

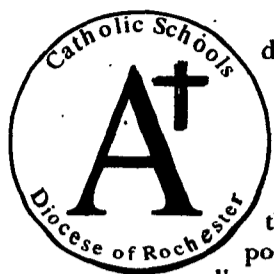
# Donors give DeSales, six schools \$15 million

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

**GATES** — Right before the Diocese of Rochester began celebrating Catholic Schools Week Jan. 29 to Feb. 2, a group of anonymous donors gave seven schools in the Finger Lakes 15 million reasons to whoop it up even more than usual.

At a Jan. 26 press conference at the diocesan Pastoral Center, officials announced that a group of nine anonymous donors had given \$15 million to DeSales High School in Geneva and six Finger Lakes area Catholic elementary schools. DeSales alone will get \$5 million with the rest going to the elementary schools that are the high school's feeders.

"The timing of this is absolutely won-



derful," said Peter Koch, chairman of the board of trustees of DeSales.

Koch noted that DeSales supporters had been discussing seeking matching grants and other funds from various business leaders prior to learning of the \$5 million grant. He said the \$9 million going to DeSales is part of a \$9 million total endowment school supporters are trying to raise to implement a master plan to overhaul the school and make it "the very best in the Finger Lakes Region." He added that the gift will enable

DeSales to fulfill its goal of turning no student away for a lack of money.

"This gift by these generous donors is just ... the first step," he said.

The gift to diocesan schools is second in size only to \$25 million given a group of inner-city Rochester Catholic schools by supermarket chain founder Robert Wegman and his wife, Peggy, six years ago. That gift was the largest-ever single gift given to diocesan schools, and among the largest given to Catholic schools in U.S. history.

Diocese of Rochester officials said they also believe the \$15 million gift is among the 10 largest ever given to Catholic schools in U.S. history. A member of the same group of donors gave DeSales \$1

million two years ago.

Joining Koch at the press conference were Bishop Matthew H. Clark; Timothy W. Dwyer, diocesan superintendent of schools; and Fred Smith, principal of St. Mary's School, Waterloo.

Principals from the other Finger Lakes schools receiving portions of the gift were on hand as well: St. Mary's, Canandaigua; St. Francis DeSales/St. Stephen, Geneva; St. Michael's, Newark; St. Michael's, Penn Yan; and St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls. DeSales Principal, Daniel Skinner, was also present at the press conference.

Dwyer said that most of the donors have ties to the schools targeted.

"For years these schools have offered a

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## New York state



## on student standards



**A**s a new president and Congress begin discussions about education reform — including talk of testing all the nation's students annually — less than half the nation's states measure their schoolchildren through annual tests now.

New York has long required assessment testing, though not for every grade, as the president is suggesting. In the 1990s, the standards that testing measured were raised and the tests themselves changed. From Jan. 29 to Feb. 2, fourth-graders throughout the Empire State were taking assessment exams in English Language Arts mandated by the state. This exam, instituted in 1999, is administered over three days for one hour each day, and tests students on their listening, reading and writing skills.

Story by Rob Cullivan

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