, who joined the board in the fall of 1988. "We were not able to do the things we wanted to do — the public relations, the recruiting."

Nevertheless, by the time Sharon Miller joined the board three years ago, it was beginning to set goals beyond mere survival.

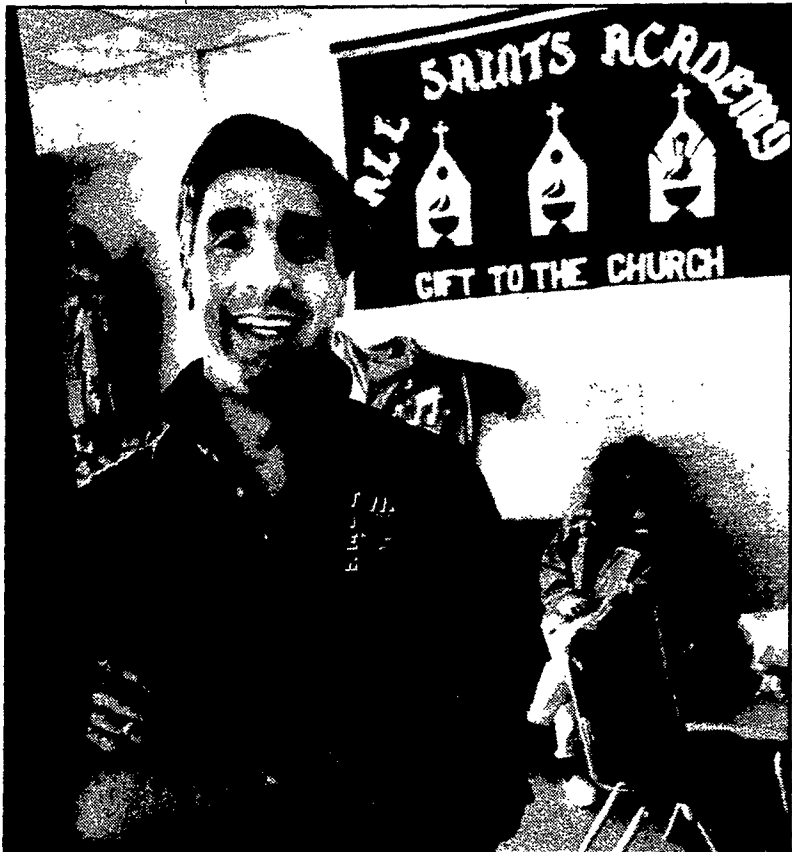
"We decided our two main thrusts would be better public relations, to let the community know what we have, and then to get the enrollment up," said Miller, who now heads the board's public relations committee.

Early efforts included producing a brochure for distribution to local real-estate agents and to major area businesses that might have new employees moving into the area.

The public relations committee also began sending regular notices about school activities and student achievements to local newspapers.

To help parishes with their financial problems, the school changed its funding formula, Nessle said. Instead of charging parishes per-pupil subsidies — figures parishes found difficult to calculate for budgetary purposes before enrollment was fixed — the school board moved to fixed fees for each parish. This change made it easier for parishes to plan their school expenses, he noted.

The school also began to let other groups use its facilities in



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Vincent Moschetti, principal of All Saints Academy in Corning, says much of the credit for the school's enrollment turnaround belongs to parents, the school board and the staff of the consolidated Corning-Painted Post Catholic Community.



Violinist Jullanna Methven, a student at All Saints Academy, took part in the Corning Philharmonic's summer-school program at the school. Allowing civic groups to use the school facilities is one way All Saints is striving to gain recognition in the community.

order to gain community awareness, Moschetti observed. Each summer, for example, the Corning Philharmonic uses the school building for its summer school program.

The school also instituted extended after-school day care and a full-day kindergarten — a program Corning's public schools do not have. Many of the students who begin in the kindergarten continue in the school, Moschetti said.

In order to further promote All Saints Academy in the community, the school has involved itself in more civic activities. For the past three years, for example, the school has produced a float for the Memorial Day Parade in Corning and for Painted Post's June Colonial Day Parade.

Meanwhile, the board formed a fund-development committee, which began exploring income sources. Through the committee, the school has received a number of grants to buy such equipment as computers. The school also tapped into a matching contribution program with Corning Glass.

In 1989, the committee started the Annual All Saints Gala Event, a dinner with featured speakers. The first gala featured two of the authors of the humor book *Growing Up Catholic*.

This year, the school also began an adopt-a-student program in which contributors donate money to support students' tuition. The program has already brought in approximately \$1,000.

Fundraising by the board as well as approximately \$10,000 raised annually through activities of the Home School Association have helped the school become more financially secure, Moschetti said.

Last year, the school was also aided by the Diocese of Rochester's move to cluster the parishes in Corning and Painted Post into the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, Moschetti said. The ministry team, headed by Father William Spilly, is solidly behind the school, he said.

"Father Spilly makes people feel even though this is a consolidated school, it's our parish school, Miller acknowledged.

The result during the past year has been increased community support of the school, Nessle said. Such support is vital, he added.

"If the community as a whole did not feel strongly about supporting the school, no matter what we did, we would come up short," Nessle explained.

Essentially, Nessle said, recent years' efforts to promote and market the school have changed people's view of All Saints Academy. Community members now believe that the school will continue, and will provide their children with a good education, he noted.

And increasingly, he added, they want to be a part of it.

"Somebody is going to hesitate to send their child to a school if they don't think it's going to be there five years from now," Nessle said. "When things are upbeat, more of the people want to be involved."



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