

Bishop Hogan Academy will close

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Irondequoit's Bishop Hogan Catholic Academy — a diocesan-run junior high school located at Bishop Kearney High School — will close in June 2004, according to Sister Elizabeth Meegan, OP, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Rochester.

The diocese informed Bishop Hogan school parents of the closing through a Nov. 12 meeting and letters sent home to parents. The closing was publicly announced Nov. 13.

Sister Meegan told the *Courier* that the closing arose from the expiration of the five-year lease under which the diocese has operated Bishop Hogan Academy in the Bishop Kearney building. Rather than renewing the lease for another five years, Bishop Kearney offered the diocese a one-year renewal with no guarantee that it would be extended. In addition, she said Kearney requested a \$50,000 increase in rent for 2004-05. Hogan currently pays rent of \$165,000 to Kearney each year, she said.

Diocesan officials said their primary concern related to long-term stability for parents and children. "Parents would not enroll their children in a two-year program with a one-year lease," Sister Meegan said.

Bishop Hogan currently has 116 eighth-graders and 68 seventh-graders, she said. The 2003-04 enrollment dropped off significantly due to rumors of Hogan's possible closing, she said. The diocese addressed these rumors in a June 26 letter to parents, notifying them that Kearney was considering other uses for the space occupied by Hogan

and that the diocese was looking for alternate sites for the junior high school.

Hogan's 18 faculty and staff members will be given priority for job placement in other diocesan schools, Sister Meegan added.

"No one likes to see a school close, especially the superintendent," Sister Meegan said in the diocesan statement. "We looked at every possible way to keep Bishop Hogan Academy going, but none of the options were fiscally or educationally sound enough to merit support."

Vilma Goetting, principal of Hogan, said parents were upset, angry and saddened by the closing. One such parent was Margaret Oberst, who has one child currently enrolled at Hogan, three children who are alumni and one child who hoped to enroll at the school two years from now. Oberst said she wished Kearney and diocesan officials could have devised a plan to save the school.

"I think everyone was a loser in this decision," she said.

Sister Meegan said Hogan students would be given first priority for admission to two Catholic junior highs operated by the diocese, Siena Catholic Academy in Brighton and All Saints Academy in Gates. Siena currently has 337 students with a capacity of 400 to 425, she said, and All Saints has an enrollment of 235 with capacity for 300.

Sister Meegan explained that officials at Bishop Kearney have indicated that they need the space currently occupied by Hogan. The diocesan junior high currently occupies about one-third of Bishop Kearney's building, according to Mark Ball, director of admissions

and communications at Kearney. He noted that the two schools share a cafeteria, auditorium and gymnasium.

Acknowledging that Kearney administrators are concerned about possibly losing the 40 to 50 Hogan eighth-graders who each year decide to continue their schooling at Kearney, Ball said the high school wanted the extra space — 70,000 square feet — that had been leased to Hogan. The high school hopes to increase its current enrollment of 460 students to 600, he said, noting that the space could be used for such improvements as another auditorium or technology labs.

Although Kearney draws students from all over Monroe County, Ball said the school defines its mission as serving students who live primarily in and around the Rochester suburb of Irondequoit. He said Hogan was not "bringing in students from Irondequoit and Webster," an adjacent Rochester suburb.

"All of our diocesan schools share the mission of welcoming all of our students regardless of where they live," diocesan spokesman Michael Tedesco said of the Kearney administration's concern. "I don't know the relevance of where students live when seeking a Catholic education."

Ball said Kearney officials tried to work with the diocese to keep Hogan open, and considered reasonable the 30 percent rent increase they had sought. He noted that Kearney has had to deal with rising costs in several areas in recent years, and that these costs needed to be factored into Hogan's rent. For example, he said, Kearney paid more than \$81,000 in natural gas costs during the 2000-01 academic year, as opposed to \$40,000 in 1999-2000.

"(The rent) is significantly under what that type of place would get in the marketplace," Ball said of the space occupied by Hogan, adding that Kearney reasonably could ask for double the current rent. Tedesco said the increase in rent was less of a factor in the closing than was the uncertainty that came with a one-year lease.

Ball also noted that Bishop Matthew H. Clark had declined to approve Kearney's request to open

its own junior high. Although Kearney is privately operated outside of diocesan control, it cannot operate a Catholic junior high without the bishop's permission, Tedesco said. He added that a Kearney-operated junior high would only drain enrollment from other Catholic junior highs operating in the diocese and that current enrollment trends do not merit opening another junior high school.

In hopes of relocating rather than closing Hogan, Sister Meegan said the diocese had looked at seven alternative sites in northeastern Monroe County, but that most either required extensive renovation or lacked such necessary facilities as gymnasiums. Some had already been committed to other uses, she added.

"After reviewing those options, as well as current and projected enrollment levels, Sister Meegan and the Catholic School Board of Monroe County determined the remaining two diocesan junior high schools — Siena Catholic Academy and All Saints Catholic Academy — were clearly the best way to serve all of the students who had planned to attend Bishop Hogan Academy next year," the diocese stated.

The diocese will conduct open houses at Siena on Thursday, Nov. 20, from 7-9 p.m., and on Monday, Nov. 24, from 7-8 p.m. Open houses will be held at All Saints on Wednesday, Dec. 3, from 7-9 p.m., and Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 7-9 p.m.

Diocesan-run seventh and eighth grades have been located at Bishop Kearney since the establishment in 1990-91 of Northeastern Catholic Junior High School. Northeastern's name was changed to Bishop Hogan Academy in 2001 to honor former Rochester Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who had died the previous year.

Goetting said that she and other Hogan faculty members have been touched by the support they received from both parents and students. She noted that she has not considered her own future plans at this point.

"Right now, my future consists in seeing that these kids get the best education and have a good year," she said.

Be an Angel



AS A VOLUNTEER
BELL RINGER

because...

*homelessness is not a choice
poverty is not a goal
emergencies are not planned.*

Help to provide the resources necessary for those truly in need in your community.

Call to volunteer as a bell ringer for the local Salvation Army Center or Service Unit committee.

Call toll-free or go on-line today!

1-877-733-6041

www.redkettles.org



Catholic Courier (USPS 135-580)
Vol. 115 No. 8 November 20, 2003

Published weekly except the first Thursday in January and the last Thursday in December. Subscription rates: single copy, 75¢; one-year subscription in U.S., \$20.00; Canada and foreign \$20.00 plus postage. Offices: 1136 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624, 585/529-9530. Periodicals postage paid at Rochester, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Catholic Courier, PO Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624.



Master Carpenter/Skilled Painter
Over 25 Years of Beautifying Homes in the NY Area

- Expert General Carpentry • Unique Outdoor Decks
- Quality Kitchen Renovations • Unused Basements Finished
- Faux Finish Painting • Wallpaper Borders Hung

J.J. CLARKE CONSTRUCTION

You've tried the rest now go with the best!

Call for estimates: 585-248-2692

USC

WASHINGTON bishops open meeting with a president to dir whole church" sexual abuse a victims.

During general Conference of (cussed and votes from same natural concerns, socially responsible stewardship, co-icy and several

On the first d meeting, held at Regency Capito proved the add bers for their (Youth Protectio than \$265,000 th

Failure to apj "would look lil memory has be issue, said Coad A. Galante of D:

The bishops l on the work of t Board, formed l of the clerical se told of major na crisis and of the be released earl

On Nov. 12, th 234-3, a short te why same-sex u given the socia marriage. Rapi the issue led th trative Commit seek developme in time for the N

"Between Ma

