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NEWSLETTER

Catholic students reach out to others

By Mark Hare

You are never too young to learn the art of being “other-centered,” says Sister Carolyn Rosica, RSM. Her third-graders at Seton Catholic School in Brighton every year collect socks and underwear for refugee families who visit Saints Place in Pittsford, where they find many of the personal and household items they need to begin new lives in their new country.

Every year, Colleen Knauf, who founded and directs Saints Place, visits those Seton third-graders to explain what it means to be a refugee, to have escaped persecution and arrive in a new country with nothing. Sister Carolyn says she teaches her children to “love the poor, the sick and the uneducated” — following the principles of Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin almost 200 years ago.

Catholic school students across the diocese are actively engaged in a wide range of outreach and service projects, each reflecting the Church’s historical commitment to social justice. Catholics are urged, among other things, to respect the dignity of all life, to work for a just society that cares for all its members, to promote the dignity of work and workers’ rights, to meet the needs of the poor and powerless, and to care for all God’s creation.

Service helps children see and feel the human needs of their community and beyond, says Ladeen Case, a kindergarten teacher at Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca. “I had three children go through Immaculate Conception,” she says, “and they still talk about working in the food pantry,” which is located in the church basement. Packing bags for distribution, she says, “really touches home. Food is just so important.”

Sam Deni, like many of his fellow sixth-graders at St. Louis School in Pittsford, is already looking forward to Mission Day next spring. “We have Mission Day because of our sister school in Kenya,” he says. “They are less fortunate than we are, so we make money to



GIFT OF LOVE: Helen Levinson of Rochester, a Holocaust survivor, thanks Caroline Fjermedal, Alexandra Webb and Katie Murphy. The girls, now students at Our Lady of Mercy High School, were inspired by Mrs. Levinson’s story and led a drive to raise more than \$1,700 at Siena Catholic Academy last school year to help her provide a proper burial for her father. He was murdered by the Nazis during World War II and buried on the grounds of a brewery. “I am so overcome, all I can do is cry,” she told assembled students when the check was presented on Sept. 28.

help them with their education.”

Back in 1998, the St. Louis children helped start the St. Louis School in Mautuma, Kenya, the hometown of Father Protus Hamisi, who was at the time studying at St. John Fisher College and assisting at the parish. Ever since, the students have used Mission Day to raise funds for their sister school and to learn more about Kenyan music and art, says sixth-grade teacher Susan Conlogue. It’s a way to help the students learn that they are connected to and a part of a global community.

At All Saints Academy in Corning, students have their hair cut or heads shaved to make wigs for cancer patients. At St. Rita School in Webster, students donate some of their Halloween candy and send it, along with personal notes, to members of area military service members serving far from home. At St. Lawrence School in Greece, students have a year-end Clean Desk campaign to collect

school supplies for schools in need.

While some schools have regular outreach projects at different times of the year, St. Joseph School in Auburn develops projects around an annual theme—this year, “Stay Connected: God, Family, School and Community.” In September, says middle school teacher Lisa Rouse, the students worked on caring for the Earth, by beautifying school grounds and recycling. In October they’ll be collecting winter clothing for needy people in Cayuga County.

“Every year,” she says, “we require seventh- and eighth-graders to do a community service project of their choosing, at least one to three hours per month.” The students report back on their service work. “We want them to understand that we’re all together, even people who are not part of our families,” she says. “We’re very aware of the outside community, and these are pretty hard times for many families.”

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A sampling of schools reaching out to their communities

● ALL SAINTS ACADEMY, CORNING

Every spring male students have their heads shaved and female students have their hair cut to help make wigs for cancer patients. In the fall, students collect coats for people in need, and classrooms sponsor a family for Christmas— buying presents for all members of the family.

● HOLY CROSS, ROCHESTER

Students last year organized a fundraiser called Pennies for Patients to raise money for children sick with leukemia or lymphoma; sixth-graders organized and launched a school wide recycling program. Students collected items for local soup kitchens and hospice homes. Students also worked with local nursing homes and made crafts for the residents.

● HOLY FAMILY, ELMIRA

Students collect food for the needy every fall, and prepare Christmas baskets for “adopted” families every December. During Lent, they participate in Operation Rice Bowl to raise funds for the missions.

● IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, ITHACA

Students in grades 3 to 6 help at the parish food pantry one day a week. During Advent, students prepare Christmas shoeboxes—containing personal care items, snacks, school supplies and toys— for needy children. The children also collect hats, boots and mittens for the Share the Warmth program at the Catholic Charities’ Samaritan Center.

● ST. AGNES, AVON

Students plan to raise money for Heifer International, which provides Third World families with goats, chickens and heifers to help them be able to care for themselves. Once a month, students and parents prepare a lasagna dinner for those who are sick, alone or have recently lost a loved one. Children also visit nursing homes and participate in Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives..

● ST. FRANCIS DESALES/ST. STEPHEN, GENEVA

Students visit area nursing homes throughout the year, and send cards to veterans on major holidays. They collect toys, clothing and school supplies for children in Nicaragua. Seventh- and eighth-graders help out at the Catholic Charities-sponsored lunch program hosted by the Methodist Church of Geneva every other Monday.

● ST. KATERI, IRONDEQUOIT

The service club collects food for the Irondequoit Community Cupboard, and students have made rosaries to send to Guatemala. They have also made cards for residents at a local hospice.

● ST. JOHN NEUMANN, IRONDEQUOIT

Each month a different class visits St. Ann’s Home to spend time with residents. Kindergartners volunteer at Salvation Army bell ringers at Christmas time. In January, students collect cans of soup for St. Andrew’s Food Cupboard.

● ST. JOSEPH, AUBURN

This year’s outreach theme is “Stay Connected: God, Family, School and Community.” Monthly projects are planned including Beautify Our Earth activities in September and outreach to area nursing homes in December.

● ST. JOSEPH, PENFIELD

Students collect flip-flops and school supplies for a mission school in Tanzania, raise funds for the Flower City Down Syndrome Network and participate in several individual class projects, such as making holiday decorations for residents of the Friendly Home and making blankets for neonatal intensive care unit at Strong Memorial Hospital.



BACK TO SCHOOL



Holy Family, Elmira



St. John Neumann, Irondequoit



St. Pius X, Chili



St. Joseph, Penfield



St. Mary's Canandaigua



Holy Cross, Rochester



St. Joseph, Penfield

● ST. LAWRENCE, GREECE

Students will support and host an event for the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, continue their annual Clean Desk Campaign (donating supplies to schools in need), and work with the parish’s Keep in Touch campaign, making cards and artwork for homebound parishioners.

● ST. LOUIS, PITTSFORD

Every spring students collected gently used household items that they deliver to various community agencies. Third graders collect socks and underwear for Saints Place refugee resettlement center on the parish campus. On “Thoughtful Thursdays” in December, students collect food and personal items for Daystar, which cares for medically fragile children, and the Pittsford Food Cupboard.

● ST. MARY, CANANDAIGUA

Kindergarten and Pre-K students do a Trike-a-thon to raise funds for St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital. The school’s string musicians perform for patients at Canandaigua hospitals. Students have collected money and materials for hurricane relief in Haiti and for a school in Kenya.

● ST. MARY OUR MOTHER, HORSEHEADS

Students work with parishioners on the “Prayers and Squares” project, making lap quilts for people in need of comfort and prayers.

● ST. MICHAEL, PENN YAN

At the annual Mission Day in March, students raise money for a local or national charity. They make holiday cards for residents of area nursing homes, and one year collected school supplies immediately after a local Mennonite school was damaged by fire.

● ST. PATRICK, OWEGO

Third graders collect canned goods for Rural Ministries, and second graders collect items to donate to area animal shelters. In April, the Fashion Forward project collects gently used clothing, hosts a fashion show and sells the items, donating the proceeds to an organization selected by students.

● ST. PIUS X, CHILI

In January, students collect personal items for residents of a homeless shelter and in May they participate in a walk-a-thon to raise money for the needy of Haiti.

● ST. RITA, WEBSTER

Students collect socks, gloves, toys and other items for the Mary’s Place Refugee Outreach Center. The annual We do Warm is the Way to Be project collects coats, hats, mittens and gloves for those in need. Right after Halloween, the students send some of their candy along with notes to area military personnel serving away from home.

● SETON CATHOLIC SCHOOL, BRIGHTON

Every Thanksgiving, students sponsor a food drive to support the Community Food Cupboard of Rochester. Students in grades K to 6 collected more than 3,300 gently used books (last year) to benefit students at Rochester School 54.

● SIENA CATHOLIC ACADEMY, BRIGHTON

Working through the years with different agencies (St. Joseph’s Villa, Hope House, the House of Mercy), students, teachers and school staff work in teams during Advent to assemble complete packages of ham or turkey meals and gifts for families in need.

A LETTER FROM ANNE WILLKENS LEACH DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

As we enjoy the crisp fall weather we also delight in the faces of our children as they become so familiar with their classrooms, teachers and the staff that assist them on a daily basis. Backpacks are filled and emptied at the end of the day, uniforms are ready and homework is completed... with your help, no doubt. I can never thank you enough for all you do to help us make Catholic Schools as special as they are. We could not do what we do without you.



We look forward to the 2012-2013 school year being a joyful, productive, faith filled learning experience for your children. Our principals, teachers, staff and the Catholic Schools office are committed to providing the best possible Catholic education that your child will carry with them for a lifetime.

This year it is critical that we all help in "Spreading the News." We will work together, as a united front, in informing our communities that Catholic schools are a very special gift that any parent can give their children. As you well know, nothing is as powerful as testimony. Tell everyone you know what Catholic Schools mean to you, and how they are changing your child's life for a lifetime. That will help us as we work ever so hard to ensure the vibrancy of our schools in the years to come. Your witness to others about the excellence of our schools will certainly help us.

May your school year be blessed.

God love you!
Anne Willkens Leach

CATHOLIC STUDENTS REACH OUT *Continued from page 1*

Every year, middle school students at Siena Catholic Academy in Brighton, listen to a Holocaust survivor as part of their study of history and religion. But last spring, Principal Vincent Tata urged a different approach to make the Holocaust more immediate to students so far removed from World War II. The speaker, a survivor from Poland whose entire family was killed, told students about her father who had been shot and then buried under what's now a road. She told students that she hoped before she died to provide her father a proper burial.

"I have never seen 140 14-year-olds so riveted," says teacher Maria Cahill. After the event, three eighth-grade girls offered to help raise money for the burial. They organized a five-day bake sale and a raffle and raised almost \$1,500.

One of the girls, Katie Murphy, now a freshman at Our Lady of Mercy High School, says, the survivor "grew up during the hardest of times and never had anything special happen to her." The tragedy was so powerful it moved the girls to act.

"It was an incredible display of compassion" Cahill says. "It really increased my level of

respect for adolescents."

At St. Patrick School in Owego, last year's September flooding taught many students what it means to be on the receiving end of the kindness of strangers. The students have long embraced service to others, not only collecting food for the needy, but collecting items needed by women serving in the military and participating in an Adopt-a-Family program by raising money and making purchases for those in need.

But with the flood, says Principal Paula Smith, "no matter what somebody did for them, they wanted to pay it forward." Seeing so many neighbors and friends lose their homes, have their lives disrupted, and be forced to seek temporary shelter, "changed their consciousness," Smith says. "Good was done for them, and now they want to do for others,"

Through the tragedy, she says, the children at St. Patrick School learned so much about following in the steps of Jesus. "They learned that it's not about things," Smith says. "With all they lost, they found out it's not that important."

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QUESTIONS?

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by calling 585.328.3210
or emailing schools@dor.org

OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.dorschools.org



WEBSITE TO HELP FAMILIES

Households of Faith: Homelinks is a new website for all families in the Diocese of Rochester, produced by the diocese's Evangelization and Catechesis Department.

On this website, you and your family will find many resources, prayers, educational videos, and more -- all designed to help us be Strong Catholic Families and raise Strong Catholic Youth.

Check it out! The website address is
<http://homelinks.dor.org/>



ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL, AUBURN

Students wrote letters to local military veterans in support of Operation Enduring Gratitude. The veterans recently visited the school and thanked students.