

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Education official credits nuns with his rise to top

By Michelle Bearden
Catholic News Service

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Douglas "Tim" Jamerson, a former school security officer who became Florida's commissioner of education Jan. 1, is quick to give credit where credit is due.

And credit for his rise to the \$94,000-a-year post goes to the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y., said Jamerson, a product of St. Petersburg Catholic schools.

"They were strong disciplinarians whose teachings have sustained me though life," he said. "Their philosophy of service above self was drummed into me at an early age and it's a philosophy I've done my best to honor."

Jamerson, 46, becomes the second black person this century and the third in the state's history to hold a seat on the six-member Florida Cabinet. He had been a Democratic state representative since 1982 and chaired the House Education Committee for three years.

A graduate of the now-closed Immaculate Conception Grade School and the all-boys Bishop Barry High School (now coed St. Petersburg Catholic High School), Jamerson said public education would greatly benefit by borrowing some of the practices so common to private schools.

"The concept of structure and discipline and parental involvement is lacking in our public schools," he said. "We need to return to that if we're to assume control of our schools."

"Further, the teacher needs more freedom to teach values, service and duty to country," Jamerson added. "We've put so many restrictive laws and fears into our educators that we've lost sight of what's good for the children."

Father William Lau, pastor of St. Petersburg's Blessed Trinity Parish, where Jamerson, wife Leatha and son Cedric Alexander are members, called Jamerson a "family man of great faith."

As a freshman at Bishop Barry High School in 1961, Jamerson was one of three blacks to integrate the Catholic school. Years later, after graduating from St. Petersburg Junior College and the University of South Florida and serving in the U.S. Air Force, he began a career in public education.

He worked as a security guard and later as guidance counselor and recruiter for minority teachers. As chairman of the House Education Committee since 1990, he helped write and pass Blueprint 2000, legislation designed to shift greater control of schools to classroom teachers, parents and local school boards.

Although the task of overseeing Florida's public schools is daunting, Jamerson said he is "invigorated and inspired" by the challenge. And he has every intention of winning election to a full term in that post in November.

"I didn't get into this to lose," he said. "I intend to show God how much I appreciate his faith in me and for giving me the chance to turn things around. We're definitely in this together."

Schools join fundraising plan

By Marjorie L. Donohue
Catholic News Service

MIAMI — Catholic schools in south Florida are now the first large-scale extension of a fundraising plan inaugurated five years ago in the Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif.

Thirteen elementary schools and three high schools in the Miami archdiocese participate in the \$CRIP program begun by Monsignor Thomas J. Keys, vicar general and finance officer of the Santa Rosa diocese.

In 1988, when St. Vincent de Paul High School in Petaluma, Calif., was in danger of closing because of a \$250,000 deficit, Monsignor Keys met with parents and \$CRIP was among the ideas discussed.

According to Patrick Heffernan, director of the Miami archdiocese's Education Endowment Fund, the plan is simple. The National \$CRIP Center accumulates hundreds of orders for certificates from schools and other involved groups.

By combining the purchasing power of many, the \$CRIP center receives discounts from a variety of

merchants, including national and regional chain food and department stores. Program participants then purchase the certificates in different denominations, and the schools or groups realize a profit on the difference between the face values paid by buyers and the cost of the discounted certificates.

Merchants who participate differ in each area of the country. Although the Miami archdiocese is the only Catholic diocese participating in Florida, a large number of Christian schools elsewhere in the state have joined the program.

Any nonprofit group is eligible to participate regardless of religious affiliation, including Scout troops, according to Heffernan.

Right now, he added, "the demand for certificates is so heavy that personnel are working around the clock in two shifts to fill orders at the national center."

EDITORS' NOTE: Contact Monsignor Keys at the Santa Rosa Chancery, P.O. Box 1297, Santa Rosa, Calif. 95402.

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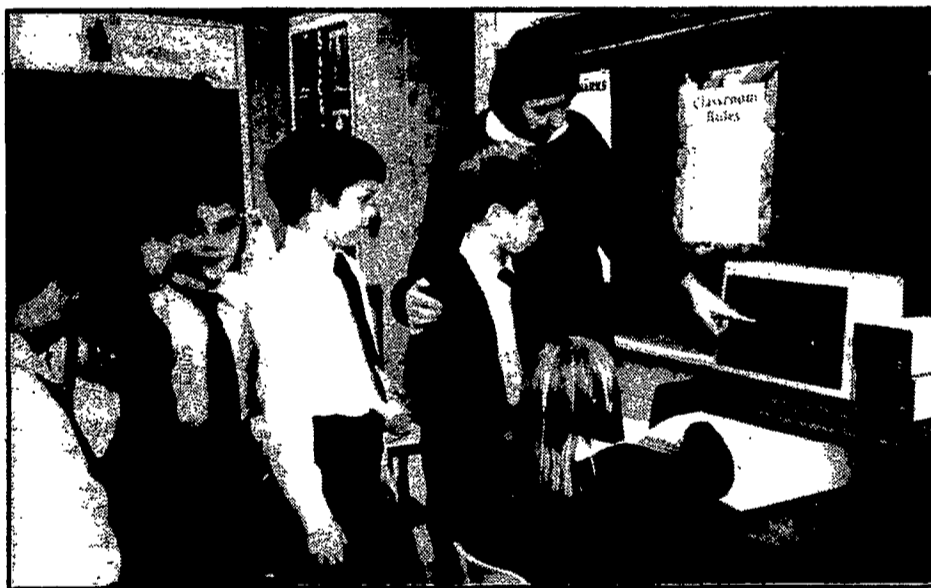
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