



CATHOLIC COURIER

DIocese OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 104 No. 45 Thursday August 12, 1993 75¢ 28 pages/2 sections

BACK TO SCHOOL

Look for the *Catholic Courier's* annual education supplement, starting after page 6.

Diocese gears up for WEE's inaugural year

BY ROB CULLIVAN, STAFF WRITER
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Constance C. Truesdale was so inundated with phone calls about the Wegman Early Education — or WEE — Program, that she had to set up a different phone line to take all the calls.

After the Rochester diocese announced the program in April, Truesdale's office began receiving 25 to 50 calls per day regarding WEE, a combined full- and part-time day care/education program for 3- and 4-year-old children of all faiths.

Callers to Truesdale's office interested in WEE now get a message telling them to call another number and extension where they can leave their name and an address to which the diocese will mail information.

"The response has been overwhelming, and my concern is that we won't have enough room for everyone who's interested," said Truesdale, public relations manager for diocesan schools.

One objective of the WEE program was to double the current number of Catholic school pre-kindergarten students from more than 500 to more than 1,000. Ideally, up to 500 children will be able to attend early education programs at schools because of WEE, a target number likely to be hit, according to Truesdale and other diocesan officials.

Truesdale is overseeing WEE's public relations and building renovation. WEE will be located at 11 Catholic schools in the city, and two more in the suburbs. The program is funded by a \$3 million grant from Robert B. and Peggy Wegman. Robert Wegman is chairman and chief executive officer of Wegmans Food Markets.

WEE supplements and expands several existing pre-kindergarten programs in the diocese. For example, Sister Eileen Daly, SSJ, principal of Corpus Christi at Blessed Sacrament, noted that funding from WEE will allow her to offer early education to 3-year-olds in addition to the 4-year-olds currently attending her school's pre-K program.

Truesdale credited the placement of WEE's promotional advertisements on radio, and the mailing of informational flyers to various social service agencies, for sparking interest in the program. The WEE Program was designed to especially help financially strapped parents who are unable to find adequate day care and pre-kindergarten programs.

Continued on page 10

Volunteers help ready WEE schools

Above left, Kathie McAlpin volunteered her time to help paint one of the rooms to be used for the WEE Program at St. Monica School, 841 Genesee St. Rochester. Shawn Toth, a Chase Pitkin employee, helped prepare a room at St. Margaret Mary School, 401 Rogers Parkway, Irondequoit. Chase Pitkin donated painting supplies for the work.

Photos by
S. John Wilkin



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