

# The Mirror

Vol. XLII, No. 34

DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD - CAPE GIRARDEAU

January 26, 2007

## What's cool about Catholic school?

By Julie Pettyjohn

Springfield

“Catholic Schools: The Good News in Education” is the theme for Catholic Schools Week, celebrated Jan. 28-Feb. 3, in nearly 8,000 Catholic schools across the US. Leon Witt, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, said Catholic Schools Week is a good opportunity to brag a little about the schools in this diocese. Witt enthusiastically proclaimed the accomplishments of students, teachers, and administrators. He said students test above average in core subjects and in critical thinking, they have Catholic identity, and they are church leaders of the future.

Catholic Schools Week is a joint project of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. National Appreciation Day for Catholic Schools will be observed Wed., Jan. 31. A delegation of Catholic students will meet with congressional leaders in Washington on that day to promote Catholic schools. In schools across this diocese, special activities are planned every day of the week.

### Why Catholic?

A present focus and buzz phrase used in US school systems is “teaching the whole child.” According to Witt, no system can teach the whole child better than Catholic schools. Other systems



leave out the spiritual dimension, Witt said. The public schools can't address the spiritual; Catholic schools can.

Witt said in order to teach the whole child, schools must also emphasize responsibility, discipline, and caring for others. “All those things go into what we do,” Witt said. “This is the way Jesus would want it to be.”

Catholic students are taught good study habits. Ninety-five percent of our three high schools' graduates attend college, and when they do, they are prepared. Witt said attending college is stressed even in the elementary schools. “We don't say ‘if you go to college;’ we say ‘when you go to college,’” Witt said.

Personalized attention is another reason Witt feels parents should consider a Catholic education for their children. He said the schools strive to know the child and also to know the child's family. Good communication between parents and school is essential.

“We know we do an extremely

good job with core subjects,” Witt continued. “But we also put emphasis on Catholic identity. We want to develop young persons who will one day become our parish and church leaders.”

Another witness to Catholic education is found in alumni. “We have people who have gone through Catholic schools and have taught in Catholic schools,” Witt said. “It is a generational thing because that is what we believe in.”

See Catholic School / 13

## INSIDE

Finding God in ordinary family routines and rituals

8-9

Viewpoints

16

# What's cool about Catholic school?

From Page 1

## Test scores and recognition

The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is given in Catholic schools across the US each year. A score of 50 is considered the national norm. Witt said students in the diocese score about 15 points above the national norms in all areas. Scores in critical thinking are even higher.

Witt said the reason for testing is to help students improve. Teachers and adminis-

trators use the breakouts in test scores to identify where attention may be needed, whether in schools, specific grade levels, or with individual students.

The NCEA Assessment of Catechesis Religious Education (ACRE) test results are not in yet, "but we expect to do well in that too," Witt said. The ACRE test measures faith formation, examining students' level of knowledge regarding the Catholic Church.

ACT scores are higher than average, too, according to

Witt. "That means college scholarships," he said.

Witt said Notre Dame Regional High School in Cape Girardeau has been listed in the 2006 Catholic Honor Roll, published by the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, as a top 50 high school.

## Ethnic population

National figures for the ethnic background of Catholic school students, according to NCEA, breaks down as: American Indian/Native Alaskan: .4 percent; Asian: 3.9 percent; Black: 7.8 percent; Hispanic: 11.7 percent; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: .8 percent; Multiracial: 2.8 percent; White: 72.7 percent; and unknown: .2 percent.

According to Witt, about 10 percent of the total Catholic student population in this diocese have ethnic backgrounds other than White/Caucasian. And, he said, the Hispanic student population is not nearly as high as one might expect considering our Hispanic Catholic population within the diocese.

Some students within the Catholic schools come from faith groups other than Catholic. According to Witt, about 11 percent in our elementary schools are non-Catholic. About 11 percent in the high schools are non-Catholic, as well.

"Students are not judged



by income, race, nationality, etc. We are all brothers and sisters, and we stress that with our students," Witt said.

## Building for tomorrow

The newest school in the diocese is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School in Springfield. A preschool was established when the parish began more than 20 years ago. But in the 2005-2006 school year, kindergarten was added. Enrollment that year was 37 pre-kindergarten students and 24 in kindergarten. A first-grade class was added this 2006-2007 school year with 22 first graders enrolled.

Principal Marilyn Batson said the plan is to add one grade per year until the facility offers preschool through eighth-grade.

"Most of our students are St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parishioners, some of whom are new to Catholic schools," Batson said. "I've spoken to families who would have sacrificed and

driven further to provide a Catholic education for their children and others who have 'always thought about it' but who freely admit that if it hadn't been for the establishment [of the new school] would have probably settled for public schools." Batson continued: "The common thread is that all seem to be very happy with their choice of Catholic education. They most often mention the quality of the teachers, the faith-based environment, and the shared mission of a strong commitment to the success of the children, both academically and spiritually."

Witt said one change he has observed over the years is that students today seem more willing to challenge authority. He was not referring to lack of discipline, however. In regards to disruptive behavior, Witt said, "If we tell the students, your choice is to be good or not be here, they are good because they want to stay in Catholic schools." ©TM

## Catholic Schools Week Word Find

Find the words in the grid. Words can go horizontally, vertically and diagonally in all eight directions.



www.TheMirror.com

- |                  |          |            |
|------------------|----------|------------|
| ACHIEVEMENT      | FAITH    | MASS       |
| BELIEFS          | FAMILY   | RELIGION   |
| BIBLE            | FUN      | SACRAMENTS |
| CATHOLIC SCHOOLS | GOD      | STUDENTS   |
| COMPASSION       | GOODNEWS | SUCCESS    |
| DEDICATION       | HONOR    | TEACHERS   |
| EDUCATION        | JESUS    | TRADITION  |
| EXCELLENCE       | LOVE     | UNIFORMS   |
|                  |          | VALUES     |

Solutions on p. 6

## 29th Annual Smoked Pork Chop Dinner

Holy Trinity Catholic Church  
Carnation & Hwy. 60, Aurora

Sun. Feb. 4, 2007—10:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

• Smoked pork chops • Green beans • Applesauce • Slaw • Bread • Drink • Homemade pies

Adults: \$6 in advance, \$6.50 at the door.

Children under 8: \$3 (1 pork chop)

Carry-out service available starting at 10:15 a.m.  
You don't have to get out of your car!



SPRINGFIELD  
CATHOLIC  
SCHOOLS

"Educating the whole child" - Academically, Spiritually, Emotionally, & Physically

### Top Five Reasons Why You Should Consider Catholic Schools

1. High academic and conduct expectations for all children
2. Averages on standardized tests and ACT tests are higher than National, State and Local averages.
3. 95% of SCS graduates enter college; Over a third receive scholarships
4. Highly certified and qualified staff
5. High level of parental involvement and school safety

Now accepting applications for Pre K - 12<sup>th</sup>  
2007-2008 school year

Springfield Catholic Schools invite you to the following Open Houses during Catholic Schools Week.  
Come to any or all!

St. Joseph  
Wednesday - January 31<sup>st</sup>  
8:00 am - 4:30 pm

St. Agnes  
Wednesday - January 31<sup>st</sup>  
6:45 pm - 7:45 pm

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton  
Thursday - February 1<sup>st</sup>  
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Immaculate Conception  
Thursday - February 1<sup>st</sup>  
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

I.C. 881-7000 St. Agnes 888-5038 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton 887-6056 St. Joseph 888-0067  
Springfield Catholic High School 887-8817

www.springfieldcatholicschools.org