

DIOCESAN NEWS

Federation wants to save Rochester's west side

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Like an army fighting a major war on many fronts, Interfaith Action, a federation of Monroe County churches, organizations and businesses, is currently waging several different battles to revitalize the west side of Rochester.

Fueling federation members' efforts is a passion to reclaim the west side from the drug dealers, vandals, negligent landlords and others members say are contributing to the area's deterioration. Federation members are working with Rochester city officials and other organizations to promote property code enforcement as well as home ownership in order to stabilize a section of the city marked by declining property values and transient populations.

In its most public battle, the federation's members have also clashed with the owner of a recently opened nightclub they believe is clouding their vision of a newly revitalized west side. Holy Family Parish, an Interfaith Action member, scored a victory when it learned that the city of Rochester has changed the closing time for the nearby nightclub from 2 a.m. to 11 p.m. Called The Hot Spot, the club had received city permission to operate until 2 a.m., although other area businesses had to close by 11 p.m. However, Father Paul Tomasso, Holy Family's pastor, said on May 17 that a city official had told him the city had "edited" the club's certificate of use to compel the club to close at 11 p.m.

The Hot Spot has been a source of contention for Holy Family members and neighbors, more than 250 of whom attended an April Interfaith Action meeting with city officials, in part, to voice their concerns about the club. In particular, the club's opponents are concerned because the club's owner was listed in the Monroe County Clerk's Office as having owned an escort service as of February 2001.

The *Catholic Courier* made several unsuccessful attempts by phone to obtain a comment from Perry Reed, the club's owner, regarding Interfaith Action concerns about The Hot Spot. However, Reed's attorney, Richard S. Mayberry, said he and his client had fully cooperated with various city officials over the past few months to ensure that the club is in compliance with municipal rules and regulations, and that Reed has no desire to run anything but a legitimate club.

"He has done every single thing (city officials) have asked him to do," Mayberry said of Reed. "(The club) is clean and will remain clean because that is the nature of (Reed)."

He added that Reed has considered filing a slander suit based on an unattributed statement in the April 25 Rochester *Demo-*



James Stein/Photo Intern

Maria Barnes, a member of Interfaith Action, plants flowers in the 19th Ward Community Garden on Chili Avenue in Rochester May 18. Group members cleaned up litter and planted flowers in a continuing effort to revitalize the city's west-side neighborhoods.

crat and Chronicle asserting that the club's "owner has proposed an escort service as part of the business."

Federation members said Reed had misrepresented Holy Family's views on the club to city officials. Federation members provided to the *Courier* a copy of a Jan. 17 letter from Mayberry to a city attorney. The letter stated: "The Catholic Church does not oppose our use." However, Father Tomasso said Reed had never contacted the church for its view.

When asked about the letter, Mayberry told the *Courier* that he wrote the letter based on information given to him by

Reed.

Father Tomasso said the church and its neighbors will keep an eye on the club, and that by voicing its concerns about the club, the parish is not saying it wants more vacant properties in the neighborhood.

"We're waiting to see what kind of business develops there, and we're open to business on the property," Father Tomasso said. "We want it to be a business that promotes the health of the neighborhood."

Notre Dame sister marks 50 years

Sister Lorraine Burns (formerly Sister Ronald), SSND, principal of Holy Family School in Rochester, celebrated her 50th year as a School Sister of Notre Dame on May 19 with a special liturgy at Holy Family Church followed by a reception for friends and family.

Her five decades of service have taken her through four states as well as the African nation of Liberia. A native of Buffalo, Sister Burns entered her congregation in 1949 in Baltimore, Md. She took her first vows on Aug. 2, 1952, and is a member of the Wilton, Conn., Province.

Sister Burns has taught in New Jersey and served as a principal in Connecticut. She came to Rochester in 1961 to teach at Holy Family, and in 1964 began teaching at the now-defunct St. Joseph's Business High School downtown. From 1968-73, she served as principal of St. Boniface School in Rochester. She left that position to work as an English teacher in rural Liberia.

"We didn't have running water, we didn't have electricity," she said, adding that



students typically walked two to three miles each way to school daily. She said teaching in Liberia "was a marvelous experience."

"In one sense, it was easier because people over there value education so

highly. They were very appreciative of the education they were getting."

Sister Burns returned to Rochester in 1986 to take up her current position at Holy Family.

"I love working with kids," she said. "You can have a horrible day, but you walk down to the kindergarten or to the 3- and 4-year-olds, and they give you a hug."

She said she became interested in the religious life as a young girl, and that the School Sisters of Notre Dame drew her because of their charism.

"It just appealed to me knowing that it was an education order and being able to help other people."

- Rob Cullivan

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