

School reaps benefits of WIN, parent contracts

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Catherine Gaffney said her mouth dropped open when she heard about the \$25 million the Wegmans Inner City Voucher Program would provide for inner-city children attending six Rochester Catholic schools over the next 10 years.

The announcement came as Gaffney struggled to make a decision on re-enrolling her four-year-old daughter, Teresa, at St. Monica's School.

"It wasn't the school," Gaffney said of her hesitancy. "It was the money."

The assistance she will receive through the WIN program made it easier for her to decide to register her daughter in St. Monica's kindergarten.

"That was a big help," Gaffney said. Gaffney is apparently not alone in deciding the gift from Robert and Peggy Wegman could lighten the burden of Catholic-school tuition. Since the WIN donation was announced Aug. 22, St. Monica's has received an average of 25 calls a day from families interested in enrolling their children, according to the principal, Sister Mary Marvin, RSM.

Nor is the situation at St. Monica's unique, according to the Timothy Dwyer, superintendent of schools for the Rochester diocese.

"The phones are still ringing off the hooks at the six schools," Dwyer said. "It's filling up quicker than we anticipated."

But the WIN program is about more than just providing financial aid for students. The program also incorporates the Commitment to Excellence — a pledge the parents of students in all Monroe County Catholic schools make to take an active role in their children's education and attend weekly worship services.

The pledge — which was actually begun in January — was instituted to help emphasize the faith and values components of the curriculum, Dwyer noted.

Dwyer pointed out that the pledge is a less stringent form of the contract

school parents at St. Monica's followed during the 1994-95 school year.

For the past year, St. Monica's has required parents to sign agreements that they will attend monthly parent-teacher conferences and obtain weekly reports from their own faith communities — of whatever denomination — attesting to the fact that their children participated in weekend worship services. Parents who fail to fulfill the contract must withdraw their children from the school.

Sister Marvin acknowledged that she was hesitant about the contract when it was introduced at St. Monica's before the 1994-95 school year, and wondered if parents would accept something so strict.

Indeed, the school's enrollment by late August, 1994, was only around 60, although it eventually reached about 125, Sister Marvin reported. About 20 parents withdrew their children during the school year because they could not fulfill the contract.

But this year, enrollment is already

above 160. And after working with the contract for a year, Sister Marvin has become a wholehearted supporter.

"A lot of parents said it wasn't as bad as they thought it would be," she remarked.

Indeed, the parents' biggest problem was keeping up with tuition bills. This summer, approximately 40 parents said they would not be able re-enroll their students this year for financial reasons.

The Wegmans money will help, Sister Marvin said, but even with the money and other financial aid, each family still has to come up with \$800 to \$1,000 — a significant burden since many of the parents are on welfare or have low incomes.

Beyond the financial obligations, parents are made aware of the requirements of St. Monica's contract during pre-registration interviews, noted Father Peter Enyan-Boadu, parochial vicar of the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward. Many people are aware of what they will be asked to do even before

the interview, he added.

"Word has gotten out because we do what we say we are going to do," the priest said. And, he added, what school officials say they are going to do "is put their children first," the priest noted.

Gaffney noted that she was already actively involved in her daughter's education and in a faith community before coming to St. Monica's. She was attracted to the school by the atmosphere created by broad parental involvement, and faculty and staff concern for the children — in contrast with programs in which her daughter previously had been enrolled.

"It seems to me these teachers, the majority of them are more involved," Gaffney said. "They care more about the child."

As for herself, Gaffney expressed gratitude for the WIN program and the policies at St. Monica's.

"With help like that, (Teresa) should be able to finish (at St. Monica's)," Gaffney said. "With all the help they give us, I'm going to try to be the best parent here."

Tompkins parishes adding new structures

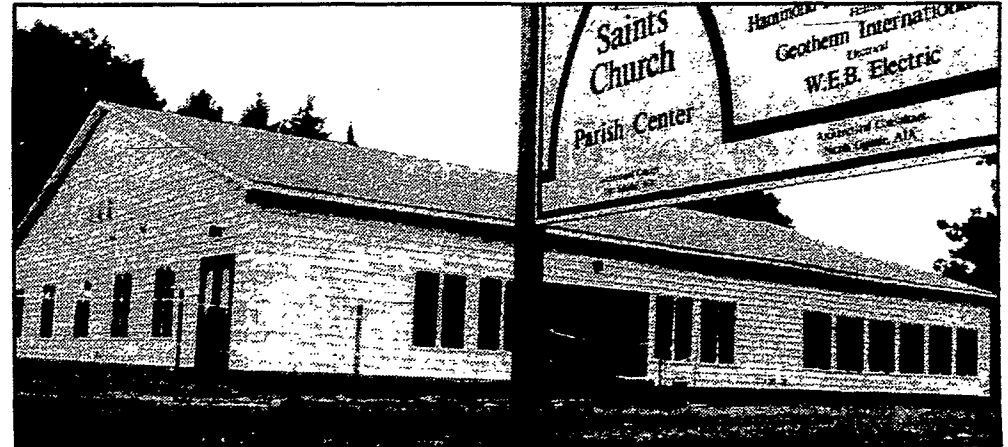
New buildings at two Tompkins County churches are making life more comfortable for parishioners.

Work was completed this past spring on a parish center at All Saints Church in Lansing, located just north of Ithaca. The building stands proudly alongside the church on Ridge Road (Route 34B).

"The parishioners realized their dream," said Father Ronald E. Gaesser, pastor of All Saints.

Father Gaesser lauded the fundraising efforts of the 170-family parish, which set out to raise \$175,000 for the one-year construction project and brought back nearly \$240,000 in pledges.

The All Saints facility includes two offices, a conference room, four classrooms, a large meeting hall and a kitchen. Construction has also been planned for a ramp that will connect the parish center with the church.



— S. John Wilkin/Staff-photographer

The new parish center at Lansing's All Saints Church is located on Route 34B.

This project marks a drastic improvement over a trailer formerly used on the same site for parish events.

Meanwhile, at St. Catherine of Siena

Church in Ithaca — where Father Gaesser also is pastor — a new priest residence is currently being built.

This \$150,000 project is set to be completed in late 1995. Located on the parish grounds on St. Catherine's Circle, the house will contain three bedrooms.

Father Gaesser has already vacated the St. Catherine's rectory and is renting a house in Ithaca until construction of the new residence is done. This allowed for the rectory to be immediately converted into a much-needed office facility, he explained.

"It doubled our available space for the parishioners," Father Gaesser acknowledged. "Before, we had four people operating out of one room in the parish center. As one staff person put it, 'Having this office is like having another staff person.'"

— Mike Latona

Bishop Matthew H. Clark appoints 14 regional synod coordinators

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has appointed 14 people to serve as regional synod coordinators.

The regional coordinators will assist Kathleen Cannon, synod implementation coordinator for the Rochester diocese, with implementation of the diocese's five-year Pastoral Plan. In addition to facilitating networking and collaboration among faith communities in each region, their duties will include convening Synod leaders from parishes

in their regions four times each year, or whenever appropriate.

The coordinators, listed along with their regions, are: Deacon William Dougherty of Elmira (Chemung and Schuyler counties); Mabel Treadwell of Leicester (Livingston); Sister Roberta Tierney, SSND, of Irondequoit (Monroe County North); Ann Bojda of Macedon and Robert Burgos of Fairport (Monroe County Northeast); Louis Di Fabio of Webster (Monroe County

Northwest); Barbara Swiecki of Pittsford (Monroe County Southeast); Joan Tanous of Gates (Monroe County Southwest); Deborah Patrick of Moravia (Seneca and Cayuga counties); Sister Edna Slyck, RSM, and Andrew Smith of Corning (Steuben County); and Patricia Albrecht of Clyde and Jack and Mary Skvorak of Walworth (Yates, Ontario and Wayne counties).

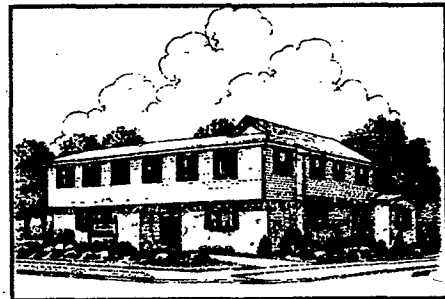
A coordinator for Tompkins and Tioga counties has yet to be named.

V-S & M Vay-Schleich & Meeson Funeral Home, Inc.

Douglas C. Meeson, Robert E. Vay, Roy E. Dilcher, Jr., Robert W. Shaver, Sr., Nicholas J. Miller, Richard Peterson, Steven Marcinkowski, Patrick J. Donnelly, Peter J. Agnello



1075 Long Pond Road



2692 Dewey Ave.

Our Family Serving Your Family Since 1927
663-2100

You'll Find the BEST Entertainment Variety in Town at

 Nazareth College
V.S. Center

FIRST HALF OF SEASON

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| OCTOBER 6 | LIVINGSTON TAYLOR, folk singer |
| NOVEMBER 4 | MARGIE GILLIS, solo dance artist |
| NOVEMBER 10 | THE WESTERN WIND, vocal sextet |
| DECEMBER 9-17 | "THE VELVETEEN RABBIT" |
| DECEMBER 31 | CAPITOL STEPS, political satire |
| JANUARY 27 | THE REDUCED SHAKESPEARE COMPANY, "The Bible" (A Parody) |

For ticket information and reservations,
Call the Box Office at 586-2420.