

Diocese preparing for first year of WEE

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Tuition for the WEE Program runs between \$80-\$90 per week. Fred W. Seiler, the diocese's assistant superintendent for business and finance, noted that a large number of WEE applicants have requested financial assistance, but that in the end, all the participating parents will probably pay some fee, even if it is as low as \$5-10 weekly.

Truesdale also noted that some parents on public assistance can receive financial aid for day care.

Seiler stressed that the diocese wants to disperse the program's funding carefully so as to keep tuition assistance available to as many families as possible.

"We don't want to give parents a large amount of money one year only to pull the rug out from them the next," he said.

Saving money on day care isn't the only concern of WEE applicants, according to Truesdale. She pointed out that several of the applicants have told her that the program would enable them to improve their own lives by giving them time to look for a better job or to pursue a high school or college diploma.

Other parents, particularly single mothers, want to leave welfare behind for the workplace, and some parents simply "don't want their child in front of the TV 10 hours a day," Truesdale said.

Christine Button decided to enroll her 4-year-old daughter, Stephanie, in the early education program at Corpus Christi School after the public school teacher in charge of her daughter's previous day care group took six months to learn Stephanie's name. She also complained that the children in her daughter's class did not spend enough time on learning activities.

Button noted that she expects better attention to her daughter's needs by the Corpus staff, and she added that two of her children are already enrolled in Corpus' elementary program located at Blessed Sacrament Parish, 546 Oxford St. She pointed out that she wants her children to be fully prepared to do well in elementary school and beyond.

"I want my kids to be college-bound, and I want them to get that edge," But-



Lydia Voleshen, a Wegmans volunteer, helps paint a WEE Program room at St. Margaret Mary School.

ton remarked.

Evelyn Kirst, diocesan curriculum coordinator, explained that children in WEE will experience a combination of structured and unstructured activities designed to build "values, growth and motor skills."

According to information provided by Kirst's office, a typical day for full-time WEE students would go as follows:

- A.M.:**
 6:30-8:30: Children arrive and are greeted; they can choose a variety of activities from all areas of the classroom.
 8:30-9:00 Children clean up toy areas, wash their hands and move to a snack area at table.
 9:30-9:50: Group or circle time: activities include singing, storytelling, and fingerplays.
 9:50-11: Activity time: children choose from planned activities.
 11-11:45: Outdoor or large motor skills activities.

P.M.:
 12:30-1: Clean-up after lunch, bathroom time, quiet reading.
 1-3: Nap time.

2-3: Quiet activities for children who are not asleep.
 3-3:30 Snack.

3:30-6: Unstructured activities inside or outside, and students gradually leave as parents arrive to pick them up.

In addition to the full-time WEE Program, the schools also offer part-time, pre-K program and an extended care program for school-age children.

Kirst noted that programs vary from school to school, and that most will keep the programs for 3- and 4-year-olds separate. Ideally, each program will feature a child/adult ratio of no more than 7-1, she said, and each program will be marked by the presence of at least one teacher and two or three aides.

Most programs will take up to 21 children in each age group and open by Sept. 13, Kirst said. Programs will be offered September to June, and she noted that the diocese hopes to expand all of its pre-K programs to a year-round basis.

Kirst added that the WEE Program will attempt to recruit such volunteers as senior citizens to work with the children, though she emphasized that volunteers would be carefully screened before being accepted.

Volunteers of another sort are playing a crucial role in the establishment of the WEE Program, according to diocesan officials. About 150 employees of Wegmans and Chase-Pitkin stores (owned by Wegmans) have volunteered to work at the WEE school sites, painting and performing other preparatory tasks to ready rooms for the program.

"No one had to twist my arm to do this," said Fred W. Parker, assistant manager of the gardening department at Chase-Pitkin in Marketplace Mall.

The supervisor of a volunteer crew painting and fixing up rooms at St. Monica School last weekend for the WEE Program, Parker said that even some people who initially did not volunteer for the fix-up program surprised him by showing up as the crew worked at the school.

"It's the realization that it's a community project," Parker said, adding that the fact that the WEE program is open to all children, including non-Catholics, and especially those from poor families, made many Wegmans and Chase-Pitkin employees eager to volunteer.

"If you can do something to give some of these disadvantaged kids a leg up, what more can you hope for?" he said.

New program offers children a full slate

WEE at a glance:

Full-time Pre-K

2-5 days per week, 10-11 hrs. per day

Part-time Pre-K

3 day, 2.5 hrs. per day for 4 year olds
 2 day, 2.5 hrs. per day for 3 year olds
 Mixed classes for 3 and 4 year olds

School Age

(for K-6 grade students enrolled in the regular school program)
 1-5 days before school, after school, or both

Registration:

Parents are invited to contact one of the WEE Program sites to schedule a visit or call the Department of Catholic Schools at 716/328-3210.

Hours:

The hours will vary per school.

Cost:

Tuition assistance is available to parents who enroll their children in the WEE Program and who demonstrate financial need. The school principal can provide information.

The cost is between \$80 and \$90 per week per child for the 5-day, full-time early childhood program. Rates for the Part-time Pre-K Program and School Age Program are based on the number of sessions each child attends.

Eligibility:

Children who are at least 3 years old and toilet trained by September 1, 1993 are invited to join the WEE Program.

Children who are students in the regular school program are eligible for the School Age Program

School calendar:

The program will be open from September 1993 through June 1994. Full-day child care will be available during July and August of 1994.


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Hopefuls

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public position that conflicts with church teachings, Deacon Erb cited the example of President John F. Kennedy, who, during his 1960 presidential campaign, distinguished between his religious beliefs and his political activities.

But when reminded that President Kennedy was a lay person, whereas Deacon Erb is an ordained church minister, the county legislator said that, with respect to his political activities, he prefers not to be identified as a deacon, and declined to speak further on the record.

In a later telephone conversation with the *Courier*, Murray said he was "pro-choice" and that as an elected official, he is sworn to uphold the law of the land, which currently includes

abortion.

Padilla likewise told the *Courier* that she did not believe in interfering with a decisions made by women and couples. She added that if elected mayor, "My role is not to impose my value system on others."

Brown said during a telephone interview that the *Democrat and Chronicle's* description of her was not strictly accurate and that she is pro-life. However, she noted, the law of the land is pro-choice and, as an elected official, she has to uphold the law.

"My obligation as a person who is anti-abortion is to work within the confines of the law to change the law," Brown observed. In part, that process will involve attacking such problems as teen pregnancy and splintering families — both issues she would address if elected mayor.