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Community support helped turn the tide

By Rob Cullivan, Staff Writer

Often lost amid news of declining enrollment and dwindling finances at Catholic schools are stories marked by different endings — ones in which the schools survive, and even thrive.

Each of these stories has certain unique features, but common to all are a number of similar life-support systems: a high degree of community support, a reliable pool of volunteer workers, shrewd marketing coupled with aggressive student-recruitment efforts, and innovative fundraising.

Such factors appear critical to Catholic school success stories because no diocesan school will long survive unless it is built on a foundation of supportive families, teachers, clergy, religious and alumni.

As the Diocese of Rochester ventures forth in the 1990s, such institutions as Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca are exploring a variety of methods to stay open.

In October, 1991, Immaculate's school board voted to close grades six, seven and eight this June, but the panel later voted to delay implementing its decision for one year. If the school can successfully increase enrollment from 145 to 177 students for the 1992-93 school year, it will remain in operation beyond June, 1993, the school board resolved.

Even so, a planning group for the Southern Tier Cluster Schools still must examine developments at Immaculate, according to Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, director of diocesan Faith Development Ministry and acting superintendent of schools. Hence, she

Continued on page 2



SURVIVOR SCHOOLS