

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

CEO helps youths attend Catholic schools

By Jay Copp
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO — The head of an insurance company that funds an educational choice program to help needy students attend Catholic schools said such a program is a win-win situation. He urged other business executives to follow his lead.

Poor children receive a quality education and companies benefit from good public relations and by contributing to a more capable labor pool, according to J. Patrick Rooney, chairman of Golden Rule Insurance Co. in Indianapolis.

He addressed the Corporate Responsibility Group of Greater Chicago, a nonprofit organization that tries to raise corporate awareness of economic and social public policy issues.

Added Rooney, a Catholic: "I'm a practical man. I want to get to heaven someday. What we have done 'for the least of my brothers' may look pretty good on my resume when I die."

Begun in 1991, the Golden Rule choice program was the first of its kind. The first year the company paid half the tuition of 500 poor students whose parents chose a private school.

This year 907 children in kindergarten

through eighth grade participated, and next year 1,500 are expected to be involved. The program is open to children eligible for federally subsidized lunches.

Other companies besides Golden Rule now contribute to the Choice Charitable Trust.

Drawing job seekers from inner-city neighborhoods, Golden Rule found that many of the applicants could barely read and write. Schools in poor areas of Indianapolis are plagued by gun-toting youths, and a primary concern is safety, let alone discipline and education, said Rooney.

Rooney said he and other company executives spent less than two hours deciding upon the choice program after the Indiana General Assembly voted down state funding for school choice.

The decision turned out to be a good one, he said.

"It's not just the right thing to do — it's good business. We've gotten wonderful publicity."

Educational choice does not hurt public schools, said Rooney, and instead forces them to become better.

Rooney, 64, is the son of the founder of Golden Rule, the nation's largest writer of individual major-medical insurance policies. He attended public schools while growing up in Lawrenceville, Ill.

In the 1980s Golden Rule was a plaintiff in a landmark lawsuit settled out of court that accused the Illinois Insurance Department of discrimination against minorities in its exams for licenses.

Rooney, one of the few white members of a black church in Indianapolis, said private schools satisfy parents' chief concern for their children.

"You might think they're interested in a better education. It's not that. They're interested in values," he said. "They want their children to grow up to be responsible people."

"That's the reason why they're interested in private schools. They know about the moral deterioration of the public schools."

Public schools declined as school systems when they were consolidated over the past few decades, said Rooney. The larger school systems were able to improve facilities but at the cost of discipline.

"It's not a matter of individual people or failure," said Rooney. "It's not that bad people teach in public schools and good people in Catholic schools. It's a



File photo

Due to an increasing enrollment, All Saints will expand into the former St. Patrick's School building next fall.

Corning school to expand in 1994-95

CORNING — This is the kind of problem Vincent Moschetti is delighted to have.

His school walls are bursting with students.

Due to a sharp enrollment increase in recent years, All Saints Academy, 158 State St., will expand into another facility beginning in the 1994-95 school year.

According to Moschetti, All Saints Academy's principal, 309 students are currently enrolled in grades kindergarten through 8. That's an increase of 22.1 percent over the 1992-93 school year's total of 253, and approximately a 50-percent rise from four years ago.

And, fueled by the addition of a pre-kindergarten program next fall, Moschetti projects an overall enrollment of approximately 375. To accommodate the increase, the former St. Patrick's School, 274 Denison Parkway, will be put back into use.

The St. Patrick's building will house All Saints Academy's pre-K and kindergarten classes in 1994-95. Moschetti said that first-graders will be phased in the following year.

The All Saints principal said that three possibilities were considered for relieving the space crunch: expanding the All Saints Academy building; re-opening a school building; or utilizing a parish center.

One reason for settling on the second option, he said, was that St. Patrick's "was built in 1960, so it's a fairly new building."

St. Patrick's has not been used as a school since it closed in the early 1970s. Another Corning school, St. Vincent DePaul, merged with St. Mary's School in 1986, leaving St. Mary's — now known as All Saints Academy — as the city's only remaining Catholic teaching institution.

Moschetti noted that the title of All Saints Academy will continue to be used at both St. Patrick's and St. Mary's.

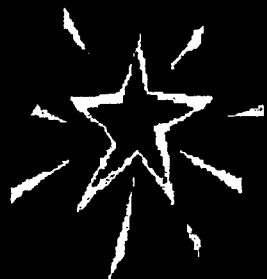
In assessing the enrollment resurgence, Moschetti remarked that support from Father William V. Spilly, pastor of the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community, has played a key role.

"There is no feeling that Catholic schools are on shaky ground here," said Moschetti.

— Mike Latona

'In the Christian view, our treatment of children becomes a measure of our fidelity to the Lord himself.'

—Pope John Paul II



An idea that's working for all of us!

Catholic elementary and junior high schools offer :

- * academic excellence
- * value-centered education
- * parent involvement
- * pre-kindergarten, elementary and middle school education
- * self-discipline
- * acceptance of all people
- * the Wegman Early Education (WEE) Program for preschoolers
- * before and after school care

For information about registration and open houses, please contact your neighborhood Catholic school or call the Department of Catholic Schools

328-3210

A GREAT FOUNDATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
St. Boniface School

PRE K, K-6
15 WHALIN ST.
(cor. Gregory)

TUITION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
Now offering after-school care

FOR INFORMATION CALL:

271-6370

Our Difference Builds Success

