

## Elmira high school begins fund to honor late athlete

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

Elmira Notre Dame High School has established a scholarship fund in the memory of Joel Stephens, a record-breaking athlete from the high school who died Sept. 30, 1998, of colon cancer. He was only 22.

According to Sister Mary Walter Hickey, RSM, principal of Notre Dame, Joel's parents decided to establish the fund at the time of his death.

"The school meant a lot to his parents, and he meant a lot to us," Sister Hickey said.

The principal added that the fund raised \$3,000 in just its first week. This money, she explained, will be used for families struggling with tuition costs.

"Donations are coming in from all over the country. It's really amazing," Sister Hickey commented.

Joel graduated from Notre Dame in 1995. He had just completed his third year

as a baseball player in the Baltimore Orioles farm system when he became ill in the fall of 1997. His struggle with cancer gained public attention across the Southern Tier and northern Pennsylvania; he was also befriended by several people from the Orioles, including Baltimore player Eric Davis — a colon cancer survivor himself.

Well-wishers turned out to support Joel at a Mass celebrated in his honor last December at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Elmira Heights. A month later, Oriole players and officials were on hand at a benefit dinner for him. Joel attended both events as well.

Joel's high-school coach, Mike D'Aloisio, said an estimated 7,000 people attended the athlete's wake Oct. 2 at Church of the New Covenant in Mansfield, Pa., waiting up to four hours in line to pay their respects.

Just four days before he died, Joel appeared unexpectedly on the sidelines during Notre Dame's 14-0 football win at Tio-

ga. "His father had to literally carry him to the car," said D'Aloisio, ND's athletic director who was also Joel's varsity football and basketball coach.

However, D'Aloisio said that Joel constantly downplayed his illness so that his well-wishers wouldn't worry.

"I know that deep down in his heart, he knew the prognosis wasn't good. But in typical Joel Stephens fashion, he thought about everybody else once again instead of his own concerns," D'Aloisio said.

D'Aloisio said that Joel "was the closest thing to a son I had." The ND coach, who was with the athlete when he died, added that Joel displayed his deep spirituality in his final hours.

"He summoned the courage to open his eyes, reach up to the heavens and make the No. 1 sign," D'Aloisio remarked. "He said, 'I'm not awesome, the Lord's awesome. The Lord's No. 1.'"

Joel had first made headlines through his athletic exploits at Notre Dame. In his senior football season of 1994, he set a Section 4 record for most yards in a game with 352. He ended the season as the all-time Twin Tiers career rushing leader with 4,715 yards, and was named state Class C Player of the Year.

A basketball and baseball standout as well, Joel went to sectional title games in both sports in 1994-95 and helped ND to the Class D baseball crown. He was a 1995 ninth-round draft pick by the Orioles.

Despite all these accomplishments, his former coach said, Joel will be better known for his off-field characteristics.

"The thing with Joel wasn't the amount of hits, home runs — it's because he was a great person," D'Aloisio said.

"I will never see another person like this in my lifetime."

A funeral service for Joel was held Oct. 3 at Church of the New Covenant. Burial was at Evergreen Cemetery in Tioga, Pa.

Joel is survived by his parents, Ronald and Joyce; brothers, Aaron and David; a sister, Lindsay; grandparents, C. Arthur and Marjorie Swanson, and Emmett and Virginia Stephens; fiancée, Erin Wood; and aunts, uncles and cousins.

Sister Hickey said that contributions to the Joel Stephens Scholarship Fund may be sent to Notre Dame High School, 1400 Maple Ave., Elmira, N.Y., 14905.

In addition to the Notre Dame fund, donations in Joel's memory can be made to the Joel Stephens Memorial Fund, Church of the New Covenant, 310 Extension St., Mansfield, Pa., 16933.

## Sister Janet Korn starts new post with diocesan Catholic Charities

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — After 16 years of missionary duty in Chile — and another eight years ministering to pregnant women and mothers in Rochester's inner city — Sister Janet Korn, RSM, knows a thing or two about working with the impoverished.

For these reasons, according to Jack Balinsky, Sister Korn was a natural choice to become social justice awareness coordinator for diocesan Catholic Charities.

"A unique strength of our Catholic Charities family, as will be exhibited in Sister Janet's work, is the ability to blend advocacy with hands-on service to the poor," said Balinsky, diocesan Catholic Charities director. "That makes our advocacy more effective and credible."

Sister Korn began the newly created position in late August. She said that she does, indeed, plan to "share what I have learned."

"Because of my previous work in Chile, and with young pregnant teens and their realities, I feel the need to share the stories of people's lives — people who have come out of poverty and have had the ability to brave themselves through it," she said.

From 1965 to 1981, Sister Korn was a missionary in Santiago, Chile. She directed pastoral ministry while living and working with the poor, and she also provided ministry and advocacy for political prisoners and their families during years of an oppressive military dictatorship.

More recently, Sister Korn ministered to low-income mothers and their babies as founder and administrator of Catherine McAuley Housing (1990-98) and as interim director of Melita House (1997-98).

In her new position, Sister Korn said she is encouraging diocesan Catholics to link with Catholic Charities on public policy issues. She also seeks to raise overall awareness of Catholic Charities' services.

"My mind has been blown by what Catholic Charities does. It's really huge," Sister Korn said. "They're serving between 80,000 and 100,000 people in the diocese alone. When you get out into the rural areas, there's so much that people don't know about."

Sister Korn will also encourage diocesan participation for the national Catholic Charities conference, Oct. 1-3, 1999, at the Rochester Convention Center.

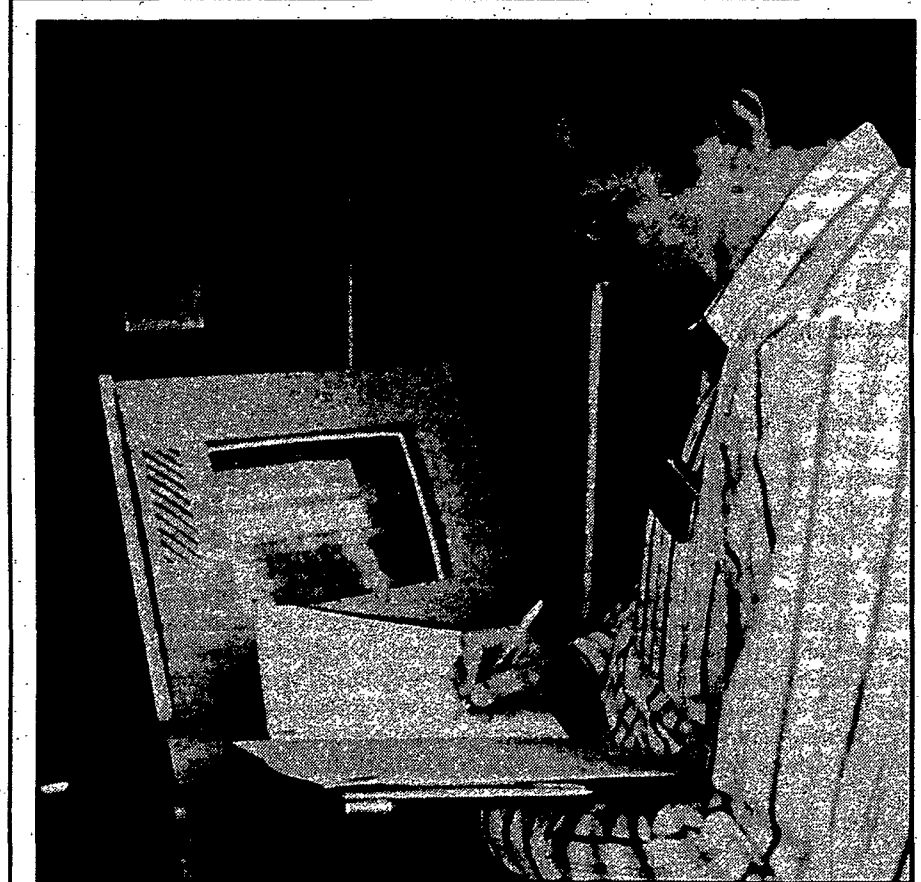
"I plan to speak to as many groups as I possibly can, in as many parishes as I possibly can. 'Out and about' is my mission," she said.

To that end, Sister Korn has spent her first month visiting such parishes as St. Christopher's in North Chili; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Hamlin; and St. Michael's/St. Andrew's in Penn Yan and Dundee. In addition, Balinsky said, Sister Korn has been meeting with (Catholic Charities) staff and boards, learning about our programs.

Sister Korn said she is unsure if her full-time position will extend beyond the national conference.

"It's for one year at this point. It could depend on funding," she remarked.

Along with her social ministry experience, Sister Korn has held many leadership roles within the Rochester Sisters of Mercy. She served on the community's leadership team from 1981 to 1989, directing the Lay Associate program and serving as ministry director. She was also the community's director of formation from 1990 to 1997.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

### Grave questions, high-tech answers

Dave Rich, a parishioner of Guardian Angels Church, Henrietta, uses a new interactive kiosk at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Rochester, to find the location of a deceased cousin Oct. 7. The kiosk features a touchscreen and can print a map to a selected grave, even when the cemetery office is closed.

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