

DIOCESAN NEWS

Students collaborated on Web 'fun facts' site

By Kathleen Schwar
Assistant editor

School isn't as hard as people make it out to be, according to Jordan Perez.

Actually, "it's pretty fun," said Jordan, a seventh-grader at Bishop Hogan Catholic Academy.

Jordan along with friends Christopher Larrabee, Matthew Passantino and Michael Peartree constitute the "LP3" gang. LP3 stands for Larrabee ("L"), and the others (three "Ps").

In sixth grade at Irondequoit's St. Margaret Mary School last year, LP3 designed a United States Fact Page on the World Wide Web. Designing the page was fun, the students said, but better yet was winning fourth place in an international contest sponsored by ThinkQuest, a non-profit organization that attempts to advance education through the use of technology.

The animated site features a U.S. map that allows visitors to click on any state and view a separate fact page about that state — its bird and flower, its flag, and even hear a digitized version of the state song. The page also features games.

At a graduation awards ceremony last summer, St. Margaret Mary presented each of the boys with a ThinkQuest certificate of excellence for their achievements, a certificate from the Monroe County legislature and a keychain-calculator.

Jordan said they also received something else — "pride."

"I don't really tell people that, but it feels good to win," Jordan acknowledged.

Christopher Larrabee now attends McQuaid Jesuit High School; all three "Ps" are at Bishop Hogan.

They figure sooner or later, they'll design another Web page together. In fact, Christopher and Matthew are thinking of creating one for a Cub Scout troop, for which they would receive credit for rank advancement in their own Boy Scout Troop 356 at St. Margaret Mary.

They almost shrug off the difficulty of their Web-design work, though they acknowledge they met through lunch periods and on weekends to do it. Their non-balance may stem from the fact that all four boys have worked with computers since kindergarten.

"Actually I think it was pre-school," said Michael. He noted that St. Margaret Mary School "had computers in every room — just some old ones," and remembers playing such games as "Hot Dog Stand" and "Treasure Hunt Math."

In sixth grade, the students got a "real computer teacher," the boys said, referring to an instructor who taught comput-

ers exclusively. His name was Richard Hartmetz.

"He is really nice, he got really involved with the project and really made it fun for us," Christopher said. "He was sort of patient with us — we made mistakes — and told us we were doing good when we were doing good, and helped us along through everything we did."

St. Margaret Mary opened a new computer lab in the fall of 2000 and hired Hartmetz, who has a master's degree in computer education, to teach four days a week. This move completed a three-year plan begun by the former computer teacher, Kristin Klatt, in which the school made a \$50,000 commitment to teaching technology. The money was raised primarily through fundraising activities.

Students in kindergarten through sixth grade are exposed to HTML programming, or Web page design; video game design, video conferencing and other advanced computer projects.

"From second grade on up, they're designing their own Web pages and designing their own video games," Hartmetz said.

"We actually are doing the HTML code. My kids don't use things like (the software program) FrontPage, which ... writes for them," he explained. "My kids are learning to write in code. We're way beyond what the (other) kids in the contest were doing. Our kids actually programmed."

In fact, he said, Michael is now helping Hartmetz fine-tune a program called Net Meeting the teacher is installing at the school. "We are going to try video conferencing between various schools, even possibly Europe, so kids can communicate with other students like themselves," Hartmetz said.

Of the four students, Michael alone is thinking of becoming a computer engineer.

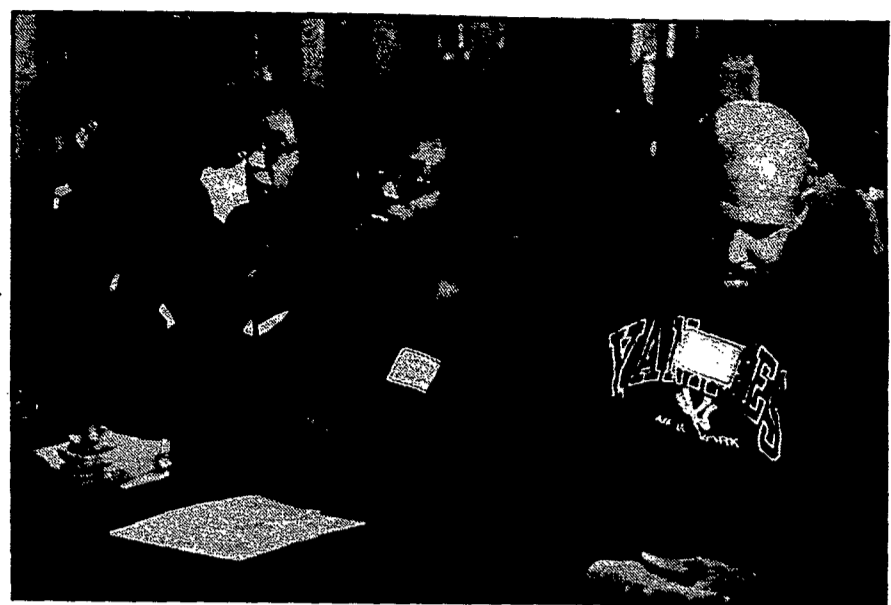
Matthew said that he'd like to become a Catholic elementary school teacher. "I've known that since kindergarten."

The boys realize that many people do not understand computers.

"My grandma had no clue how to work anything and now she knows how to do a lot of things (on computer)," Michael said. His grandparents received a computer for their anniversary and started taking computer classes at the Jewish Community Center. "They said that it's really good," he added.

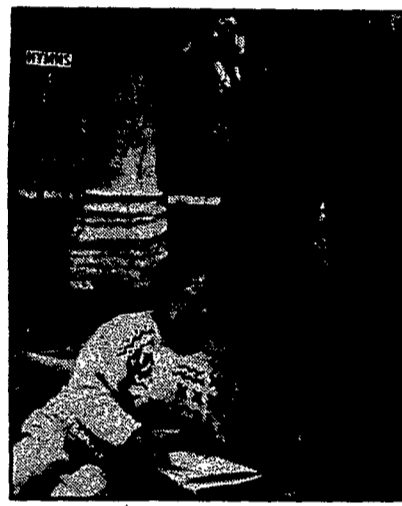
Jordan offered another suggestion for computer neophytes: "I'd say ask Mr. H."

EDITOR'S NOTE: The students' site may be found through <http://www.stmms.org>. Click on "School News and Recent Events."



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Congress delegates prepare



Above, David Divers (right) of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish and Denise Brady of St. Augustine Parish close their eyes in prayer at the end of a diocesan Morning of Reflection at St. Monica's Church, Rochester, Jan. 26. The gathering was intended to prepare African-American Catholics from the Rochester Diocese for the National Black Catholic Congress in Chicago Aug. 29-Sept. 1. At left, event co-moderators Father Michael Upson, administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish, and Brenda Easley Webb, director of the Buffalo Diocese's Office of Black Ministry and NBCC regional coordinator, enjoy a laugh.

Driver who hit priest sent to jail

Acting Seneca County Court Judge W. Patrick Falvey sentenced Philip R. Johnson Jan. 22 to six months in jail and five years probation for his role in the vehicular death of Father Brian Jeffers.

In addition to jail and probation time, Johnson, 54, was also ordered to perform 1,000 hours of community service and pay more than \$55,000 in restitution to the estate of Father Jeffers, according to David Mashewski, assistant district attorney for Seneca County. Restitution was intended to cover medical, funeral and other costs.

Johnson, a resident of Fayette, N.Y., pleaded guilty Dec. 4 to criminally negligent homicide and driving while intoxicated in the death of Father Jeffers. On July 22, 2001, the van Johnson was driving struck a motorcycle being driven by 37-year-old Father Jeffers. The priest died early July 23 at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester.

According to former District Attorney Donna M. Cathy, Johnson admitted that,

while driving north on Route 96 in the Town of Fayette, he crossed into the southbound lane and struck Father Jeffers' southbound motorcycle. Cathy said Johnson's blood alcohol at the time was .20 percent. The legal standard is .10.

DA Cathy filed the criminally negligent homicide charge in the Town of Fayette Court Nov. 6, after consultation with New York State Police and in light of accident-reconstruction and vehicle-examination reports. The DWI and traffic violations were filed against Johnson July 26. Johnson had no prior criminal convictions.

Father Jeffers, who was ordained in 1992, had been on a leave of absence since April 2001, while reportedly discerning his future. He had served for two years as pastor of the Good Shepherd Catholic Community in Cayuga County. Previously he had been parochial vicar at Geneva's St. Stephen's Parish from 1995-98, and priest intern at St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua, from 1992-95.

—Rob Cullivan

Obituaries

Sister of St. Joseph Dorothy Agnes Tyrrell, 93; taught math, German

Sister Dorothy Agnes Tyrrell of the Sisters of St. Joseph died at St. Joseph Convent Infirmary Jan. 4, 2002. She was 93 and had been a Sister of St. Joseph for 74 years.

Sister Dorothy Agnes was a native of Rochester and entered the congregation from St. Augustine's Parish in 1927. She was a graduate of Nazareth Academy, and earned her baccalaureate and master's degrees from Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

Sister Dorothy Agnes taught elementary school for two years, one year at Nazareth Hall and the other at Holy Rosary, both in Rochester. She taught mathematics and German at Nazareth College for 17 years.

After studying at the University of Montreal, she taught at Nazareth Academy and

St. Agnes High School. She returned to Nazareth College in 1954 for 11 years and at the same time was director of the junior sisters for nine years and coordinator for sister formation for 11 years.

From 1970 to 1991 she was assistant librarian at Nazareth College. She retired

to the motherhouse in 1991 and then to the infirmary in 1996.

Msgr. William Shannon celebrated her funeral liturgy Jan. 8 in the motherhouse chapel. Assisting were Msgr. Emmett Murphy, Father Bruce Ammering and Father Ello Nwosu.

Rose Marie B. Zeppetella, 68; eucharistic minister and choir member

Rose Marie B. Zeppetella, a member of St. Jude's Parish in Gates for the last seven years of her life, died Dec. 28, 2001, at her Gates home. She was 68.

Ms. Zeppetella spent her first 61 years as a member of Rochester's Ss. Peter and Paul Parish, where she was a eucharistic minister and choir member. She also volunteered for the soup kitchen and clothes

closet located at Ss. Peter and Paul.

She belonged to the choir at St. Jude's as well, and was a member of the St. Cecilia Verdi Opera Company. In addition, she listened daily to the Family Rosary for Peace and had belonged to the St. Ann's Society since 1962.

Ms. Zeppetella worked for 30 years in the family business, Siamo Custom Built

and Repair Shoe Co. She also worked for three years at Ss. Peter and Paul rectory.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 2, 2002, at St. Jude's Church. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

She is survived by her brother, John (Joan Tannous) Zeppetella; sister-in-law, Carol Anne Tannous; and several other relatives as well as friends.