

A pencil and a prayer for students at Notre Dame Academy

By PAULA DE ANGELIS - STEIN

Notre Dame Academy is a regional school, which means it reaches out beyond parish boundaries to educate students from the surrounding areas. A regional school also receives support from, and works in conjunction with, the many parishes they serve. In South Buffalo, there are five Catholic churches in the vicinity of Notre Dame Academy: St. Martin of Tours, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa and Our Lady of Charity, which has two worship sites, St. Ambrose and Holy Family.

As the school year at Notre Dame Academy begins, so too does the notion of working together to benefit the students. Tristan D'Angelo, principal of Notre Dame Academy, had an idea that would bring school and parishes closer together.

"While on vacation I came across an idea that I felt the students, teachers and parishioners could all be involved in," explains D'Angelo. "I tweaked the idea to better suit our community and we are running with it. But for it to work, we needed to ask for help from our parish priests. I am so thankful to the priests in South Buffalo who are always so supportive of Notre Dame Academy."

D'Angelo's idea is to hand write the name of

each student who attends Notre Dame Academy on the back of a paper cut-out and invite parishioners from all five South Buffalo churches to look for a basket full of names in the back of their parish. Parishioners will be asked to take a cut-out home and keep this child in their daily prayers.

"The parishioners receive the name of a student to pray for and the students will receive a blessed pencil," said D'Angelo.

Father James Cunningham, pastor at St. Teresa; Father Bill Quinlivan, pastor of St. Martin of Tours and St. Thomas Aquinas; and Father Bryan Zielenieski, pastor of Our Lady of Charity, have all taken time to bless pencils for the school students. The pencils are inscribed with the words, "Someone is praying for you."

Teachers handed out these blessed pencils to their students during the first week of school. It is the hope of Notre Dame Academy, that when a student is having a bad day, they can simply look at their pencil and take comfort in the knowledge that someone is holding them up in prayer.

"I am really hoping that our parishioners will become prayer partners with our children so I tried to think ahead," said D'Angelo. "We coded each of the cut-outs in case a parishioner would



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like to send 'their student' a short prayerful note in care of the school."

Small gestures go a long way. If you belong to one of these parishes, please consider adding a Notre Dame Academy student or even a faculty member to your personal prayer list.

For more information on South Buffalo Catholic School Notre Dame Academy visit www.notredamebuffalo.org.