

Wing and a prayer

From left, Superintendent of Schools Timothy W. Dwyer, Rochester City Court Frank Geraci Jr., eighth-grader Lindsay Jones, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, and Siena Catholic Academy Principal Steve Schockow cut the ribbon to officially open the addition of a new wing at the St. Thomas More Campus, 2617 East Ave., Rochester on Sept. 12.



S. John Wilkin/Staff Photographer

'Reality Cup' challenges rivals to debate

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Reality Cup Committee last week issued a challenge to Monroe County Executive Jack Doyle and his Democratic rival, Eugene Welch, to a debate over issues such as poverty and race relations.

The committee will work with the candidates to work out the date and venue for a debate.

According to an official with the Monroe County Democratic Committee, Welch mailed in his acceptance to the committee Sept. 15, pending Doyle's acceptance and the forum's date.

James Smith, the county-wide campaign coordinator for the Republican Party, said even though Doyle has publicly stated his desire to debate Welch, he did not know if the county executive was aware of the committee's challenge. Smith was not aware of the committee's proposal, he acknowledged.

The challenge for a debate is the latest effort by the committee to draw attention to issues of poverty in the Rochester community. The Reality Cup was created in response to the Ryder Cup golf tournament, which takes place this coming weekend at the Oak Hill Country Club in Pittsford.

Despite the public's perception, the

Reality Cup is not intended as a protest, observed John Klofas, a professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology and a member of the Reality Cup Committee.

"Our effort is really to get the word out, to educate people, not to disrupt anything," Klofas said. "I think we need to move from inflamed rhetoric into some really substantial discussion."

"Still," he acknowledged, "people prefer to see this as a protest — which it never was and was never intended to be."

The idea behind the challenge for a debate is to bring to people's attention the issues being raised through the Reality Cup, Klofas said.

"I think the earlier we can get a debate of substance, the better it will be," he said. The goal, he added, is "to highlight the problems in the community."

The five issues raised in the challenge are: racial and economic segregation in Monroe County; tax burden sharing among Rochester and other Monroe County communities and Monroe County; economic development; addressing the needs of the poor; and plans to improve the quality of life in Monroe County over the next 15 years.

"Poverty is really a threat to the entire community," Klofas said. "It affects the quality of life in the whole community. It's not only a burden on people in one section of Rochester."

He noted that some people have argued that the Ryder Cup may help to bring businesses to Monroe County. He contended, however, that the tournament by itself will not do that.

"Businesses don't move to communities because they have golf tournaments," Klofas argued. "They move business to communities because they are solid, successful, problem-solving communities."

Mass to honor law enforcers

ELMIRA — Law-enforcement officials do not wear uniforms, carry guns and drive cars with flashing lights 24 hours per day.

In fact, many even carry out "civilian" activities like going to church.

And the public occasionally needs to be reminded that people in law enforcement lead normal lifestyles, Elmira Police Officer Dave Smithers said.

Smithers is serving as one of the organizers of the second annual Mass honoring the feast of St. Michael — the patron saint of law enforcers. The Mass will be celebrated Friday, Sept. 29, at 5 p.m. at St. John the Baptist Church, 325 Lake St.

"We invite the public, and maybe they can see the other side of a police officer," Smithers said. "Not the one who has to make the arrest here and there."

Smithers noted that he was confirmed a Catholic four months ago at Elmira's St. Charles Borromeo Church. Appropriately, he took Michael as his confirmed name.

Serving as the Mass' concelebrants will be Father Patrick Connor, pastor of the Eastside Catholic Parish; Father Rick Farrell, Eastside parish's weekend assistant; and Father Paul A. Bonacci, parochial vicar of the Corning Painted Post Catholic Community.

Fathers Connor and Farrell are co-chaplains of the Elmira Police Department. Father Bonacci, meanwhile, was a Seneca County sheriff's deputy in the late 1970s.

Father Connor said the public needs to recognize that police officers, "like other emergency personnel, are often put in situations of great risk and responsibility. We need to remember they're human and they need the support of the community to live up to the high standards of their profession."

A free pasta dinner will be served immediately following the Mass.

In addition to area police officers, the Mass will honor firefighters, ambulance drivers, emergency medical technicians and prison officials — "those who try to preserve the peace," Father Connor said.

For other details about the Mass and dinner, contact Smithers or Elmira Police Officer Jim Collins at 607/737-5626.

— Mike Latona

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