

Students follow parents' footsteps

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

When she was in fifth grade, Cathy DiBellis (then Cathy Sipos) had to write an essay about why she loved her school, St. Patrick's in Seneca Falls. The last line of her essay read "Most of all I like going to St. Patrick's school because when I get older I can be proud and say I went to the same school my dad went to when he was younger."

Not only did DiBellis' father, John Sipos, attend St. Patrick's (he graduated in 1956), so did her grandmother, Catherine Maguire, a 1918 graduate. Her three children also attend the school, and by the time her daughter Riley graduates in 2012, there will have been a century of St. Patrick's students in the family.

This phenomenon is not unique to DiBellis and her family — Catholic schools throughout the diocese have historically been filled with generation after generation of students from the same family.

Sister Elizabeth Meegan, superintendent of diocesan Catholic schools, said although there are no statistics on the percentage of students who have parents that are alumni of their school, the trend is easy to spot. For example, she recently asked students at Rochester's Holy Cross School how many of their parents had attended Holy Cross.

"I think that three quarters of the students raised their hands," Sister Meegan said. "It is more likely that people who experience Catholic schools would want their children to have that same experience."

Sipos agreed, saying that he wanted his children to have a top-notch Catholic education.

"They were taught social values; not just Catholic values, but social values," he said.

Diane Huver, secretary at St. Mary's School in Dansville, agreed that Catholic-school students receive a more well-rounded education. Huver's children and husband graduated from the school, as did her husband's father and grandfather.

"We have the diocesan curricu-



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

Diocesan Catholic schools have historically been filled with multiple generations of the same family. Samantha Meadows of Webster (left), her mother, Cathy Battaglia, and grandmother, Jeanette Ciarico, are all graduates of Rochester's St. Ambrose School.

lum and standards and also the New York state standards, so there's kind of a double goal that you have to strive for," Huver said, noting that the education students receive doesn't stop at academics. "There's a lot of parent, home, teacher and school commitment. Everybody gets involved. The kids are taught that here — to volunteer, to help their community."

Huver's husband, James, a 1965 graduate of St. Mary's, thinks parent involvement is one of the reasons St. Mary's students are academically successful.

"If you're coming here, your parents are struggling to provide the

dollars to send you here and want to make sure you do your best," he said.

Michelle Benedict-Jones, a 1977 graduate of Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca, has two children enrolled in the school, which 58 members of her extended family have either graduated from or attended.

Benedict-Jones is on the school advisory and finance committees,

and often sees former classmates at the school with their children. She thinks parents who are graduates of the same Catholic school they're sending their children to might be more willing to get involved, because they have a vested interest in and a history with the school. Benedict-Jones said she sent her children to Immaculate Conception because of the "great experience" she had there.

"It gave (me) a really strong foundation in terms of math and writing. God could be spoken about and was a part of the day," she said.

Jeannette Ciarico, a 1958 graduate of St. Ambrose School in Rochester, sent her daughter, Cathy Battaglia, to the school because she liked the way the nuns ran it.

"You seemed to get more attention. It just seemed they took an interest. It was just the way they went about it; they made it enjoyable," Ciarico said.

Battaglia in turn sent her daughter, Samantha Meadows, to the school in part because of the lasting friendships both she and her mother made while at St. Ambrose. They both see former classmates on a regular basis, and "it's like time never passed," Battaglia said.

Deanna Colombo, a 2003 graduate of St. Ambrose School, said she enjoyed attending the same school as both her mother and grandfather.

"St. Ambrose has all the class pictures hanging in the hallway. (Deanna) was always telling her friends, 'that's my mom, that's my grandpa.' It's important to have a root system," said Colombo's mother, Sue.

Your Money Deserves the Best!

Gen-See Makes The Difference

**Earn More
Worry Less** **7.1%**
Annual Interest

Since 1975...

- Regular monthly checks
- Term 3, 4, or 5 years
- Minimum investment...\$5,000
- Rate of interest guaranteed for term of certificate

GEN-SEE CAPITAL CORPORATION
CALL NOW... 1-800-507-4393

"I went to the Web for my health."

www.stronghealth.com

Rochester's most preferred hospital Web site for health information.
(National Research Corporation 2003 Internet Report)

STRONG HEALTH

Strong Memorial Hospital • Gosport Children's Hospital of Strong • Highland Hospital
The Hubards • Lastman Dental Center • Visiting Nurse Service

**MAKE
ROSARIES**
Call for our catalog
& special introductory offer

LEWIS & COMPANY
P.O. Box 268-K Troy, NY 12181
800-342-2400