

Southeast quadrant board member steps down

Claims diocese 'coerced' board to accept plan

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Joseph A. F. Valenti, a member of the Southeast Quadrant Governance Board, resigned last week claiming that the diocese had "coerced" board members into proposing a single-site centralized junior high in the quadrant next September.

Valenti, who announced his decision on Thursday, Sept. 10, sent several statements regarding his resignation to the *Catholic Courier* by facsimile transmission on Monday, Sept. 14.

His announcement came the same day board and diocesan officials explained the single-site junior high proposal to approximately 400 school parents at St. John of Rochester School, 18 Wickford Way, Fairport.

The current proposal would establish a quadrant junior high in September, 1993, at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 165 Rhinecliff Drive.

In various statements and in a subsequent telephone interview, Valenti maintained that Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the diocesan Christian Formation and Education Council essentially ignored the southeast board's desire to create a two-site junior high for the quadrant.

"When the two site plan was informally presented to Diocesan Officials, we were ordered to amend the plan so as to recommend a single site," Valenti said in one of his statements.

"It was only after the coercion of the bishop that the board reversed its decision," he added in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

To back up his claims, Valenti cited a Feb. 17 letter from the bishop to Frank Geraci, chairman of the Southeast Quadrant Governance Board. Valenti provided the *Courier* with a

copy of the letter, which noted that the board's planning committee had recommended a two-site junior high at St. Joseph's, Penfield, and Good Shepherd in Henrietta.

The bishop stated, however, that the Christian Formation and Education Council had recommended adopting one junior high, and that the board should follow suit.

Michael Perrotta, chairman of the southeast board's planning committee, dismissed Valenti's contentions that the board was forced to adopt the plan for a centralized junior high.

Perrotta emphasized that board members are volunteers, not paid employees of the diocese, and hence would have little reason to fear speaking out against any diocesan directive.

"There's really nothing to lose, so I don't see how we were coerced," Perrotta said.

Peter J. Spinelli, chairman of the Christian Formation and Education Council, concurred with Perrotta's contentions. Spinelli said he believed Valenti was simply unhappy with the single-site plan, and criticized Valenti for pointing the finger of blame at the diocese.

"Throughout this whole schools process, that's always the last resort, to say that this is what Buffalo Road wanted," Spinelli said, referring to the diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates. "The board knew it was their decision, and believe me, you're not going to take a 27-member board in any quadrant and tell them what to do. In fact, that's how you would get them to go the other way."

Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools, also echoed Perrotta's contention that the board was not pressured to propose a single site for a junior high. Dwyer said the board decided for a centralized junior high only when board members believed the plan offered the best educational setting for the quadrant's children.

Nonetheless, Valenti's sentiments about the one-site plan were shared by the majority of parents who attended

the Sept. 10 meeting at St. John's.

In addition to other factors, many opposed the single-site plan because it would necessitate long bus rides for children living in the quadrant's outskirts. Others wondered whether their opposition to a single-site quadrant junior high was even worth voicing.

Yet, according to Dwyer, the diocese and the governing board are going to take parental input seriously in any final decision regarding a junior high.

"From my perspective, this is not a done deal," Dwyer said about the proposal presented at the meeting.

On Tuesday, Sept. 15, Dwyer told

the *Courier* that the southeast board was still doing its "homework" on the proposal, and that parents would be surveyed regarding the plan.

EDITORS' NOTE — The Sept. 10 edition of the *Catholic Courier* inaccurately reported that the Southeast Quadrant Board had proposed closing one of Henrietta's two Catholic schools.

That error was derived from an informational handout staff writer Rob Cullivan received from a representative of a quadrant school. The *Courier* did not learn that the information was outdated until after it had gone to press on Sept. 8.

Peaceful protest



S. John Wilkin/Photo Intern
Kathleen Dubel (left), director of justice and peace for the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, distributes petitions and gathers signatures in downtown Corning Sept. 9 as part of an effort to increase awareness of the Haitian's plight.

Corning activists join effort offering support for Haitians

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

CORNING — The Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry, in conjunction with peace and activist groups in the Corning and Elmira area, has joined a nationwide effort to promote awareness of the plight facing Haitians.

The inaugural event locally was held Wednesday, Sept. 9, at Corning's Centerway Square on Market Street. Three activists distributed leaflets and circulated petitions in front of a cardboard boat intended to represent the makeshift boats Haitians are using to flee their country.

Participants then marched to the Denison Parkway office of Congressman Amory Houghton (R-31st Congressional District) to make their concerns known about U.S. policy concerning repatriation of many Haitians.

Co-sponsored by STOSM, Amnesty International and Peace Works, a coalition of Elmira-area peace groups, the Corning action coincided with a protest at the White House.

The Washington, D.C. protest, which was organized by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and TransAfrica, an anti-apartheid group, resulted in 95 arrests, including that of former tennis star Arthur Ashe.

Organizers described the Corning effort as an attempt to educate people about the boat people's suffering, especially those that are being repatriated back to Haiti by the United States, according to Kathleen Dubel,

STOSM's director of justice and peace.

Dubel said the effort, which will be followed by other events in the coming weeks, was also intended to alert people to the political situation in Haiti. A military coup ousted Haiti's democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Sept. 30, 1991.

"We've discovered that a lot of people don't know a lot of what's going on in Haiti," Dubel said.

She noted that since the U.S. government's decision last spring to repatriate most of the boat people who fled Haiti, the situation has disappeared from the headlines.

"I think people don't realize that people who have been repatriated have been subject to harassment," Dubel said. "They are being detained."

Matthew Carney, a member of Amnesty International and one of the participants in the Corning effort, noted that reports issued by Amnesty International and Pax Christi, the Catholic peace group, had shown that "most people have gone into hiding since being repatriated out of fear of reprisals."

Prior to the Sept. 9 action, concerned individuals had circulated the petition at Corning-area Catholic parishes, reported Carney, a member of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community. Approximately 150 people had signed the petition, he said, and more parishes will be contacted in the future.

In discussions at churches and dur-
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Director tabbed for urban project

ROCHESTER — Kathleen Cannon, director of diocesan Urban Services, was recently named a member of Leadership Rochester's class of 1992/93.

Over the coming year Cannon will take part in all-day workshops focusing on seven urban issues, including economic development, education, criminal justice, health care and human services. The workshops will involve input from community residents already dealing with these issues.

At the end of the year, Cannon and her fellow class members — representing a broad range of community, church, business and service groups — will select or create community projects with which to get involved.

Sponsored by a number of Rochester-area organizations — including the City of Rochester, the County of Monroe, the Urban League of Rochester and the Rochester Labor Council — the program is intended "to identify potential and emerging leaders and expose them to critical issues in the Rochester area," according to a press release from Leadership Rochester.

Cannon noted that she applied for the program after consulting individuals who had taken part in the first-ever Leadership Rochester class in 1991/92.

"Everybody responded that they felt

a rekindled enthusiasm to try to get involved in a project that's going to improve the quality of life for Rochester residents," Cannon told the *Catholic Courier*.

According to the diocesan director, her goals for the year include learning more about various issues facing today's urban communities; gaining an understanding of the politics involved in addressing those issues; developing skills to help her in her own work; and establishing a network of contacts with other community residents.

The class gathered for a Sept. 16-17 retreat at the State University of New York College at Brockport to begin the year. All-day sessions are slated to begin in October.

Rochester station changes time for Mass broadcast

ROCHESTER — The diocesan Office of Liturgy has been informed that WHEC-TV10 plans to change the time it broadcasts Sunday-morning Mass.

Effective Sunday, Sept. 13, the Mass moved from its former time slot of 8 a.m. to a new time of 7:30 a.m. According to the liturgy office, Channel 10 made the shift to accommodate scheduling changes in NBC network programming.