

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Teacher pool shrinks yearly

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

When the 2000-01 school year began, Mary Caffrey thought her staffing needs were all set. However, the principal of St. Joseph's School in Auburn said five of her teachers have since been contacted by public schools and two of them left for new positions.

"We're excellent training ground for teachers," Caffrey quipped.

Because public schools can offer double the salaries of St. Joseph's, Caffrey said, she tries "not to stand in the way" of teachers who consider moving on. Meanwhile, it's becoming harder to find replacements when Catholic-school teachers leave permanently or for extended breaks, another principal observed.

"I've had two teachers go on maternity leave this year, and that was a real challenge to cover their spots," said Stephen Oberst of St. Pius Tenth School in Chili. "In past years I may have had four to six people interview for a position. The last couple of years, it's been two people." He credits this decrease to "turnover in the public school system, largely because of retirements expanding."

Though overall staffing in Catholic schools is still sufficient, the supply of candidates for openings has shrunk significantly in recent years, said Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ, outgoing diocesan Catholic schools assistant superintendent of human resources. Only a few years ago, Sister Steinwachs noted, she drew from a pool of 400 candidates for full-time and substitute positions. That list is now between 60 and 80.

To address the shortage, the diocesan schools department has developed several recruitment and retention incentives. Topping the list is an improvement in salaries.

Sister Steinwachs said her department instituted a 6-percent pay raise for 2000-01, with another 6-percent increase planned for 2001-02. This would bring the basic salary for a first-year Catholic school teacher to just over \$19,000 per year, and slightly more than \$20,000 for an advanced-degree teacher. The raises apply to all Monroe County schools and most schools in outlying counties. The Catholic schools department hopes to maintain the 6-percent annual raise for at least a five-year period, she said.

As always, Sister Steinwachs said, she emphasizes the strong diocesan health benefits package to prospective teachers. And for substitutes, the pay rate of \$70 per day — \$85 for long-term positions — is a strong selling point.

"We are competitive, even better than some of the outlying public schools," she said.

The schools office is also stepping up its promotional efforts. For instance, notices seeking retired and first-year teachers appeared in numerous parish bulletins in late 2000. Sister Steinwachs said she got a large response, though only a handful of those who inquired were qualified.

Sister Steinwachs, who will retire July 15, said her department is eyeing other possible recruitment initiatives. Among them are offering tuition assistance for college students who pursue a career in Catholic education; developing a Catholic education "cadet program" for high schoolers; and adding a program that would offer entertainment and shopping discounts for Catholic school teachers.

## Troupe stages shows for scholarships

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

It may seem like a lot of song and dance, but the former Aquinas Follies — now the Actors for Catholic Education (A.C.E.) Performing Arts Society — has a serious mission: supporting Catholic education.

In fact, that's what finally propelled Doreen Crane, the group's treasurer, onto the stage.

"I'd always wanted to be onstage at Bishop Kearney," said the 1969 BK graduate. "I used to think, 'I wish I could be up there.' But when I went to Bishop Kearney I was a little more shy."

Through dance lessons in Hilton, Crane became friends with fellow school parent Diane Weber, who talked her into joining the Follies in 1993.

Having been educated in Catholic schools since kindergarten, Crane found the idea appealing. She noted that the musical group was formed in 1977 to raise money for the former Cardinal Mooney High School in Greece. From that point on its mission has been performing to raise money for Catholic education.

"We all enjoy being onstage, but that's the underlying theme we have. That's why we do it," Crane said.

Weber has even offered to help send relatives' children to Catholic schools.

"The basics are drummed into you in Catholic school," said Weber, who is A.C.E.'s president. "Your spelling, your reading, your math. The atmosphere is more conducive to learning. I think more would opt for it if they could afford it."

After Cardinal Mooney closed in 1988 the Cardinal Mooney Follies moved to Aquinas Institute and became the Aquinas Follies. In 1997 the group incorporated as a nonprofit organization, becoming A.C.E. Performing Arts Society Inc., in an effort to obtain grant money. Now the group has affiliated with Bishop Kearney High School, where it is performing its 23rd



David Wallace/Photo intern

(From left) Amy Harrington of Rochester, a parishioner of St. Mark in Greece, and Mary Kelley of Webster rehearse for "On Broadway."

show, "On Broadway," which opened Feb. 2-3 and continues Feb. 9-11.

"Bishop Kearney had expressed an interest in us," Weber said. "We originally talked to Brother (Raymond) Verduynde before he left. When Mark Peterson came in (as president), we thought, 'Is he going to be enthusiastic?' He was, and then some. ... We've had 110 percent or more from them."

Proceeds from performances will go to Bishop Kearney's general scholarship fund and a Cardinal Mooney Scholarship fund the high school set up at the beginning of this school year to help Mooney alumni send their children to Kearney. "They're trying to incorporate alumni from Cardinal Mooney who feel lost and have no school to go back to anymore," Crane said.

"What a wonderful idea," added Weber, whose daughter attended Cardinal Mooney. "It pulls us all together again."

The group consists entirely of volunteers except for its choreographer/director,

Robin Wunsch, and music director, Mike Szatkowski, music director at St. John the Evangelist.

Wunsch, a Lutheran, runs A Little Bit of Broadway dance studio in Greece.

"I don't have a problem with that," she said. "The thing with this particular organization right now is they are funding the education of children, which is more important than what religion they are. They're putting away money for a scholarship to assist kids who can't afford it."

Wunsch even recruits most of her family, most of whom also are Lutheran, to help with the shows.

"We beg and borrow all the nieces and nephews," she said. Shaun and Dan move sets, Nicole ushers, Erica operates the curtains. Wunsch's mother, Marie, is house manager. Wunsch's sister, Vicki Stocking, helps manage the stage; her husband has worked with the Weber's to make sets.

"When one is involved, you've got the whole family," Weber commented. While as many as 40 performers have filled the stage, this year about 25 will.

The musical group at one time raised as much as \$8,000 for its host school. Proceeds have declined in recent years. The group gave Aquinas \$1,000 last year and \$2,000 the year before, according to Crane. "It would be nice to get it up there again," she said.

Program ads, promoted largely by Cos Lombardini (Aquinas '52), provide the group's working money — its two salaries, costumes and other production costs. Normally the cast comes up with its own costumes, however. Ticket money is earmarked for the school.

Marji Lombardini (Nazareth Academy '52) plans to sit out this year's performance for health reasons, for the first time in seven years, but will be among the fans in the audience.

"The music is really fantastic," she said. "It really is a very well-organized show, and I think people will enjoy it."

## Obituary

### William G. Connors Sr., 59; St. James Mercy CEO

William G. "Bill" Connors Sr., 59, died Jan. 29, 2001, of a rapid blood infection. He had been president/CEO of St. James Mercy Health System in Hornell since 1999.

"It has been difficult in dealing with Bill's loss," said Fran Macafee, interim CEO. He added, however, that Mr. Connors left a clear path for the 300-bed hospital/long-term care system.

"Just the overall direction and diversification the health system has moved into owes much to Bill's leadership and put us on the right path," Macafee said.

Shocked friends and family packed St. Ann's Church in Hornell Feb. 2 for Mr. Connors' funeral Mass.

"He really never showed many symptoms other than a cold and what he thought was arthritis-type pain," Macafee said. "Bill was always very strong and had a high threshold of pain. He was just dealing with it, that's all."

He was admitted to St. James on Jan. 28, airlifted to Strong Memorial Hospital about 10:30 p.m., and died the next morning.

"It was just an awful thing, I still don't

want to believe it," said Father Jeremiah Moynihan, who knew Mr. Connors through his 16 years of service as chaplain at St. James Mercy Health. Every year the two met at the Corning LPGA Classic, where the priest served as marshal and Mr. Connors worked on crowd control.

"We had some grand times together," Father Moynihan said. "How much Bill loved life; he always had that ready smile and Irish wit."

The CEO always had time for people, the priest recalled, and would put his feet up on his desk during their visits and listen.

The mothers of Father Moynihan and Mr. Connors shared a room at MercyCare until their deaths. The family accepted the priest as "one of their own."

Mr. Connors had worked in management of St. James Mercy Health System for 26 years.

"He was a top-notch professional," said Jack Balinsky, director of diocesan Catholic Charities and diocesan health-care coordinator. "And he also had the generosity and caring of spirit reflective of

the Gospel message. It was always 'We'll find a way to make it work.'"

A member of St. Ann's Parish, Mr. Connors had served numerous community organizations. He was a member of the Southern Tier Social Ministry Board of Directors, president of the Hornell YMCA Board of Directors and campaign chairman for the Western Steuben United Way.

Survivors include his daughter, Brigid, and grandson, Carl "CJ" of Syracuse; sons, William Jr. and Gregory (Jeni) of Rochester, and Matthew of Hollywood, Calif.; brother James (Katie) of Hornell; sister, Joan (John) Conti of Lewiston; his identical twin, George (Barbara) of Corning; and a sister-in-law, Eileen of Hornell.

Father Moynihan celebrated the funeral Mass, with Father James Jaeger and Father Robert Kanka concelebrating, and Deacons Ray Defendorf and Robert McCormick assisting. Burial was in St. Mary's Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to the Memorial Fund of St. James Mercy Foundation, 411 Canisteo St., Hornell, NY 14843.

—Kathleen Schwar



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