

OUTGOING SUPERINTENDENT LEACH LOOKS BACK FONDLY ON EXPERIENCE

Anne Willkens Leach, the superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Rochester since 2008, is leaving her job on June 30, but she's not ready to retire.

"I'm trained as a leadership life coach," she says, "and I'd like to do some workshops; I could also work with new school administrators." She wants to work, but she wants time for other things, especially for her four grandchildren and her son and daughter, both of whom live with their families near New York City.

"I need to be closer to them," she says. At some point, Willkens Leach says, she and her husband may move from their Penfield home to be near family, but right away they'll be able to make that drive whenever they like.

Willkens Leach began her career in education teaching physical education at the Rochester School for the Deaf and then at the School of the Holy Childhood. She did stints as a classroom teacher, training coordinator and director of curriculum and staff development at Monroe BOCES #1. She worked also as an assistant superintendent in the Wayne Central School District and as deputy superintendent for the Genesee Valley BOCES in Leroy. She served for one year as principal of

Nazareth Hall Middle School and Nazareth Academy High School in Rochester.

"I want to take my expertise with me," she says of her plans for a new flexible work life. "I've always found joy in work" — a trait she credits to her mother, "who was an independent woman who didn't marry until she was 35." She made each of her three children, as soon as they turned 16, "dress up and take the bus downtown, get a (work) permit and get a job." Willkens Leach got a job with the W.T. Grant Co. — where she repossessed refrigerators. She also worked in the kitchen at Northside (now Rochester General) Hospital.

Her mother insisted that her children cultivate an appreciation for work. "She got me out of taking Home Economics at Eastridge High School," Willkens Leach says. "She said, 'You're not going to school to learn how to cook for some man.'"

As she prepares to leave the diocese, Willkens Leach says she is optimistic about the future of Catholic education. "We've stabilized our enrollment. We want to keep our schools Catholic but we reach out to and embrace children of all faiths. We will need to grow that piece of our mission."



Anne Willkens Leach

Having worked in both public and Catholic schools, Willkens Leach says she sees value in both, but has deepened her appreciation for Catholic schools. "On that tragic day of September 11, I was working for the Genesee Valley BOCES, and we called all of our schools, made sure they shut off the TVs, went into lock down and helped them know how to talk to the students. But the one thing we could not say was, 'Say a prayer.' Here we do that, and it helps to bring peace to the hearts of the children."

ANTHONY COOK *Continued from page 1*
to Catholic education.

He is well-prepared to do just that. "I've met every principal" in the 20 schools in the diocesan system, Cook says, "and I know many of the teachers." He says each school has its own strengths to develop, and he expects to spend a lot of time out of the office becoming even more familiar with the schools and their potential.

Ray Manuszak, a science teacher at Aquinas, remembers Cook as a student at the school and coached him in track. He has more recently worked as an assistant coach on the track teams.

"He teaches and coaches with his heart, not just his head," Manuszak says. "He will put a kid in a heat that he can win (even when the time wouldn't put him among the race event's top finishers) because he wants him to have a chance for success." But Cook, he says, is one of the best organized educators he's ever seen. He is focused, knowledgeable, always on task and always thinking ahead.

HE NEVER GIVES UP

In his teaching years at Aquinas, Manuszak says of Cook, "he led the annual magazine drive and somehow his homeroom always won the competition. I'm pretty sure he used bribes." All kidding aside, Manuszak says, Cook knows what buttons to push and how to motivate students.

Whatever he does, he gives it his all, says Colleen Cook, of Greece, Anthony's mother. "He had perfect attendance all four years of high school," she says, and "he never gives up on anything." Her son played football all four years at Aquinas, she says, "but he was not very big and mostly just rode the bench. But he never missed a practice."

"I'm so glad I played football for all the relationships I made," Cook says. In his senior year, 1998, the Aquinas team won its first state championship. "I'll never forget that."

It was an important lesson for the future schools superintendent: Honor your commitments and good things happen.



DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
1150 BUFFALO ROAD
ROCHESTER, NY 14624

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT THE OFFICE OF
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:
by calling 585.328.3210

or emailing schools@dor.org
OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.dorschools.org

Diocese of Rochester Catholic Schools

June, 2013

Partners

NEWSLETTER

MEET ANTHONY S. COOK, NEW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT

BY MARK HARE

Anthony S. Cook III is moving from one "coaching" job to another this summer.

On July 1, Cook becomes superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Rochester. Meanwhile, this past April 26 he was named Section V coach of the year, after his Aquinas Institute boys indoor track team won a second sectional championship in three years.

Cook, the principal at Seton Catholic School in Brighton, was formerly a teacher and administrator at Aquinas and has coached boys and girls indoor and outdoor track for six years. The Aquinas girls won a sectional title in 2009.

"My work as a teacher and a coach has taught me the importance of interaction," he says. "Communication is vital."

It's an oversimplification to liken the superintendent's duties to coaching, but there are similarities. In both cases, he says, it's important to identify people's strengths and help them maximize their potential. It's important to stay positive and to look forward.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY CRUCIAL

He is a true believer in the mission and future of Catholic education, "For Anthony, the single most important thing is our Catholic identity," says Aquinas Principal Theodore Mancini. "That's what makes us strong; that's what makes us different."

His greatest strength, Mancini says of his former colleague, "is his understanding that school must give kids a chance to be successful." That's a sentiment echoed by Patricia Battisti, the dean of students at Aquinas. "When it comes to students, he has a special gift and a special compassion. He wants students to be successful, not just academically, but spiritually. He cares for the whole person."

Cook is a native of Greece, N.Y., where his family attended St. John the Evangelist Church. He attended public schools through 8th grade and then went on to Aquinas (Class of 1999), where he first acquired a love for teaching.

"I started tutoring math in my senior year," Cook recalls. "And I really enjoyed it. At the time, my dad wanted me to be a lawyer or an orthodontist. But when I went to Geneseo, I had a dual major in math and chemistry. Later, I changed to political science. I knew I wanted to be a teacher."

After college, Cook started as a substitute teacher in the Gates-Chili School District, but he was asked to teach a class at Aquinas for Michael Dianetti, a business teacher and then assistant principal who was battling cancer. "He had very little time left," Cook says of his mentor, "but he told me I would do fine and he helped me prepare. It was a gift from him to me. In that semester, 'I knew I wanted to teach at Aquinas.'"

Cook took a full-time position at Aquinas, where he taught American history and began his coaching career. He went on to become dean of students in the Aquinas junior high before moving to Seton in January 2012.

During his teaching years at Aquinas, Cook spent three summers at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned an M.A. in Educational Administration from the university's Mary Ann Remick Leadership Program. "After about a week in my first summer," Cook says, "it was clear that the expectation was that anyone in the program would become a Catholic school administrator."

MAKE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

POSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE

The experience deepened his appreciation



Anthony S. Cook

for Catholic education. Offering students the chance to live the faith is the strength of Catholic schools and will be their future, Cook believes. Community service, prayer, the celebration of the Eucharist — all are part of daily life in the schools. Although parents still value the religious faith, the academic rigor and the discipline Catholic schools offer their children, Cook knows that cost is a big reason families do not always send their children to Catholic school.

"I think if people are interested in Catholic schools, we want to make that a possibility for them." He will ask pastors for their help, Cook says, and he will ask people with means to help those who need help. "The cost difference between 15 and 20 students in a room is not that much," he says. "We need to fill those seats."

Cook will use a collaborative leadership style to find ways to strengthen and grow the Catholic school system. Catholicity will be at the heart of everything the schools offer, he says, but it will be important to identify new strategies and programs that will attract new families

Continued on page 4



AROUND THE SCHOOLS



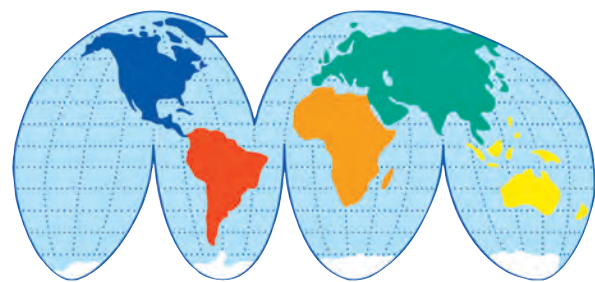
SCIENCE CLASS AT ST. LOUIS SCHOOL, PITTSFORD



EARTH DAY AT ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL PENFIELD



GRANDPARENTS' DAY PERFORMANCE
HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL, ELMIRA



PENPALS, ST. AGNES SCHOOL, AVON
Penpals at the Cheery Children Education Center in Kenya open a care package from the first-grade students at St. Agnes School in Avon, including school sweatshirts.



ST. PATRICK'S DAY
ST. MICHAEL SCHOOL, PENN YAN



ST. JOSEPH'S TABLE
ST. MARY, CANANDAIGUA
6th-grade members of the National Junior Honor Society host a St. Joseph's Table.



READING BUDDY DAY
ST. FRANCIS-ST. STEPHEN, GENEVA



MAY CROWNING



ST. KATERI SCHOOL,
IRONDEQUOIT



ST. LAWRENCE SCHOOL, GREECE



ST. MARY OUR MOTHER
SCHOOL, HORSEHEADS



HOLY CROSS SCHOOL, CHARLOTTE