

## Tier leader calls for school choice

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ELMIRA — Chemung County Executive G. Thomas Tranter is calling for the creation of either a statewide school-voucher program or tax credits for private-school parents, making him one of the first public officials in the state to openly endorse school choice.

Tranter, a Republican, made his call for school choice at a morning press conference Jan. 31, at Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave. Tranter's call was echoed by similar statements from Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM, Notre Dame's principal, and Elizabeth Berliner, principal of Holy Family Junior High, 1010 Davis St.

Copies of all three officials' statements were sent by facsimile to the *Catholic Courier*.

A parent of four children attending Catholic schools in the Tier, Tranter is also a 1972 graduate of Notre Dame. The county executive called for the issuance of publicly funded vouchers that can be used by parents to pay for the cost of private-school tuition, or for the creation of tax credits that allow non-public school parents to deduct a portion of their taxable income.

"Catholic schools create a caring atmosphere where our children learn Christian values as well as academics," Tranter said. "Yet, many families must make significant financial sacrifices to afford to send their children to Catholic schools ... The voucher system or tax credit program would give more parents a choice and introduce the element of competitiveness in our educational system."

Berliner and Sister Hickey belong to a group of Mercy sisters and associates who are Catholic school administrators and who decided last November to endorse school choice. In doing so, the administrators stressed that citizens are allowed choice in many areas of their lives, but are often denied choice due to economic reasons when it comes to their children's education.

"Our local schools are currently ex-

periencing an increase in enrollments," Sister Hickey said at the Jan. 31 press conference. "We also know that families withdraw from our schools for financial reasons. We believe that choice would make it possible for even more people to afford our education."

In a follow-up phone interview, Tranter expressed his hope that New York Gov. George Pataki will eventually endorse some form of non-public school choice.

"I think he's giving it very serious con-

sideration, and that's something we haven't had in this state in a very long time," Tranter commented.

Tranter added that he had written Pataki in January urging him to support school choice.

According to officials with the Pataki administration, the governor has taken no position on non-public school choice. However, numerous observers, including many non-public school lobbyists, have noted that the new governor is seriously considering the concept.

## Showing school spirit



Wendy Longlade/Photo intern

The 21st annual Catholic Schools Week, observed Jan. 29-Feb. 4, was celebrated throughout the Rochester diocese last week with numerous activities promoting the theme, "Catholic Schools: Schools You Can Believe In." Greece's St. Charles Borromeo School, 64 Maiden Lane, sponsored a Feb. 3 show showcasing the talents of students and faculty. (Above) The school's cheerleaders show their spirit while students (left) join in the fun.



## Synod office flooded with parish plans

By Lee Strong  
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Kathleen Cannon had heard dire predictions from a few people about the small number of parishes that would submit by the Feb. 1 deadline Synod implementation plans.

The new Synod implementation director, however, was far more optimistic. Her optimism has been borne out.

As of the Feb. 1 deadline, 107 parishes and clusters had submitted plans detailing steps they intend to take to implement the four goals in the diocese's pastoral plan: lifelong faith formation; advocating for the consistent life ethic; recognizing the value and dignity of women in the church and society; and forming small Christian communities.

An additional seven parishes contacted Cannon to say that their plans would be tendered within the next week or so. Two other parishes are involved in long-term strategic planning processes and will submit their plans after the processes are completed.

"I am delighted with the timeliness of the responses, and with the quality of the plans," Cannon said.

That response, she added, will make it easier for the Pastoral Center's staff and administration to decide how to allocate personnel and financial resources to serve parishes and to aid them in their efforts to implement the Synod.

In anticipation of those reports, Bish-

op Matthew H. Clark invited some 50 people to participate on five interdisciplinary teams charged with developing work plans to support implementation of the goals in the parishes and diocesan institutions. Four of the teams are dealing with the four goals — one for each goal — while the fifth is evaluating ways to improve communications and to utilize diocesan computer resources.

After evaluating budget implications of the parish plans, the teams will submit their reports to the diocese by the end of March, she said. Those reports will then help with developing the diocesan budget for the 1995-96 fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Although analysis of the parish reports is still to come, Cannon said she had perused them and had made some general impressions.

Some parishes have already begun to implement synod goals. Indeed, Cannon noted, some began to take action even before the General Synod held Oct. 1-3, 1993, during which diocesan Synod priorities were announced.

These parishes, in turn, can help other parishes who are only now beginning to implement the synod goals, Cannon said, noting, "It's wonderful to say to parishes, 'Maybe you should contact...'"

Cannon cited a great deal of activity around goal one, lifelong religious education. A number of parishes, for example, have begun or plan to begin adult discussion sessions on the issue.

Parishes have also indicated they will incorporate elements of the consistent life ethic, which holds that all life is sacred and addresses such issues as abortion, war, euthanasia and the death penalty, into homilies, and will try to become involved in service projects.

Many parishes are exploring small Christian communities — small groups of people who gather on a regular basis for prayer, Scripture reading, faith sharing, service and mutual support.

Meanwhile, a number of parishes have already begun to look at goal three — recognizing and valuing the dignity of women in the church and society — by considering the issue of inclusive language, by discussing women's issues and by opening doors for women to take on more parish roles that have traditionally been done by men.

Moreover, a number of parishes have already begun to explore ways they can work with other parishes and church groups. The plans will enable Cannon to help even more parishes network whenever possible, she explained.

Meanwhile, diocesan Parish Support Ministries is scheduled to hold a Sept. 1 conference to help parish leaders with implementing the Synod. Titled "Putting Our Synod Values Into Action," the conference is slated for the Radisson Hotel, 70 State St.

For details about the conference, contact Deacon Claude Lester at 716/328-3210.

## Pasta dinner to benefit ailing former AQ student

ROCHESTER — A benefit pasta dinner will be held Feb. 12, to raise funds for a former Aquinas Institute student who is seriously ill.

The dinner will take place from 1 to 7 p.m. at Aquinas, 1127 Dewey Ave. Proceeds will help defray the medical costs of Vinnie Ferrari, a Greece Olympia High School senior who attended Aquinas up until this year. Vinnie, who is also an Eagle Scout, was diagnosed last month with an inoperable, malignant brain tumor.

Tickets are \$5 per person. Reservations can be made by calling Sue Remillard at 716/621-4110 or Ross Talarico at 288-5161.

Those who cannot attend the dinner but wish to donate to the "Love for Vinnie Fund" may send their contributions to Boy Scout Troop 70, St. Andrew's Church, 923 Portland Ave., Rochester, N.Y., 14621. The fund is being sponsored by a coalition of community organizations, including Aquinas Institute; St. Andrew's; Troop 70; the Otletiana Council of the Boys Scouts of America; and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

## Parenting skills program targets domestic violence

Debbie and Ed Fickess — whose 19-year-old son, Greg, was murdered in downtown Rochester in July of 1993 — are offering a series of workshops designed to develop parenting skills for avoiding domestic violence.

The first three-hour workshop was held Feb. 8. The next session is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 11, from 1-4 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club, 500 Genesee St., Rochester. Another two-part workshop will be offered Feb. 15 and March 1, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., in the Greece Town Hall auditorium, 2505 Ridge Road W.

This program is being offered through Partners Against Violence Everywhere (PAVE), a program sponsored by Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc. The seminars are free and open to the public. For details, call 716/624-5555.

## ND's PeaceNet schedules Trumansburg gathering

TRUMANSBURG — The first Northeast Regional Conference of Notre Dame PeaceNet is scheduled for 1 p.m. Feb. 11, at St. James the Apostle Church, 17 Whig St.

Notre Dame PeaceNet is an organization of alumni, faculty and students of the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary's College. The group's goals are to call for replacing institutionalized violence with peace and justice alternatives, and to promote the establishment of a chair in Catholic nonviolence at the university in Indiana.

For more information about the organization or the meeting, contact Frank Carver at 607/387-6140.

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