

YOUTH FEATURE



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Fifth-grader Jillian Jardas (left) and kindergartner Meghan D'Hondt show off one of the many items sent to St. Francis School in New Mexico as part of Holy Cross School's recent charity drive.

Parish bonds together to help faraway friends

Youths conduct charity drive

By Mike Lafona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In more ways than one, Holy Cross Church's parish community exists in unique locations.

Most people know Holy Cross as the charmingly small church in historic Charlotte, where the Genesee River merges with Lake Ontario.

Yet recent charity efforts by young parishioners have shown that the Holy Cross boundaries stretch much further.

The parish made a tremendous response to a plea from Holy Cross parishioner Todd Reynders, who currently serves as a volunteer teacher at St. Francis School in Lumberton, N.M. Earlier this year, Reynders had contacted Holy Cross School principal Sister Carolyn Knipper, RSM, to request funds and supplies for the many impoverished Native American and Hispanic students who attend St. Francis.

"Our school has basically no money," Reynders wrote in a letter to Sister Knipper. He noted that most of the 90 students live on the Jicarilla Apache Indian Reservation, and added that many of these youths live with foster parents due to alcoholism within their natural families.

Sister Knipper had become inspired to initiate an additional drive for the parish's namesake — Holy Cross Medical Center in Mission Hills, Ca. — after viewing the damaged facility on television in the aftermath of this past January's earthquake which devastated much of southern California.

"Across the top there were the letters 'Holy Cross Medical Center,' and they were all askew from the earthquake," Sister Knipper recalled.

The causes were merged together as Sister Knipper's students launched an effort to help both the New Mexico school and California medical center. The drive concluded earlier this month when checks and supplies were forwarded to both facilities.

In the end, support came from many different factions within the Holy Cross



Provided photo

Holy Cross is reaching out to St. Francis School (above) in Lumberton, N.M.

parish. For instance, more than \$600 for the Holy Cross Medical Center was raised by Holy Cross School students and adult parishioners.

In addition, students and their families came up with a wide variety of supplies for the St. Francis School pupils.

"It makes me feel happy that (Reynders) is going to help them. It's also sad, because it's not a lot of fun to have poor people in this world," commented Jillian Jardas, age 11. The Holy Cross School fifth-grader donated a globe which formerly belong to her grandparents.

"This stuff was all my mom's," announced Meghan D'Hondt, a 6-year-old kindergartner, as she displayed a list of donated supplies such as pens, folders, paper, scissors and painting supplies.

The parish's youth group, meanwhile, raised more than \$300 through a soup-and-bread supper during Lent. Completing this team effort were grade 4-6 students in the school's religious-education program. They collected a large amount of goods and about \$100 in cash.

"They were very touched when they read the letter (from Reynders). Some would take out pocket money that was supposed to be for lunch the next day," noted religious-education coordinator Karen Hendricks.

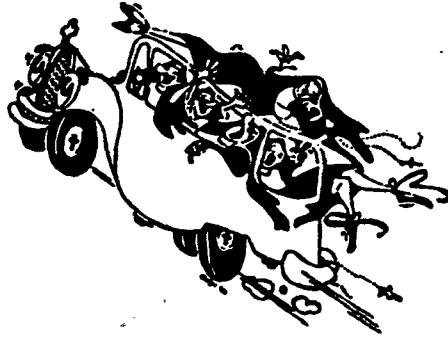
Father Timothy Brown, parochial vicar at Holy Cross, praised the parish's ability to bond several groups together in support of one cause.

"It was our parish helping one of our own," remarked Father Brown, who coordinated the youth group's charity supper. "It was a real effort across the board."

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