



Kellie Mc Cann/Photo-intern

Boycott in black

Dressed in black, members of the Rochester Infant Formula Action Coalition gathered in front of the Stouffer Rochester Plaza Sept. 25 in support of the International Nestlé and American Home Products boycott. The hotel, a wholly owned subsidiary of Nestlé, hosted Lakeside Memorial Hospital's annual meeting at which former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, an outspoken proponent of breastfeeding, was the keynote speaker. Pictured (from left) are Sweet Grass, Carol Crossed, Georgia Nesmith, Allison Clarke and Isabel Morrison.

Ithaca school's enrollment rises by 28 percent

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ITHACA — The often-used expression "get the word out" would also fit nicely as a rallying cry at Immaculate Conception School.

The latest enrollment figures reveal a 28-percent increase at Immaculate Conception, 320 W. Buffalo St. The school, which houses students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, has an enrollment of 188 students this year — significantly up from last year's total of 146.

"The parents went out and beat the bushes," said Diana Baker, principal of Immaculate Conception. "We had groups working on recruitment as well as retention."

Immaculate Conception has increased to 11 its offering of after-school activities. Nearly all of these groups are staffed by parents. In November of 1991 the school also began circulating a newsletter called *The Blue Knight*, which is edited by public relations coordinator Richard Marisa. He and all of Immaculate Conception's activity coordinators serve on a volunteer basis.

Baker acknowledged that this type

of support base has not always been as strong at the Tompkins County school.

"I think the school used to be taken for granted," said Baker, who taught at Immaculate Conception for 11 years prior to becoming principal two years ago.

Dwindling enrollment last year endangered the future of the Ithaca school's seventh and eighth grades. Baker believes that this development spurred parents into action, and the junior high grades remained open thanks to a series of fundraising efforts.

"There's been a more active group since the mention of the closing," she said.

The increased enrollment at Immaculate Conception is reflective of a positive trend in the newly formed Southern Tier Cluster. According to a press release from the Diocese of Rochester, cluster enrollment has risen 10.65 percent compared to last year — from

1,174 to 1,299 students.

This year also marks the first time in nearly two decades that diocesan enrollment has increased in pre-K through 8. This signals a possible end to a trend that has seen a decrease of approximately 50 percent since 1973-74. During this time period, 31 of 87 Catholic schools have closed.

To combat declining enrollments, the diocese adopted the System Framework Plan in July of 1992. This procedure puts all diocesan schools in groups: by quadrants in Monroe County and by clusters elsewhere in the diocese. Hence, schools are now part of a diocesan, rather than a parish-based, system.

Immaculate Conception is part of the seven-school Southern Tier Cluster, and the school board includes representatives from each parish in Tompkins County.

Overall, diocesan enrollment figures have risen from 14,493 in 1991-92 to

14,568 in 1992-93. Other regions showing slight increases were the Northwest Quadrant (5.61 percent), Southeast Quadrant (1.28 percent), Genesee Valley Cluster (1.10 percent), and Finger Lakes Cluster (0.79 percent.)

Those areas showing a decline were the Northeast Quadrant (11.72 percent) and the Southwest Quadrant (2.92 percent).

Timothy Dwyer, diocesan superintendent for schools, concurred with Baker's assessment that promotion is the key element in keeping enrollment on the upswing.

"We've never been real good in the past at that," he admitted. "But the NCEA (National Catholic Education Association) has put out kits to show how to do a better job of marketing, and I'd like to see them used in the schools. We're looking into the possibility of using billboards and radio commercials (at the diocesan level)."

Bishop Clark offers support for workers

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

SENECA COUNTY — In a show of support and concern for people who will be affected by proposed staff layoffs at the Seneca Army Depot in Romulus and the Willard Psychiatric Center, Bishop Matthew H. Clark celebrated Masses at three Seneca County parishes Sept. 26-27.

In addition to the 5 p.m. Mass at Holy Cross Church in Ovid on Sept. 26, the bishop celebrated the 9 a.m. Mass at St. Patrick's Church in Seneca Falls and the noon Mass at St. Mary's Church in Waterloo on Sept. 27.

Bishop Clark met with parishioners at all three parishes to discuss concerns about the layoffs.

Accompanying Bishop Clark on the visits were Giovina Carosio, executive director of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, and Jack Balinsky, diocesan director of Social Ministry.

"Basically, (Bishop Clark) was here

to show support and encouragement for the people," said Father Nelson Ruppert, OFM Cap., pastor of Holy Cross Parish. The concern Bishop Clark expressed, the pastor said, was "that no matter what comes, it comes with justice."

The visit came in the wake of the announcement that the Seneca Army Depot, one of the county's largest employers, would be laying off 503 civilian employees, effective Nov. 13, 1992. Meanwhile, the state is considering closing or downsizing the Willard State Hospital.

In a letter to Seneca County parishes prior to his visit, Bishop Clark said, "In addition to supporting you in prayer, I have deployed members of the diocesan staff to respond to your needs. Our directors of Social Ministry and Parish Support Ministry have begun to work with your local pastors and local civic and business leaders."

Father Ruppert said the diocese has been pushing for community leaders to form a Finger Lakes Task Force to recommend alternative uses for the two facilities; that the cutbacks involving depot employees be phased in rather than initiated immediately; and that training be provided for employees who will lose their jobs.

In his letter, Bishop Clark noted that among diocesan efforts, the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry is working with county agencies to respond to workers' day-to-day needs.

"We are prompted by our bond with you in the human family and our

common faith," Bishop Clark wrote. "Our work is grounded in the principles held up by our recent pastoral letters of the U.S. Bishops on peace and the economy."

"These letters," Bishop Clark continued, "call us as a church to promote peace through justice and a strong economy that provides employment at a just wage."

The state government is currently assessing plans for the hospital.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Senate Sept. 22 approved a bill that would temporarily halt the layoffs at the army depot. A provision inserted into the 1993 Defense Appropriations bill blocks the use of any defense funds for downsizing the Seneca Depot — except as part of the formal Base Realignment and Closure process.

That process — referred to as BRAC — would require review and public comment on plans and would make the local community eligible for special aid if reductions were ordered. It would also require environmental cleanup of the site.

The provision was still under consideration by a joint Senate/House conference committee as the *Catholic Courier* went to press Sept. 29.

In further action on the proposed depot downsizing, the Seneca County government — in conjunction with the state government and several local agencies — has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Rochester to halt the depot layoffs. A hearing on that lawsuit is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 1.

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