

# FOCUS ON EDUCATION

## Parish sets Works of Love into motion

By Kathleen Schwar  
Assistant editor

Have you ever seen the hands of God? Would you like to see God's hands?

Ellen O'Connor of Catholic Family Center asked those questions of children at Holy Ghost Church, during a religious-education class prayer service July 27. The children nodded.

"OK, raise your right and left hand and put them in front of you," she said. Dozens of little hands went into the air. Then O'Connor informed them that what those hands had done was a "really big deal."

The Holy Ghost children had performed the first Works of Love project in the Rochester Diocese by gathering 10 laundry baskets and 10 bags and boxes full of soap, paper towels, shampoo and other items, including a toy truck. The items were given to reunited families reestablishing their homes after participating Restart Substance Abuse Services.

"You are God's hands, feet and heart here on earth," O'Connor told the children.

"Dear Friend," read one of several letters children packed with the items, "Here's some things to help you in your new home. I know how hard it must be to move into your new home. It's hard, but don't be afraid. God is always with you, so you will never be alone."

O'Connor, manager of agency volunteer services for Catholic Family Center, explained that she and Laurie Orman, Holy Ghost's Christian formation coordinator, had come up with the project for Works of Love week, which will be celebrated across the diocese Oct. 20-27.

"We are just ahead of the game," Orman said, noting her students' efforts set an example for what others may do in October.

After receiving materials about Works of Love that had been distributed to diocesan religious-education directors, Orman asked Ruth Putnam, Works of Love coordinator with Catholic Charities, what her classes might do.

Catholic Charities is encouraging diocesan schools, parish youth groups, faith-formation and social-ministry groups to join in the efforts. The week is designed to in-



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Summer religious education students say the Our Father during a prayer service July 27 at Holy Ghost Church, Gates. The children brought forward baskets of donations for former homeless people in the first Works of Love project.

corporate justice education into service, Putnam said, noting that a 1998 letter from the U.S. bishops asserted that Catholic social teaching needs to be incorporated more in Catholic schools and religious education.

"Oftentimes when we just serve, we serve without thinking about the people we are serving," she said. "We need to reflect on why is the service necessary, is there something we need to do more, in our own life or community, to change the system that's made it that way."

"Schools are aware of that and are interested in partnering with us," she said.

Schools and parishes have application forms for Works of Love, and Putnam has asked that they return them and inform her of the projects they've chosen by Sept. 7. They are welcome to work with an agency of their choice or with a regional Catholic Charities office.

"I think people are looking for something like this," Putnam said, adding that

participants expressed interest during an Aug. 8 workshop she conducted on Works of Love at diocesan Leadership Days. In her presentation she spoke about key social teachings the projects might address, including life and dignity of the human being; call to family, community and participation; the option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation.

"I'm expecting a grain of sand this year," Putnam said, but explained that she would like to see Works of Love become an annual program.

While some individuals and groups already take part in United Way's Day of Caring in April and Gannett's Make a Difference Day in October, Putnam doesn't expect the program to compete. Instead, whatever people are doing, she suggested, "They can take a piece from ours and make it grow, as far as service and advocacy."

## Survey ranks college 10th

Nazareth College ranked 10th in a National Collegiate Athletic Association survey of student-athlete graduation rates among Division III schools.

The school recently announced the results, saying its rate was 89 percent. The survey included athletes who were freshmen in the 1994-95 school year and were given six years to earn diplomas.

The first USA Today/NCAA Foundation Academic Achievement Awards recognized schools in all three divisions.

Nazareth also ranked 10th among Division III schools for having a student-athlete graduation rate that is 25 percent higher than the general student body.

"We're certainly pleased to be part of a group of schools that are committed to academic excellence," said Nazareth President Thomas J. O'Connell.

The survey was conducted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association's National Student-Athlete Academic Achievement Study.

The study is the first of its kind to measure the academic achievement of student-athletes in Division III schools.

The study also found that 89 percent of Nazareth's student-athletes graduated within six years of starting college.

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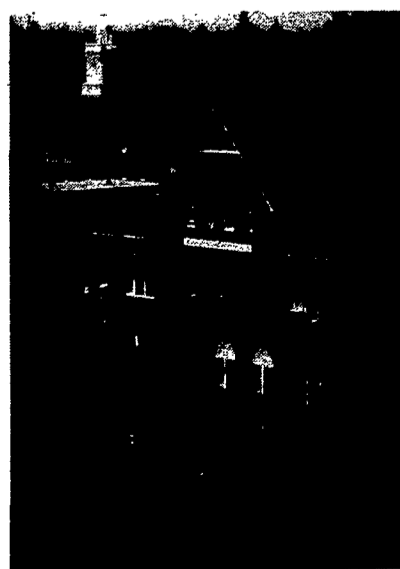
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