

St. Peter School in Lewiston raises the bar for recess

School in Lewiston just got a little more fun. St. Peter R.C. School has opened a new playground for its students.

Bishop Richard J. Malone blessed the new recreational area Oct. 12, following a Mass at the school. Children from every grade took part in the Mass.

The new playground includes swings, climbing walls, teeter totters and a play structure that makes the schoolyard look like something in a Dr. Seuss book. All the new equipment sits on soft rubber padding.

The playground was dedicated in honor of Dr. Irene Elia, a member of the school's board and a very strong supporter of the school. The former mayor of Niagara Falls has been very active in the parish for years. She made a significant gift to get the project off the ground.

"When I first announced that we were doing this, she came forward and gave me a sizeable gift to get



DAN CAPPELLIZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bishop Richard J. Malone, assisted by Father Ryszard Biernat, blesses the new playground at the St. Peter School, Lewiston.

it going, and she is a very strong supporter of the school and the parish. She's really helped us to grow in many ways. We're extremely grateful for her generosity," said Msgr. David G. LiPuma, pastor of St. Peter's.

The school has been growing over the past seven years, following Maureen Ingham being named principal. At the time the school was in danger of closing as it had only 72 students. Now, the school is growing with 211 students, 30 enrolling this year alone. The pre-K through eighth-grade school, has students come from Niagara Falls, Youngstown, Wilson and other Niagara County towns.

The new playground, which includes a basketball court, came as the result of three years worth of work.

"I came here five years ago and discovered the children really didn't have a place to play," Msgr. LiPuma said. "They just kind of walked around the block for recess. Some

years ago they used to walk over to another playground in town. So we started talking as a parish and a school about what to do and it grew out of that."

The parish acquired two houses behind the church, which were torn down to make room for the playground. Msgr. LiPuma wishes to thank Libby Broderick of Professional Construction Services, who served as construction manager; Harold Hibbard, president of Metro Environmental; and Michael Sullivan of the diocesan Office of Buildings & Properties for their support.

"It was a wonderful spirit. It was really a positive joyful experience," said Msgr. LiPuma of the unveiling and blessing. "We're really grateful the bishop came and we're very grateful we have this playground now. We're grateful to all our parishioners because we wouldn't be able to do what we do without the generosity of our parishioners and our community of Lewiston and Youngstown."