

Community may create center

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Neighbors and supporters of the General Pulaski Community Library — including several parishioners of St. Stanislaus Parish — met in the library's basement on Saturday, Jan. 8, to discuss a proposal to convert the facility into a community center.

Located at 1151 Hudson Ave., the Pulaski branch library is slated to merge with the Lincoln branch, 585 Clifford Ave. later this year.

Twenty-eight people attended last Saturday's meeting, coordinated by Karyn Herman, executive assistant with Action for a Better Community, Inc.

The Pulaski branch library — which houses a few thousand books on Polish history and culture — has served as a veritable cultural archive for Rochester's Poles. The facility also includes Ukrainian books.

When the Pulaski branch library's slated closing was announced last year, several community leaders, including Rochester City Councilman Benjamin Douglas and U.S. Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-30th District), rallied to its support. Slaughter convened a task force to consider options for the library's future use.

Mary Eaton, a Slaughter congressional aide, was present at the Jan. 8 meeting.

"From the congresswoman's point of view, it would be a sin if part of this library was not maintained as a living library of some sort," Eaton said.

The task force includes representatives of the Hudson Area Association, Group 14621 Community Association, and the Polonia Civic Centre, which had several members attend the meeting. Last summer, the task force surveyed 153 people



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Karyn Herman, executive assistant with Action for a Better Community, facilitates a Jan. 8 meeting aimed at finding ways the Pulaski Library could be used as a community center.

about the library. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to such Catholic parishes as St. Stanislaus, 1124 Hudson Ave., St. Theresa's, 34 St. Stanislaus St., and several other churches.

Much like the survey, Herman asked participants to suggest ways in which the library building could be used to enhance the neighborhood. Among the suggestions participants offered were:

To create ongoing cultural programs for the neighborhood's various ethnic groups through classes in dance, music and crafts.

To establish programs that bring young and old people together to share knowledge and skills.

To locate a police satellite station in the building, and offer safety workshops.

To fund a full-time artist-in-residence to coordinate a community center.

The meeting's participants were also

asked to fill out a formal survey on what they wanted for themselves, their families and their community from the building. Herman and Jack Morton, chairman of the Pulaski Library Committee, said that the library's supporters will draw on the participants' responses to support an application for a community block development grant from the city. The

application would ask for funding for programming and building renovation, and is due to be completed by the end of January, Herman said.

Gene Golomb, a parishioner of St. Stanislaus Church and president of the Polonia Civic Centre, noted that the Rochester City School District has used the library for programs and he hoped to expand such efforts as a means of keeping the facility open.

"I'd hate to see the building close up and end up some boarded-up eyesore," Golomb commented.

Another meeting on the library is slated for 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 15. A member of the American Institute of Architecture, Morton noted that AIA is providing three interns to help the library's supporters draw up renovation plans. He said the next meeting would focus on renovation proposals for Pulaski.

St. Anne's set to host ecumenical gathering

ROCHESTER — In conjunction with the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, St. Anne Church, 1600 Mt. Hope Ave., will host an ecumenical celebration at 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 23.

Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic participants will gather for the celebration, at which Bishop Matthew H. Clark will speak. The Cathedral Choir School will provide music during the celebration.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held every year from Jan. 18-25, is intended to promote reconciliation among all religious denominations.

The national observance is prepared by the pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and representatives of the World Council of Churches.

The Rochester-area celebration has been organized by the Greater Rochester Community of Churches — to which the Diocese of Rochester and a number of diocesan parishes belong.

Three-day retreat set for Ithaca-based parish

ITHACA — A three-day retreat featuring Eileen George's healing ministry will take place at immaculate Conception Church, 113 N. Geneva St. The dates and times are Jan. 14-15, from 7-9 p.m. each night; and Jan. 16 from 2-4 p.m.

George, who lives in Millbury, Mass., is the mother of eight, grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of one. Diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1980, she began her ministry in 1982 and has conducted several services and retreats for bishops, priests and lay people.

For details on the retreat, call Mary Camobreco at 607/273-7325.

Obituaries

Fr. Alexander J. Stec; pastor 36 years

ROCHESTER — Father Alexander J. Stec, pastor emeritus of St. Stanislaus Parish in Rochester, died on Monday, Dec. 15, 1993, in the parish's rectory. He was 85.

Born in Rochester on July 8, 1908, Father Stec attended St. Bridget's School and St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries in Rochester.

After he was ordained on June 10, 1933, by Bishop Emmett J. Walsh, Father Stec was assigned as assistant pastor of St. Michael's, Newark, from June to December of 1933, and as assistant pas-

tor at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Rochester from 1933-36. He served as assistant pastor of St. Casimir's Parish in Elmira briefly in 1936, then studied at the University of Cracow in Poland later that year until 1938.

After returning to the United States in 1938, Father Stec was named administrator of St. John's Parish in Newark Valley and St. Francis Parish in Catatunk, but resided at St. Patrick's Parish in Owego. He became St. John's resident pastor in 1942.

In 1959, Father Stec was appointed

pastor of St. Stanislaus in Rochester. He retired in 1978, but continued to reside at the parish as pastor emeritus.

Father Joseph M. Jankowiak, who came to know Father Stec from the perspectives of a parishioner, a seminarian, an assistant pastor at the parish in 1968, and as the pastor who succeeded Father Stec in 1978, recalled the late priest as a humble man with a wry sense of humor.

"He was the soul of charity," said Father Jankowiak, who has served as the pastor of St. Mary Our Mother Parish in Horseheads since leaving St. Stanislaus in 1984. "In all those years (of knowing him), I don't think I ever heard an uncharitable word (from him) about another human being."

The Horseheads pastor noted that Father Stec was forced to deal with many stresses during his pastorate at St. Stanislaus, including the decline of the neighborhood around the church. Yet he maintained an attitude of charity, Father Jankowiak said.

"He was a wonderful person to have around, and a wonderful example as a priest," Father Jankowiak stated.

Father Jankowiak recalled that, even in retirement, Father Stec remained active in parish activities. In addition to assisting with Masses and confessions up until the time of his death, Father Stec served as chaplain to the women religious living in the parish convent.

"He was very strong, and — I say this with respect — stubborn," Father Jankowiak said. "He just didn't give in to his age or his infirmities."

Father Stec is survived by a niece, Katherine Zawdzki, of Rochester; and a sister, Anna Strzepak, of Poland.

— Mike Latona

Administrator

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except for Mass and the sacraments," remarked Mary Lou O'Connor, who is chairing the planning team at St. Gabriel.

This structure is similar to clustering in that there will be only one full-time priest for both parishes.

But Father Clifford noted the situation in Bath and Hammondsport differs in that they have chosen to remain two distinct parishes, rather than adopt a multi-church, one-parish structure typified by clusters.

The appointment of a pastoral administrator at St. Gabriel "does not presume any further cooperation," between the two parishes, said Father Clifford. For instance, none of the parish committees at St. Gabriel or St. Mary will merge.

On the other hand, Father Clifford noted, "Clusters develop over and above the existing identities of the original parishes. What happens is that a new identification develops. There is intended to be a great deal more unity and interaction among participating parishes."

He noted that cluster churches located within a small geographic area, such as Rochester's four-church 19th Ward Roman Catholic Community, can benefit from having combined staffs and committees.

But Father Clifford also acknowledged that pastoral administrators afford an alternative to clustering for parishes affected by the lack of available priests.

"I am hopeful that we'll be able to offer this option much more frequently," said Father Clifford.

Sr. Mary Alma Waterstraat, RSM, at 98; longtime teacher, principal

Sister Mary Alma Waterstraat, RSM, the eldest member of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, died on Friday, Dec. 17, 1993, in the Lourdes Hall Infirmary at the Mercy motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road, Brighton.

A Rochester native, Sister Alma entered the Mercy community in 1924 at age 28. At the time, she was a parishioner at St. Michael's Church. Sister Alma professed perpetual vows in 1929.

She spent 50 years serving in various roles in Catholic elementary schools throughout the Rochester diocese. Sister Alma served 19 years at St. Cecilia School in Elmira (1926-39 and 1944-50) and 18 years at St. Charles Borromeo School in Greece (1952-59 and 1965-76).

She combined roles as teacher and principal at three schools: St. John in Clyde (1939-44), St. Cecilia in Elmira (1944-50) and Our Lady of Mount

Carmel in Rochester (1959-65). She also taught at St. Salome School in Rochester during the 1950-51 school year.

Sister Mary Matthew Kruckow, who taught with Sister Alma at St. Cecilia in Elmira from 1944-50, has fond memories of her good friend.

"She was a beautiful person to live with and had a tremendous sense of humor," said Sister Kruckow, who now lives at the Mercy motherhouse. "She was an excellent cook and took over all the cooking — and could she ever cook! She could make the best of a situation. She was well liked by the parish and people of Elmira."

A Mass of Christian Burial was held for Sister Alma in the motherhouse chapel on Dec. 20, 1993. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Sister Alma is survived by several cousins.

— Lee Strong