

## CONTINUED...

## school

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Fifty-six percent of the cost of educating a child comes from tuition, which runs \$1,670 to \$2,070, depending on the school, for a family with only one child in the school. Last year 99 percent of tuition was collected, which one official described as phenomenal. Whereas the child's parish once provided a subsidy of 40 to even 60 percent or more of school costs, parishes now carry 30 percent of the burden. And by next year a single tuition rate should be set for parishioners in the county, according to Sister Guerin.

According to David Meisenzahl, diocesan assistant superintendent for business, the remaining 14 percent of school income comes from state reimbursement for such mandated services as testing and attendance records, and, primarily, donations.

The most notable of those donations is the \$25 million gift made by Robert and Peggy Wegman, announced in August 1995. The Wegmans' donation was to help inner-city students over the next 10 years, and established the Wegman Inner City Voucher Program, supporting students at six inner city schools. Pre-K through sixth-grade enrollment at those schools has grown 12 percent since 1994-95, largely thanks to pre-K enrollment.

According to the most recent National Catholic Education Association survey, the average cost per Catholic elementary pupil nationwide was \$2,145 for 1994-95. Sixty percent of that cost was covered by the average \$1,280 tuition and fees. In the Diocese of Rochester the average cost was \$2,163 per student in 1994-95, according to Meisenzahl.

## Where the money goes

Most school income, 75 percent, goes toward salaries and benefits.

Teachers salaries for the upcoming school year range from \$16,115 to \$32,933. (Teachers salaries in the Rochester City School District ranged from \$30,123 to \$68,863 as of 1995-96.)



The second biggest expense is maintenance at 14 percent of a student's cost. This includes the salaries of maintenance staff, utility costs, service contracts and other items.

Operating costs (office supplies, books and other classroom materials) and miscellaneous and general expenses (diocesan administrative costs, financial services and public relations) each run 4 percent of student cost. The final component, financial aid to needy students, accounts for 3 percent of total costs.

Sister Guerin said a major benefit of consolidation has been the combined bargaining power it creates for purchasing such large items as copiers, paving, roofing and lighting.

Enhanced bargaining power has enabled schools to do "nice things that one parish wouldn't be able to afford or finance" in the past, Sister Guerin said, citing window replacement as one example.

Another advantage has been the ability

to offer school employees such additional benefits as dental insurance and paid long-term disability insurance.

## Community support

Most money the schools themselves raise goes toward tuition assistance, Meisenzahl said, but the schools themselves are free to determine how to use such revenues. Such efforts are one of the principle aims listed in the "Lighting the Way" report, "to raise new revenues and provide an ever-increasing pool of financial aid dollars."

"Candy sales, wrapping paper and magazines — those are the big ones," Sister Guerin said. "Everyone likes candy, uses wrapping paper and reads magazines. It's not like (donors are) buying something they don't buy anyway."

Schools also have come up with creative fundraisers. At St. Boniface School in Rochester, "Adopt A Student" brings in \$20,000 a year to help with tuitions. At St. Louis School in Pittsford, the parents' school advisory committee stages GALA, "Gaining Assets for Learning Advancement," which last spring brought in \$20,000.

The event features a progressive dinner in various homes — an idea based on a similar Seton Catholic School fundraiser — and an auction of donated items and services. One raffle prize was \$2,000 toward tuition.

This year proceeds went toward children's desks, carpeting and painting classrooms. GALA also generates money for tuition assistance, which the principal oversees.

The first GALA was intended to build community, according to Mary Pluta, one of this year's chairs. "We billed it as come out, get to now people at the school, an adult evening, fun time. Then we realized, hey, we made money on this. And we had not one bad comment on it," she said.

"We really gear it toward not only fundraising, but to get to know parents of kids your kids go to school with and betterment of the St. Louis community."

A magazine drive is the school's other major fundraiser, bringing in at least as much money as the GALA.

At St. Boniface, the "Adopt A Student" program "has gone over big," according to the school/parish business manager, Ed Sloan, who said the program has been in effect for 14 or 15 years.

"It is vital to the subsidy program at St. Boniface," he said, "especially in view of our declining bingo revenues." A state law passed in 1994 prohibited smoking on any church property that has a school in operation. The resulting decline in bingo attendance means revenue "won't be anywhere near half" of the \$50,000 it used to bring in, Sloan estimated.

"Mr. Wegman's money is super, but

most people need something in addition," he said, noting that the Wegman donation has stabilized the assistance program.

To "adopt a student," parishioners pledge certain amounts toward a child's tuition, in response to solicitation literature. Many pledge the full \$600 suggested, Sloan said.

"By and large it's an elderly population at the parish and most (parishioners) went to St. Boniface School," he said. Sloan himself is a 1931 graduate, and his wife Imelda and their eight children also graduated from St. Boniface.

## Concerns remain

Sloan said that when it comes to the school budget, parents "aren't really that interested in that much detail. It's unlike what you read in the public press where the city and suburbs have a lot of input from the population. We don't have anything of that type and it's a blessing. (Parents) assume (the budget) is being properly handled, and it is."

However, David Peartree, chair of the Catholic School Board of Monroe County, likewise does not detect a great concern with what he calls the "macro budget" of county Catholic schools, but said parents are more concerned about the budgets of their local schools.

To better acquaint parents with the new budget system, the board plans to continue two forums a year in the community, and other meetings at schools, as well to continue sending "Partners: A Newsletter for Catholic School Parents in Monroe County" to parents, which explains components of the new budget system.

"We used to be parish-based schools, so the budgets were parish-based," Peartree said. "Starting in the early '90s we became a quadrant system for a period of years, so the budget planning was done in the four quadrants throughout the county. Most of the budgeting now is down on the county level, and we make the schools' budgets fit within that."

He added that principals do maintain some autonomy within the system.

Despite often-cited stabilization of both budget and enrollment during the past several years, school officials do have concerns:

- At what point does rising tuition — an annual reality — not diminish enrollment?

- Will ordinary, middle-income Catholics be squeezed out of the Catholic schools system?

"You could go back 10 or 15 years, and it has been the concern of every principal, pastor and school board that ever existed to stay as affordable as we can," Sister Guerin said.

"The board is concerned we don't become a system for the very rich and the very poor," she said.

## Thoughts to Consider



**EDWIN SULEWSKI**  
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When a pet dies what can I do for my child?

A child may be quite upset when a pet dies. One way you can help is to plan a ceremony with the child for saying goodbye. A pet funeral gives the child a feeling of being in control and allows him to express some feelings about the loss. Finding a box to place the pet in, digging a grave, and holding a ceremony also satisfies a child's natural curiosity about the physical aspects of death. When a pet dies a child may continue to be sad for several days then, as a rule, they turn their attention to other matters. Listen to your child when he expresses his feelings and be available to answer any questions your child might have.

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## Women Needed for Hormone Therapy Research

As they search for the combinations of hormone replacement therapy that are both safe and effective, the Reproductive Endocrinology Unit and Menopause Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center seek women to participate in a study.

Volunteers must be healthy, post-menopausal women between the ages of 40 and 65. After a physical examination, women will be randomized to one of 8 treatment groups and receive various combinations of an FDA-approved estrogen and/or progesterin, or placebo.

During this one-year study, volunteers are seen every three months. Benefits to volunteers include free Pap smears and lab tests, free mammogram, and possible relief of menopausal symptoms based on the medication(s) they receive. Compensation of \$450 is available. Women who have had a hysterectomy are not eligible.

Women interested in participating can call Wanda Rivers at 275-7891.