

Catholic school continues to change with times

Two reunions set for St. Monica's

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Alumni attending two upcoming reunions for St. Monica's School may be surprised if they visit their alma mater during these opening weeks of the new school year.

Although the building still looks the same, the student body is very different.

St. Monica's School, 841 Genesee St., has been serving students on Rochester's southwest side since 1898. All the school's alumni will have the opportunity to renew acquaintances this coming Sunday, Sept. 12, when a first-ever alumni reception is held from 2-4 p.m. in the St. Monica's gymnasium.

In addition, the school's Class of 1943 is hosting its 50th-year reunion on Saturday evening, Sept. 18, at The Party House, 677 Beahan Road, Chili. The 4 p.m. Mass that day at St. Monica Church, 831 Genesee St., will be dedicated to deceased members of the 1943 class.

St. Monica's alumni from these earlier generations hailed largely from Irish Roman Catholic backgrounds. However, third-year school principal Sister Mary Marvin, RSM, noted that approximately 85 percent of the current student body is non-Catholic and only about 10 percent are St. Monica's parishioners.

The school's makeup is almost exclusively African-American children who live in the neighborhoods around St. Monica Church.

"We need a light on Genesee Street," Sister Marvin stated. "We need to give these children a chance to receive a Christ-centered education when they're coming from a sad and very, very poor background."

Sister Marvin explained that although most of the children aren't Catholic, "we try to teach more Christian than Catholic. Many of their families are churchgoers."

Enrollment this year is 118 for students in grades kindergarten through 6. But because of the precarious financial situation surrounding St. Monica's, Sister Marvin noted that the staff and students rely heavily on support provided by "bingo, donors, the (Southwest) quadrant and the diocese."

Grades 7-8 were dropped at St. Monica's after the 1991-92 school year. The building is still bustling in 1993-94, however, due to a heavy influx of pre-kindergarten (ages 3-4) students.

With financial assistance provided by the newly formed Wegmans Early Education (WEE) program, the St. Monica's pre-K enrollment is approximately 70 for 1993-94 — almost double that of last year's total.

WEE is being funded through a \$3



Hoyt Newton, a St. Monica's School alumnus, sits in his old homeroom.

S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

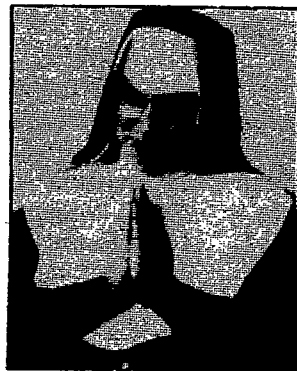


(Left to right) Andrew Esposito, Josh and Craig McFadden are enrolled in WEE. Andrew's sister, Tricia, attends kindergarten.

million grant from Robert B. Wegman, chairman and chief executive officer of Rochester-based Wegmans Food Markets, and his wife, Peggy. The program supports low-income families who cannot otherwise afford day-care or pre-kindergarten services.

Sister Marvin noted that — regardless of age — all St. Monica's students can expect positive long-term effects from the education they receive.

"I can't document this, but I would say that most of the students have high goals when they leave here," she said.



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The Class of 1943 poses in front of St. Monica Church

Photo courtesy of St. Monica's School

One such student is 15-year-old Hoyt Newton, whose St. Monica's education spanned grades 1 through 7.

"I hope to study law and then be a doctor," said Newton, who last year attended eighth grade at All Saints Catholic Junior High, 170 Spencerport Road, Gates, after St. Monica's discontinued its 7-8 grades. He has just begun his freshman year at Wilson Magnet High School.

Newton, who plans on continuing his part-time job maintaining the job at St. Monica's in the upcoming years, has fond memories of his seven years as a student there.

"I'll always remember the teachers and how they treated me nicely and with respect," he acknowledged. "They didn't yell at me; they always helped me when I was having trouble."

St. John Fisher to host SAT training course

PITTSFORD — St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Ave., is offering training sessions to assist high school students preparing for their Scholastic Aptitude Tests.

Classes will take place on four consecutive Saturdays, from 8:30-10:30 a.m. each session, between Sept. 11 and Oct. 2.

For details, call 716/385-8320.

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