

# School, faith-formation center to open

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

The closing of one school has led to the opening of another — and of a faith-formation center — in the Wayland/Dansville region.

St. Joseph's School in Wayland closed in June. This September, several of its former students and teachers will be found at Holy Family School in Dansville, located in the building that housed the former St. Mary's School.

Meanwhile, the new Holy Family Parish — formerly the Holy Family Catholic Community cluster — will open a religious-education center in the former St. Joseph's School building. The new parish comprises St. Joseph's in Wayland; St. Mary's in Dansville; St. Pius V in Cohocton; and Sacred Heart of Jesus in Perkinsville.

The cluster's pastoral council opted last year to merge its two parish-based schools into one facility for grades pre-kindergarten through 6. The decision followed several years of discussion on how to restructure the schools, which had experienced declining enrollment and were among the smallest in the Diocese of Rochester. According to school officials, St. Joseph's had 98 stu-

dents this year in grades pre-kindergarten through 6, whereas St. Mary's has 108 students in pre-kindergarten through 5 and did not operate a sixth grade. Officials at both schools said St. Mary's had the greatest potential for classroom expansion and the option of locating additional classes in the church's parish center.

About 25 students from St. Joseph's School are expected to enroll in the new Holy Family School, according to Monette Mahoney, principal of St. Joseph's for the past three years. Mahoney recently was named the new principal of Sacred Heart School in Rochester.

Diané Sauerbier, principal at St. Mary's for 11 years, said that when Holy Family opens, it will have about 150 students. She added that she plans to leave administration and teach first grade at Holy Family.

"I guess I'm really excited about staying with the school," Sauerbier said. "I'm looking forward to a bright future and meeting new people, parents and children, and I think only great things can happen from this point."

Holy Family's new principal is Deborah J. Goering, a Catholic edu-

cator for 30 years (see related story on principal transitions on page B5). Goering was a Franciscan nun for 23 years, and has taught in and/or administered Catholic schools, in the dioceses of Buffalo, Syracuse and Camden, N.J., and in the archdioceses of San Antonio, Texas, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her most recent position was as interim principal of St. Michael's School in Warsaw, Wyoming County, in the Buffalo Diocese.

Goering said Holy Family School's faculty is about evenly divided between teachers who worked at St. Joseph's and St. Mary's. She said the new school will combine the traditions of the two schools that preceded it, and create new traditions as well.

"It's going to have its own personality," she said of Holy Family.

Parents from both St. Joseph's and St. Mary's expressed excitement about the new school. Sue Keister, whose son, Ethan, was in third grade when St. Joseph's closed, co-chairs the Holy Family school advisory committee. She noted that while the St. Joseph's closing was tough on teachers and administrators, her son has adjusted to the fact he'll be attending Holy Family because as he told her, "I'll get to meet new people."

She said representatives of the two former schools, have worked

diligently to become one new community.

"Everybody came to the table with a lot of hurts and despairs," she said, but now, "we're excited, enthused and looking forward to it."

Teresa Kershner, who co-chairs the advisory committee with Keister, has two boys who attended St. Mary's and who will be attending Holy Family. Like Keister, Kershner said she believes the new school will be a strong force in the area.

"I think it provides an opportunity for both communities to have a strong Catholic school," she said. "I think it gives us a broader base in terms of ideas, increasing enrollment ... I think individually, neither (school) could support itself, but jointly, both could go a long way."

Meanwhile, Linda Mehlenbacher, faith-formation coordinator/youth minister for Holy Family Parish, said she is looking forward to the opening of the new faith-formation center at St. Joseph's. She noted that concentrating all of her programming at the new center will allow her to spend far less time on the road, shuttling from parish to parish. She added that the new center will enable her to offer expanded programming to the parish's young people and adults, including overnight retreats for young people.

"I'm going to be so happy to be in one place," she said.



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