

Raising funds and hope for future of schools

BY LENA PENNINO
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Tomorrow's Hope Foundation has planned a multi-faceted approach to raise funds to boost school enrollment and to help students who cannot afford to attend Catholic school or are currently struggling with payments.

After months of preparations, plans are unfolding for upcoming fundraising events, a direct mailing to raise funds for a scholarship/financial assistance program and a special sponsorship program, as well as a diocese-wide collection.

Kicking off Catholic Schools Week on Sunday, January 29, there will be a second collection during all parish Masses earmarked to support Catholic elementary schools on Long Island. Half of the money collected in each parish will go toward the local parish or regional school and the other half will be donated to Tomorrow's Hope Foundation. This collection, initiated by Bishop William Murphy at the recommendation of the education commission, is expected to continue each year.

The collection will fund the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation scholarship/financial assistance program, helping students with tuition based on financial need as determined by an independent agency. The application process "will be a lot like applying for college aid," explained Kathleen Brand, executive director of Tomorrow's Hope Foundation.

Applications are expected to be available this February. Updates on this program will be posted on the Web at www.tomorrowshopefoundation.org.

In February, the foundation will send out approximately 300,000 letters in a direct mail campaign appealing for funds to support a financial aid program. Catholics will be encouraged to donate to Tomorrow's Hope Foundation or sponsor a student through the STAR program (Student Tuition Assistance Relationship program). The STAR program will provide individual students with approximately half of their tuition — \$2,000 — while the students' families will pay the rest. The donor will "be updated on the student's progress and receive personal letters from the children," said Ms. Brand. Ideally donors will choose to continue to support students long term.

There are also fundraisers planned.

"We are planning the first annual gala for Tomorrow's Hope Foundation," said board member Jim Riley Jr., a retired partner and managing director at Goldman Sachs New York who attended St. Martha's School in Uniondale (now St. Martin De Porres Marianist School).

The gala April 21 at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury, chaired by Mr. Riley and his wife, Ellen, will "celebrate the past five decades of Catholic education here on Long Island and at the same time focus on the future." He expects more than

500 people to attend.

In addition, a golf outing is planned for September 25 at the Meadow Brook Club in Jericho.

"Many people have fond memories of their Catholic schools," said Mr. Riley, whose four daughters attended St. Joseph's School in Garden City and Sacred Heart Academy in Hempstead. "This foundation gives alumni and others who care about Catholic schools an avenue to help various parishes and schools in their educational endeavors. It's an easy way to help."

Diocesan Superintendent of Schools Ursuline Sister Joanne Callahan encourages local Catholics to help. "It is the responsibility of the entire Catholic community — bishops, priests, deacons, Religious, and laity — to continue to strive towards the goal of making our Catholic elementary and secondary schools available, accessible, and affordable to all Catholic parents and their children, including those who are poor and middle class," she said, quoting a document released last year by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled, "Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary Schools in the Third Millennium."

To find the Catholic school near you or to read the entire document on Catholic elementary schools, visit the education office's Web page on the diocesan Web site at www.drvc.org.