

St. Mary's OB unit to close ahead of schedule

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Margie Kelly is in the midst of a modern-day "no room at the inn" Christmas story.

Kelly is due to give birth to her fourth child Dec. 24. She had looked forward to having the baby at St. Mary's Hospital, where two of her three children were born.

"I just like the whole Catholic aspect," Kelly said.

Because her doctor had discontinued privileges at St. Mary's, Kelly's third child was born at Highland Hospital. Although Kelly planned to return to St. Mary's by using a midwife, it now appears that Kelly's fourth child, also, will be born at a hospital other than St. Mary's.

Unity Health System announced Nov. 13 that the St. Mary's maternity unit will close Dec. 19 — seventh months ahead of schedule, and five days before Kelly's due date.

"I'm obviously disappointed. I'm going to be real active, and try to have (the baby) before the 19th," joked Kelly, a parishioner at St. Charles Borromeo Church in Greece.

The obstetrics unit will relocate to Park Ridge Hospital in Greece as part of the consolidation of St. Mary's and Park Ridge into Unity Health System. The new maternity unit will be known as the St. Mary's Family Birth Place.

But this facility — the first of its kind at Park Ridge — is not due to open until late August 1999, leaving a gap of approximately nine months in which Unity Health cannot provide any obstetrics care.

According to Stewart Putnam, Unity Health's chief operating officer, women who had planned to give birth at St. Mary's during that period will be accommodated by the Strong Health System, which in-



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Certified Nurse-Midwife Mary Dahl Maher helps Luke Kelly, 2, and Emily Kelly, 6, listen to the heartbeat of their expectant mother's baby Nov. 19 at Park Avenue Midwifery. Margie Kelly's baby is due Dec. 24.

cludes Strong Memorial Hospital and Highland Hospital.

Putnam explained that Unity Health moved up the closing date of St. Mary's maternity unit to allow construction work on an adult nursing facility at St. Mary's to be completed by next summer.

The adult home, to be known as St. Mary's Living Center, will occupy all of St. Mary's second floor and part of its third floor. It will accommodate residents of the

Park Hope Nursing Home as part of Unity's plan to convert all of St. Mary's Hospital into a chronic-care (long term) facility, and all of Park Ridge into an acute-care (short term) hospital.

Putnam explained that only 29 percent of the beds in St. Mary's maternity unit were used during the first six months of 1998. Accelerating the unit's closing date, he said, could save \$1 million.

The new obstetrics unit at Park Ridge

will contain 21 beds, compared to St. Mary's 14-bed unit. St. Mary's delivered fewer than 700 babies last year, whereas the new unit at Park Ridge will be equipped for 2,000 births per year.

"We're confident we're going to be able to hit that. Whenever Park Ridge has introduced a quality service in that part of the county, it seems to be very well-utilized," Putnam said.

Putnam also emphasized that the new facility will preserve Catholic principles by not performing abortions. He added that Park Ridge has never performed an abortion or been involved with physician-assisted suicide.

Putnam said that many employees of St. Mary's obstetrics unit will be placed temporarily in other positions within Unity Health between December and August.

However, he acknowledged, job losses in obstetrics are anticipated as part of an overall staff reduction during the merging process.

Midwives, also, will be affected. Mary Maher, who is serving as Kelly's midwife, said that she must now apply for privileges at other hospitals and be willing to work with different physicians. Yet she said she doesn't anticipate her business will suffer because of the St. Mary's maternity unit's early closing.

Although the new unit will maintain the St. Mary's identity, this move will mark the end of an era at St. Mary's, the only Catholic hospital in Monroe County.

"One of the hidden treasures of St. Mary's is the smallness of size, and the intimacy," remarked Maher, a parishioner at St. Bridget's Church in Rochester.

"The Catholic ambience will be gone," Maher added. "That special mission — the crucifix in the room, the Holy Family (statue) in the hallway."

Obituary

Robert Schwartz, at age 50; noted teacher and musician

ROCHESTER — How strongly did Robert Schwartz affect the people he encountered during his 50 years on earth? The overflow congregation at Holy Family Church on Nov. 20 might serve as a good measuring stick.

School was closed that Friday so that McQuaid Jesuit High School students could join alumni, family and friends for Mr. Schwartz's funeral Mass at his native parish. Mr. Schwartz, who taught social studies, theology and English for 23 years at McQuaid, died Nov. 15, 1998, after a long illness.

"This morning, Bob is teaching his last class. The school of life is in full session, and Bob is teaching," said Father James Schwartz (no relation), former Holy Family pastor, during his homily.

Mr. Schwartz graduated from St. Andrew's Seminary and St. John Fisher College. He taught at the former St. Theodore's School, then worked briefly as a full-time vocalist and acoustic guitarist before going to McQuaid in 1974.

In addition to teaching, Mr. Schwartz was also a longtime assistant coach of the McQuaid hockey program. And, although he never taught music at McQuaid, Mr. Schwartz frequently assembled students to play in small groups with him.

Mr. Schwartz was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in January 1997. He became director of McQuaid's annual fund in the fall of 1997, and served in that role until this past September.

During this time, Mr. Schwartz fulfilled a dream by releasing his own CD, "Long Time Comin'," in January 1998. His own rendering of "I Gave You Each

Other" on that album served as his funeral Mass recessional song. Its chorus, according to Father Schwartz, is "perhaps the most important lesson Bob ever taught."

It goes: "I gave you each other / Take care of each other / You are all you've had / In good times and in bad / Be friends to each other."

"He was always generous to a fault with his time and talents. With Bob, friendships never end," said Father Schwartz, a friend of Mr. Schwartz's for 30 years.

"He just had this thing about him. He would never turn away anyone," added Jerry Votava, 17, a senior at McQuaid. "Even people he didn't know that well, he had a big impact on them."

"Mr. Schwartz was a parishioner at St. Joseph's Church in Penfield at the time of his death. He is survived by his wife, Patricia; children, Eric and Jennifer; mother-in-law, Jeanette Trinkaus; brothers, John (Carol), Thomas (Amy) and Joseph (Donna); sisters, Mary Louise (Edward) Fleur, Gerianne Schwartz and Rose Schwartz; and several nieces and nephews.

Donations in Mr. Schwartz's memory may be made to the McQuaid Jesuit High School Memorial Fund, 1800 S. Clinton Ave., Rochester, N.Y., 14620.

EDITORS' NOTE: A tribute to Mr. Schwartz can be found on the McQuaid Web site at www.mcquaid.org. In addition, Mr. Schwartz's CD will continue to be sold at the McQuaid bookstore and at Borders Books and Music.

—Mike Latona

Recognizing

* Father Francis H. Vogt, retired, was honored by his namesake Francis Center, Catholic Family Center's homeless shelter for men, at an open house Oct. 2 at the center, 547 Joseph Ave., Rochester.

* Lee Anne Fox of Ovid, Joseph Cirencione of Geneva, Robert Kernan of Seneca Falls and David Fox of Auburn were elected to the Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes board and seated at its July meeting.

* Patrick Fox, of the Catholic Family Center's board of directors, received the Child Welfare League of America 1998 Board Leadership Award in August.

Courier issues last call for Christmas edition stories, poetry

The *Catholic Courier* is still accepting original Christmas short stories, memoirs and poetry for its keepsake Dec. 24 Christmas issue.

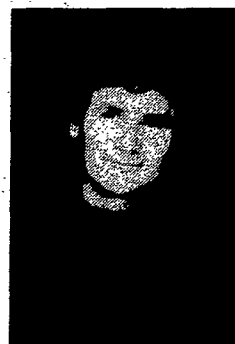
Stories and memoirs should be no longer than 1,000 words. Poetry may be in any style and format — rhymed, unrhymed, haiku, sonnets, free verse, etc. — but should be no longer than 24 lines.

All entries should be typed.

The *Courier* staff will select works for publication from entries received by 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3. Authors desiring return of their works must include stamped, self-addressed envelopes.

Mail submissions to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624, or e-mail them to cathcour@frontiernet.net.

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