

GYMNASIUM AT BETHLEHEM CATHOLIC NOW STATE-OF-THE-ART

By TARA J. CONNOLLY
Staff writer

Students at Bethlehem Catholic High School are reaping many benefits due to funds from STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH that helped clear the way for a massive overhaul project to the school's gymnasium. The diocesan capital campaign provided \$200,000 in assistance to the \$400,000 renovation project - the first major update to the gymnasium since its construction in 1965. "It is the original gymnasium and we replaced nearly everything," said Richard B. Culver, Principal. "It is now a state-of-the-art gymnasium."

According to Culver, some of the updates include new bleachers, scoreboards, and basketball hoops and components. In addition, new flooring was installed, an updated sound system was mounted and a ventilation system was added. School officials selected a floating floor for the gymnasium that is designed with rubber cushion beneath the surface in an effort to minimize injuries and offer a better playing surface. With the new flooring, Culver explained, a customized cover was also purchased to protect the flooring and allow the gymnasium to be used for other events. "It

is now a multi-purpose room. It is not just for sporting events or physical education class. It's an area used by everyone. Retreats, dances and events for the diocese and grade schools are also held there," he explained.

The new gymnasium has also expanded its seating capacity by 300 seats in the balcony area and can accommodate approximately 1,370 spectators. "The gymnasium is the most used area by the students. It is a classroom for every student. There is no other area used as much as the gym and we were thrilled to put in more seating," said Culver.

Without the capital campaign and the generosity of the faithful, Culver explained renovations would not have been completed in a timely manner or be in line with modern standards for the 740 members of the student body "We could not do any of these renovations without SOFF. We really need something like SOFF to help better what we have to offer. The campaign really gave us the ability to update the school and to keep up with modern education," shared Culver. The remaining \$200,000 in costs was made possible from alumni donations, a phone-a-thon and the school's endowment fund.



Students play basketball on the new floor installed in the gymnasium. The floor features rubber cushion beneath the surface to allow for a safer playing area. (John F. Simitz)

LAY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Membership

Parishioner	Deanery
Mr. William McMahon	Berks
Mr. Willam Mason	Carbon
Mrs. Pam Welkie	Lehigh
Mrs. Joan Pacala	Northampton
Mr. Joseph Chiaretti	North Schuylkill
Dr. Brian Barket	South Schuylkill

Members of the Lay Leadership Committee were invited to serve as lay representatives from each of the six deaneries in the Diocese of Allentown for the STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH campaign. This committee will meet on a quarterly basis for the duration of the capital campaign. **One of the committee's responsibilities is to ensure the proper allocation of funds to the identified elements in the original case statement.** For any additional information or to contact a member of this committee, please call the Pledge Fulfillment Office at 1-800-831-4443.



Issue 12

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

(as of January 31, 2006)

**Pledges Raised
to Date**
\$52,976,229

**Funds Received
to Date**
\$27,885,737

**% Fulfilled
to Date**
52.64%

FORWARD WITH CHRIST RECEIVES INITIAL \$600,000 FOR ELEMENTARY AND PARISH PROGRAMS

By TAMI A. QUIGLEY
Staff writer

Having allocated \$3 million of the initial campaign goal to Forward With Christ (FWC), the diocesan capital campaign STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH

"And, of course the real engine driving our ability to improve the education of our children is the continued timely fulfillment of SOFF pledges by our parishioner donors, for which we are extremely grateful."

(SOFF) made the initial \$600,000 payment to FWC in September, buoying the program's ability to aid students of the Diocese of Allentown. "The initial payment was invested and put in our educational endowment fund," explained the Rev. Msgr. William E. Handges, Chairman of the FWC Allocations Committee and Pastor of St. Peter, Coplay. Msgr. Handges said parishes and schools had to submit their 2006 applications for grant money to fund various programs by this month. The Allocations Committee is slated to meet in February when it will review the applications, then make its recommendations to the Most Rev. Edward P. Cullen, D.D., Bishop of Allentown, in March. The diocesan Office of Development will send letters regarding applicants' status in April or May. "The SOFF campaign calls for a separate

allocation of funding to our nine diocesan high schools. This FWC allocation directly impacts the elementary schools and the parish religious education programs," said Mark A. Hanichak, diocesan Director of Pledge Fulfillment.

"Over the next five years, SOFF will add at least \$3 million of funding to the FWC endowment corpus, thus allowing a larger distribution each year to help fund necessary improvements and programs," Hanichak said. "And, of course," he added, "the real engine driving our ability to improve the education of our children is the continued timely fulfillment of SOFF pledges by our parishioner donors, for which we are extremely grateful."



Diocesan Director of Pledge Fulfillment, Mark A. Hanichak, left, Presents a \$600,000 check of SOFF funds to the Rev. Msgr. William E. Handges, Chairman of the Forward With Christ (FWC) Allocations Committee. Joining them, center, is SOFF lay leadership committee member, Joan Pacala of Easton. The money will be used for education endowment. (John F. Simitz)



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SOFF ENABLES CATHOLIC CHARITIES TO REACH OUT TO OLDER ADULTS

By TAMI A. QUIGLEY
Staff writer

The diocesan capital campaign STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH (SOFF) has buoyed Catholic Charities' ability to aid seniors in the diocese, according to Barbara W. Murphy, M.S.W., diocesan Secretary for Catholic Human Services and Executive Director of Catholic Charities. "We are very grateful to be a beneficiary of this funding, enabling us to reach out to those who have supported the Church and their parishes over many years," Murphy said.

SOFF funds have been funneled to three specific areas: direct service through the Catholic Charities' Services for Older Adults Program from three sites in Allentown, Reading and Pottsville; diocesan Prime Time clubs and parish outreach activities; and, most recently, Catholic Charities' Hope VI Case Management Program for seniors at Hanover Acres Riverview Terrace, Allentown. "Catholic Charities' Services for Older Adults Program is completely funded by the SOFF campaign. This program wouldn't be here and available for older adults without the SOFF funding," said Heather Strohm, Catholic Charities Services for Older Adults Case Manager in Catholic Charities' Lehigh-Northampton Counties Office, Allentown. "I have found that people trust Catholic Charities. And older adults, who are often reluctant to ask for help, feel more comfortable asking the Church before they go to county or government agencies," said Strohm. "These are the people we are trying to reach - the people who are out there and in need of services, and are unsure where to go or reluctant to ask for help."

Strohm explained their direct services for seniors are information and linkage to community resources and entitlement programs. "I meet with a client and do a full assessment: listening to their story and asking questions about finances, support system, health, struggles, emergency needs, and programs they are currently enrolled in, to get a full picture of their situation. I connect them to any state, federal or local entitlement programs they would qualify for based on their income. I also look into what programs within the Lehigh Valley's nonprofit and county arenas would be available to cover some of their needs. We use the Benefits Check Up program, made available by the United Way of the Lehigh Valley, to run a report on programs for which clients may qualify."

Strohm noted adult children often call for information on assisted living, nursing homes, home health care, care giving and other issues. "These lifestyle changes are hard on everyone, and especially the parent. Knowing where to look for advice in making this transition easiest for everyone becomes an important step in the transition process."

Strohm related some clients are a very brief service, and have one or two specific questions and needs in mind. Others need support

and guidance. "That's where the longer term case management factor comes into play. A Service Plan is created within the first few client visits. The Service Plan includes goals and objectives needing to be accomplished for the client to sustain themselves in their homes," Strohm said.

Both the case manager and client create the service plan together. Action steps are created and target dates are set. Once goals are met, the client is either discharged because they no longer need Older Adult Services or a new Service Plan is established to focus on new issues. "There are a lot of Older Adults out there who fall between the cracks. They have many expenses but are over the income limit for most services. Catholic Charities' Older Adults Program then has to get creative within their plan of service," Strohm shared. "Volunteers and sponsors have to be found, things need to be reorganized, and we have to force ourselves to think outside the box."

"Of the different struggles that seniors experience, the most vivid are financial and social," observed Strohm. Not having enough money or social contact are the premiere problems facing older adults, so Catholic Charities strives to aid in these and other areas. One client, "Rose," was struggling with increased prices for her medication and facing an increasing fuel bill in the winter, all while living on a limited income. "If you have ever experienced financial struggles, you may know how Rose feels," Strohm said. "It could be so completely overwhelming that the worry takes over your entire spirit.

"If you are still well enough to work, picking up a second job may not seem too attractive, but it is a possible solution to financial



Barbara W. Murphy, M.S.W., diocesan Secretary for Catholic Human Services and Executive Director of Catholic Charities, distributes door prizes Dec. 20 at the first Hope VI Christmas Senior Social at the HART Community Center at Hanover Acres, Riverview Terrace. (Photo courtesy Hope VI Case Management Program.)

difficulties. Many older adults don't have this option, as many have trouble getting out of the house and have regular health problems," Strohm. As many older adults do not know about the financial entitlements available to them, it was beneficial for Rose that Catholic Charities' Services for Older Adults Program was able to guide her in this area.

"In the spirit of Catholicism, working together as a community, sharing gifts, talents, trades where they are most needed is important."

After speaking with a case manager who analyzed the situation, Rose discovered she qualifies for PACE, which will cover her prescription needs and subsequently wipe out the need for her to skip dosages. She also applied for the Pennsylvania Property Tax Rebate Program and received a \$500 rebate that she used to pay her overdue electricity bill. "Rose also found out she qualifies to receive \$30 per month in food stamps. At age 72 this pays for groceries for half the month," Strohm said.

Another client, "Lily," suffers not from financial problems but yearns for social contact. With her health deteriorating, it takes much planning and enormous effort to go anywhere. "Many friends have come and gone, and Lily doesn't have a family. Visitors consist of case managers, health care workers, etc.," Strohm said, adding these visits are the "highlight of her week."

"In the spirit of Catholicism, working together as a community, sharing gifts, talents, trades where they are most needed is important," said Strohm, spotlighting the importance of the volunteers who work with seniors. These volunteers perform such tasks as driving seniors to doctor appointments, social network, cleaning and home repair, and more volunteers are always needed and welcomed.

Robert J. Olney, Program Administrator for Catholic Charities' Parish Outreach, said each of the diocese's 24 Prime Time Clubs are eligible for a \$5,000 grant with SOFF funds to make their meeting places more handicapped accessible. The clubs also receive a financial allocation to use as they need, such as for engaging speakers, special activities, events or regular activities. "We've added two clubs, and I'm glad to see that, we want to expand," Olney said. Of the two new entities, Holy Guardian Angels, Reading, had an existing club but it is now affiliated with the diocese. The club serving the McAdoo parishes of St. Kunegunda, St. Mary and St. Patrick is brand new and meets at St. Kunegunda.

"We're really trying to encourage clubs to do outreach in the parish, to give back to the community," Olney said. Clubs have conducted fund raising for specific parish projects, purchased items for Catholic Charities' Foster Care and Adoption Services and Caring Hearts' Giving Tree at Christmas, and contributed to parish school projects and hurricane relief. Olney said SOFF

money will also fund three regional conferences for seniors: Wednesday, April 26, St. Michael, Lansford; Thursday, April 27, Holy Family Club, Nazareth; and Friday, April 28, John Paul II Center for Special Learning, Shillington.

Jill Hartman, Project Manager for Catholic Charities' Hope VI Case Management Program, is grateful for SOFF funds that allowed the program to host the first Hope VI Christmas Senior Social at the HART Community Center at Hanover Acres Riverview Terrace. Hartman explained that a major HUD grant to the City of Allentown is funding the demolition of Hanover Acres beginning in April, and residents will be relocated until the housing is rebuilt. Though current residents have priority to return if they choose, there is no guarantee of exactly who will comprise the residential population when the rebuilding is completed. Presently 81 percent of the residents are Hispanic.

Hope VI gleaned feedback from residents at the Christmas senior social on what activities would interest them, and some SOFF funds may be used to finance these activities, according to Hartman. "Catholic Charities is interested in supporting a senior club at the new HART site when the housing is rebuilt," Hartman said, noting there is no way to know how many seniors will be residing at Hanover Acres Riverview Terrace after it is rebuilt. Approximately 25 residents from the HART community aged 55 and older attended the social, which Hartman deemed "a great success and an opportunity for people of this age group to get together, relax and enjoy each other's company as they approach the holiday season." Murphy also attended, handing out door prizes to residents, who also received festive items and useful information regarding the senior clubs and senior centers already established in the Lehigh Valley from Olney. Strohm was on hand to present information on how Catholic Charities' Older Adults Program could help meet the needs of residents.

"Residents appeared to enjoy the idea of getting together on a regular basis if to do nothing more than to snack on cakes and cookies, drink tea and coffee, and talk about the events happening in their lives," Hartman said. "Many residents stated that being in their homes alone for long periods of time is depressing and that getting out at least once a month to socialize with others would be a helpful way to combat this problem." Hartman said the majority of residents voiced their interest in attending the Valentine's Day Social slated for Tuesday, Feb. 14 as long as they are still living close to the HART site and/or have transportation to get there. Suggestions for activities to be included that day ranged from a senior resident fashion show to presentations on "eating healthy" and "how to exercise for your age." "No particular topic or activity has yet been scheduled, and resident wishes are being taken into strong consideration," Hartman offered.

Hartman emphasized Catholic Charities wants residents to be clear that if they have a need, they do not need to wait for Catholic Charities to contact them to get help. Residents are encouraged to visit the HART Community Center and/or write or call staff there as well.

PARKING, ROAD AND HEATER REPAIRS MADE POSSIBLE AT NATIVITY BVM HIGH SCHOOL

By TARA J. CONNOLLY
Staff writer

Students, staff and visitors have a smoother ride to Nativity BVM High School, Pottsville, after the completion of an extensive project made possible by STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH (SOFF). The entrance road to the school that stretches approximately a quarter of a mile long and the parking area were repaired and paved at the cost of \$46,376. "Before the repairs, the potholes in the road could swallow you up. The road was cracked and had grass growing through the cracks. The parking lots were a mix of dirt and gravel," explained Jennifer Daubert, Director of Development.

The repairs came at a crucial time while inclement weather poses threats during the winter months. "The conditions were terrible in the rain and snow," she said. "We now have well-surfaced and safe roads and parking lots." The Rev. Ronald V. Jankaitis, Principal of Nativity and Pastor of St. Casimir, St. Clair, explained the road project was selected to receive the SOFF funding because it was an area in need of immediate attention. "The road was definitely our main concern," he said. "We didn't want cars to get damaged from the potholes and we wanted to improve the cosmetic appearance."

The capital campaign also allowed the school to repair its boiler

at the cost of \$1,782.20 and made plumbing repairs possible at the cost of \$2,304.04. "The heating element was not running properly," explained Fr. Jankaitis. "We were able to provide adequate heat with SOFF funds. The plumbing repairs were part of an update to the lavatories in the school. Fixtures were replaced and other items were added," he said.

Another part of the project included the installation of two air conditioning units in the school library, which recently received new computers. According to Fr. Jankaitis, the improvements and repairs would have been a challenge to complete without the availability of SOFF and plans for future improvements would not be possible. "The faithful really came through for us. They have always been generous to Nativity because they recognize their contribution makes Catholic education possible," he said.

Starting last year, Nativity will receive \$500,000 over five years to begin other projects and renovations. "We are looking forward to other projects, like a new roof and establishing an endowment fund to provide more students with financial aid," said Fr. Jankaitis.

Nativity is a Catholic four-year co-educational secondary school that was founded in 1955 as the successor to Pottsville Catholic High School (formerly St. Patrick High School, Pottsville and St. Stephen High School, Port Carbon.) Today the school enrolls 207 students.



Carol Boyer, science teacher at Nativity BVM High School, Pottsville, points out the parking improvements made possible through STRENGTHENING OUR FUTURE IN FAITH (SOFF) to Jennifer Daubert, Development Director. (Kevin Graff)