

## Clubs, activities teach about broader world

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

Catholicism extends beyond the classroom and the parish, noted Kathy Peters, principal of St. Michael's School, Newark.

She and other Catholic school administrators are trying to expose their students to more of that wider Catholic world.

May 26, for example, she took some St. Michael's students visited St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Irondequoit. "Many kids do not know the Catholic church is universal," she said. "The kids loved it, it was so different. The parents loved it, too."

She also has taken school children to such places as the Franciscan University at Steubenville in Ohio, St. Joseph's Cathedral in Buffalo and Our Lady of Fatima Shrine in Youngstown.

She arranges trips through the FIAT (Faith in Action Together) Club she started at the Wayne County school three years ago. About 25 third-through eighth-graders sign up each year for the club. A friend's relatives in New Jersey donate \$400 a year to sponsor the trips.

"My vision of Catholic education is something that can be more hands-on with Catholicism," Peters said.

Educators across the diocese agree, as apparently do parents and other individuals who provide donations and help with transportation. Lessons often come from trips and service project.

"Usually we are dealing with food, clothes — these are the standard projects through the year, raising money for missions, talking about the poor," noted Eliza-

beth Berliner, principal of Elmira's Holy Family Junior High School. While such projects are valuable learning experiences, so are a variety of other activities, she noted.

Last fall, for instance, seventh- and eighth-graders from Holy Family Junior High planted 1,800 crocuses in downtown Elmira's Riverfront Park, brightening a depressed business area.

"Crocuses aren't vital in anybody's life," Berliner said. "But Mrs. (Margaret) Updyke gave a talk on the importance of giving joy to people passing by — and little things do that."

Student Tony Tuffillaro said a friend of his grandmother's was so impressed with the flowers she asked his grandmother, "Did you see downtown? Someone planted all these crocuses." And his grandmother proudly replied, "My grandson Tony did it."

"We like to do things for the community," Tony said. "And it was fun, really fun." He had gone through his late grandfather's old photograph album, and saw how pretty downtown had been — that was another good reason to work on the project, he said.

Besides, added student Marisa Lytle, "It was fun, with my friends, planting in the rain, getting all messy."

Marisa found that working in the soup kitchen last spring, however, "had more impact on me from the inside."

She and her classmates took donated food, and made macaroni and sauce, bread and butter, brownies and salad, she said.

Four times a year students prepare meals at the Community Free Soup Kitchen, which serves 150 people a night. They and staff donate food or 50 cents toward meat, do the cooking, serving and clean up.



Greg Francis/Staff Photographer

St. Michael School fifth-grader Kristin Sargent, right, asks principal Kathleen Peters about part of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Irondequoit, during the Faith in Action Together (FIAT) Club tour of the church May 26.

At St. Mary's School in Canandaigua, students plant pumpkins in spring, and other students harvest them in fall to sell to family and staff. Money goes to the House of John comfort care house for the terminally ill in Clifton Springs.

Science teacher Elizabeth Hezel heads up the project, which is done at the Bill Strub family farm in Clifton Springs after school and on Saturdays.

"We pray for the people all the time in class," she said of the hospice-type home residents. "Some children have grandparents as patients there. So they are aware of the function of the house."

The pumpkin planting, she said, "is something we do because it brings together so many things in science, from the living and dying, to helping of people."

"She gets pretty excited about stuff like that," said Taylor Brown, a seventh-grader who explained that the teacher keeps the students informed about the pumpkins' progress. "She's a good teacher, too."

Meanwhile, Taylor said, "People drive by every day to see if anything is coming up." One year nothing did, Taylor said. "That's OK. It's just nice to know we tried to do something for the House of John."

"It probably costs Bill Strub and me as much as it makes," Hezel laughed. "We give the children a pizza party after harvest."

Projects beyond the classroom abound:  
• Preschoolers from St. Pius the Tenth School in Chili and St. Monica School in Rochester visit each other's schools to pray, sing and play together for a morning.

• Christ the King School students drew comic strips the past two years to sell for a dime each to the school community, donating the income to the Children's Hospital at Strong.

"I would never have come up with that one," said Principal Colleen D'Hondt, but noted, "I think if we teach the kids it's good to give to others, they grow up knowing it is a good thing to do and as adults will continue to give."



Msgr. John Squiller, St. Josaphat's pastor, explains the significance of an icon to FIAT members during their tour of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Peters created the club three years ago to broaden students' horizons.

• St. Francis de Sales-St. Stephen School, Geneva, had eighth-graders working every other Monday at the Community Lunch Program last spring.

"When I first signed up I was worried I would mess up, or do something wrong," a student wrote later for a religion paper. "I thought the people wouldn't be appreciative. My thoughts were totally wrong."

• Third-graders from St. Patrick's School, Seneca Falls, visited the Harriet Tubman House in Auburn to learn of Tubman's bravery helping slaves escape through the Underground Railway, and also the Heluva Good Cheese factory inodus, and were developing their own floor charts to show the manufacturing process.

• Seton Catholic School, Rochester, connected students with Bethany House throughout the year, delivering items they collected to help the residents.

Msgr. John Squiller, pastor of St. Josaphat's, was delighted to give St. Michael children a tour of his Irondequoit church.

"They enjoyed it," he said, recalling their awe at the iconostasis, the screen separating the sanctuary from the rest of the church, as well as large mosaics and the museum with Ukrainian costumes and painted eggs.

But more important to him was their chance to learn "what it means to be Catholic: unity of faith, worship and rule," he said, and the fact the church embraces not only the Roman rite, but also five Eastern rites.

"It's something different for them," he said.

Turn over a  
**NU**  
leaf this fall

SATURDAY  
OCTOBER 17  
OPEN HOUSE  
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Niagara University can put together a package that makes a high-quality college education affordable for just about everyone. Learn about scholarships, grants, loans and work-study opportunities. NU also offers a variety of graduate programs including Business, Nursing, Criminal Justice, Education and Mental Health Counseling. Attend Niagara University's Open House on October 17 to discover how you can get your degree the NU way.

Tour the campus and meet the academic deans. Register for financial aid seminars by calling the admissions office at 716-286-8700.

**NIAGARA**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
1 800 462 2111

Office of Admissions  
660 Bailo Hall Niagara University  
Niagara University New York 14109 2011

**Pamela Wilkens**  
**White**  
School of Ballet  
WEBSTER - ROCHESTER  
for more information call  
**381-5406**