

South Hills Record

Laffey settling in to new job

Rachel Weaver

In her life, Sister Patricia Laffey waits for God to open doors.

This year, those doors lead to the principal's office at Seton-LaSalle High School.

The school's new administrator started her position last month and has been getting to know the 526 students and 39 faculty members since.

Laffey, a Sister of Charity of Seton Hill, decided she wanted God to be No. 1 while she pursued her education career as a student at Elizabeth Seton High School.

"Education is a key thing in making a difference for a person. It helps them grow in every aspect," she says.

She later earned a bachelor's degree in English from Seton Hill University, a master's degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and principal certification from Duquesne University. She taught for 15 years before moving to administration.

Prior to accepting the position at Seton-LaSalle, Laffey served as principal at

Sacred Heart Elementary School in Shadyside for 17 years.

Laffey was initially offered either the principal or the assistant principal position. With two decades of experience as a principal, she felt accepting the higher position would make for a more natural transition.

"Over the last couple of years, they've had a couple of principals. They wanted someone who could commit to the school for some time. I hope to be here for 10 years," she says.

"I'm very pleased to continue the Sisters of Charity tradition."

Seton-LaSalle opened in 1979 as a merger between South Hills Catholic run by the Christian Brothers and Elizabeth Seton run by the Sisters of Charity. Though the Christian Brothers withdrew from the school several years ago, several Sisters remain as staff members.

After the death of Sister Kathryn Palas, former academic vice principal, last year, Laffey is the only Sister of Charity in the administration.

Her move to the Mt.

Lebanon school also makes Laffey the first female Seton-LaSalle principal.

"People have been great. I've had continual community support and offers for prayers," she says.

Last week Laffey received some encouraging news from a national organization. The Catholic High School Honor Roll named Seton-LaSalle one of the best 50 Catholic High Schools in the country.

"I'm just thrilled," she says. "I'm just getting to know the school, but I always understood it has a fine academic program. This just confirms that it does."

After her first few weeks spent figuring out schedules and sifting through paperwork, Laffey is ready to get to know her school and work toward maintaining its academic reputation.

"Right now, I'm seeing where the strengths are and seeing if any area needs improvement," she says.

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