

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Nazareth receives \$3.5 million gift

By Lee Strong  
Associate editor

The late Mabel Costich Miller, a 1924 graduate of Nazareth Academy, has bequeathed \$3.5 million to the academy for scholarships.

The donation is believed to be the largest bequest from one individual to any school in the diocese.

Nazareth officials revealed the bequest at a St. Joseph's Day celebration March 19.

"We're extremely grateful," noted Sister Ann Collins, SSJ, executive director of the Nazareth Schools, which includes Nazareth Academy high school and Nazareth Hall grammar school. "We feel it's another positive sign about the future of the academy."

According to Joan Fama, director of development for the Nazareth Schools, the bequest will be used to establish the Mabel Costich Miller Endowed Scholarship Trust. Each year, half of the income from the trust fund will be used for scholarships for academy students; the other half will be reinvested in the fund so that it can continue to grow. The principal of the fund will not be touched.

"This is going to establish a wonderful endowment for the school," Fama said. "It's going to enable some young women to come to the academy."

More than 200 students currently attend Nazareth Academy.

Before she died Nov. 19, 1995, at age 89, Miller had made it known that the school was included in her will, Sister Collins said. But school officials were not aware of the exact amount of the bequest.

The Rochester resident also left



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer  
Sister Rosemary St. Peter, SSJ, (left) and Sister Elizabeth Snyder, SSJ, hand out St. Joseph's bread to Nazareth Academy students March 19, during an assembly where the school announced a \$3.5 million dollar gift.

\$200,000 each to St. Ann's Home and the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Sister Collins reported. A separate trust fund was set up for Miller's children.

Sister Collins said she had been in contact with Miller over the last eight years, and that Miller had been a regular contributor to the academy's annual alumnae drives.

"She was quiet and unassuming," Sister Collins recalled of Miller. At the same time, she said, "She was a very astute woman and very sharp, and also very frugal."

Moreover, Sister Collins added, "It was a big concern with her that children in

need be provided for."

Miller's estate grew from a small trust her father had left her, Fama said. Miller managed that trust herself, choosing her investments, and eventually amassing a multimillion dollar estate.

"She was a woman before her time," Sister Collins remarked. "She told me when she graduated from Nazareth Academy, that she learned how to fly a plane."

Until her final illness, even though she was approaching 90, she continued to walk a mile a day and to monitor the stock market and her investments, Sister Collins noted.

## Priests, nuns to take part in D.C. fast

Three Sisters of Mercy and four diocesan priests — all former Latin American missionaries — will participate in a fast and vigil on the Capitol steps in Washington, D.C., Friday, March 22, to urge Congress to cease funding of the U.S. Army School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga.

Scheduled to take part in the protest are Fathers Charles Mulligan and Peter Deckman, co-pastors of St. Michael's Parish in Penn Yan; Father Edward Golden, pastor of Church of the Assumption in Fairport; Father Daniel P. Torney, pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Scottsville; Sister Janet Korn, RSM, executive director of Catherine McAuley Housing in Rochester; Sister Kay Schwenzer, RSM, pastoral associate of St. Michael's Parish in Rochester; and Sister Margaret Mary Mattle, RSM, an outreach worker with the rural poor in Steuben County.

According to SOA opponents, School of the Americas provides training for almost 2,000 Latin American and Caribbean soldiers a year. Graduates of SOA have been implicated in thousands of atrocities against civilians and Catholic church workers involved with the poor in Latin America, SOA.

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## Company grew from roots planted by Transfiguration men

**EDITORS' NOTE:** This is the second article in an occasional series highlighting the 10th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' 1986 pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the U.S. economy, "Economic Justice for All."

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

### ROCHESTER

Two groups of people — one from Church of the Transfiguration Parish in Pittsford and one from Booneville, Ky. — have

found a way to fight the Appalachian community's 75 percent unemployment rate.

Sit back and relax.

No, neither group wants its members to kick back and while the hours away. Instead, they want outdoor furniture lovers to sit in chairs made by Appalachian Environmental Products, Inc.

Constructed of recycled plastic and guaranteed for 20 years, AEPI products represent more than just another business' desire to make a buck in the outdoor furniture department. The chairs represent hope, dignity and a new life for a handful of workers in Booneville, located in Owsley County, Ky., the groups say.

"We've got a long backlog of people who want to work," commented Bart Patton, AEPI's president and chief executive officer, during a telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from his Booneville office.

He added that the company employs five people on a seasonal basis.

AEPI was created through the joint efforts of Booneville residents and the Men's Fellowship Group at Transfiguration, according to Michael Piehler, one of the parish's permanent deacons. Between 20 and 35 men participate in the group's activities, which include prayer and service work on behalf of various

church-connected organizations throughout Monroe County, he explained.

Deacon Piehler spoke about the AEPI project in the offices of his auto dealership on Lake Avenue. He was joined by Ken Zablotty, a member of the Transfiguration group and chairman of the group's Free Enterprise Committee.

The men pointed out that the fellowship group has traveled to Owsley County yearly since 1989 to work with Sister Marge Eilerman, OSF, pastoral associate at Holy Family Parish in Booneville. While there, the members have repaired homes owned by impoverished residents, and also engaged in spiritual development through liturgy and prayer.

Many members of the fellowship group come from business backgrounds and seek to integrate their faith and their work, noted Deacon Piehler.

"You have men in the marketplace that are very much trying to be men of God," he said. "If you have enough confidence in God's love, then you can take him to work with you."

Deacon Piehler's words echo those of the U.S. bishops' letter on the economy calling for lay Catholics to seek God not only in church.

"For the laity, holiness is achieved in the midst of the world," the bishops wrote, adding that "lay men and women have the vocation to bring the light of the Gospel to economic affairs."

That light began to shine for the men of Transfiguration in September 1992, while the group was repairing the gutters of a woman's home in Owsley County. Zablotty and Deacon Piehler recalled her wondering aloud about the possibility of building some sort of recycled products in Owsley County.

The men's fellowship group subsequently formed the Free Enterprise Committee and drafted a business plan for AEPI. A board of directors was formed in Booneville in November 1993, and the company was incorporated in 1994.

Start-up capital was provided by Sister Eilerman's Franciscan order, Transfiguration parishioners, Booneville residents and the Christian Appalachian Project, an economic development program run by a Catholic priest in Kentucky, according to Sister Eilerman, who spoke with the *Courier* in a phone interview from Kentucky.

In addition to private funds and stockholders' investments, the project has received moral and financial support from the governments of Booneville and Kentucky, according to Zablotty and Deacon Piehler.

Patton was hired in August 1994, and the company's factory became operational that October.

The AEPI product line is distributed through specialty outdoor furniture retailers and directly from the factory. Patton said the company hopes to expand its sales by targeting such potential customers as hotels and restaurants.

Transfiguration parishioners bought \$17,000 worth of the furniture over the 1995 Christmas season, Zablotty noted. Deacon Piehler added that AEPI will provide informational brochures and display materials to any diocesan parish interested in promoting the project.

Both men stressed that their fellowship group is serving AEPI in a strictly advisory capacity, and that the company's Booneville employees call the shots.

That's important, noted Sister Eilerman, because the area's high unemployment rate afflicts the region's residents both spiritually as well as economically.

"I think any time you have unemployment, you have a sense of people losing their dignity," she observed. "When we can provide for our own families, it makes a difference."

Deacon Piehler added that buyers of AEPI furniture are helping to get families off welfare and out of a cycle of poverty.

"They're not just buying the furni-

ture," he said of customers. "They're buying a story."

Both the deacon and Zablotty said their experiences in Owsley County have made them realize how dependent all people — regardless of their material wealth — are on the grace of God to carry them through this life.

In particular, Zablotty said, it never ceases to amaze him how at peace so many of the poor he meets in Kentucky are when they invite the men's group into their lives.

"These people have nothing, virtually nothing, yet, somehow, they're very, very happy," Zablotty said.

More important, working with the Kentuckians gives the men at Transfiguration a chance to live out the teachings they hear from the pulpit at church, Deacon Piehler said. Booneville is not just a poor community to him anymore, he added.

"It was a place where I felt the Word was flesh," he said.

To learn more about the Men's Fellowship Group at Transfiguration, call the parish at 716/248-2427.

### St. Ambrose Parish offers grant aid to organizations

IRONDEQUOIT — St. Ambrose Parish's Social Ministry Committee is accepting applications from not-for-profit organizations that help the poor or disadvantaged, and that are seeking funding grants. The committee has \$11,000 available.

Interested organizations may call the rectory at 716/288-5000 for an application. Applications are due at the rectory by April 19.

The social ministry committee will evaluate all applicants and select recipients. It reserves the right to distribute the money to one or more than one applicant. The parish is at 25 Empire Blvd., Rochester, N.Y. 14609.