Reflections on the Past

By Susan Work, President

In this 25th Anniversary issue of the Beacon, you will read the recollections of many longtime members of the Holy Family community. Their stories are sentimental, proud, funny, and inspirational. They describe students we loved, buildings we tolerated, leaders we admired, and moments when we felt touched by God.

I would like to share some of my own reflections. Of course the history for me begins with my amazing brother, Pastor Charles Infelt. In 1985 while I was living in Philadelphia, Chuck called to tell me his exciting news. He and his congregation were opening a school. I admired him greatly, and I was intrigued by the mission of the school. As a former teacher in an urban high school in Florida, I understood the need he hoped to address, but also the incredible strength and courage of public housing residents. It was a fantastic thing to offer them a Christian school! I never imagined that just two years later, my life would also intertwine with the new school!

Fortuitously, my family relocated to Chicago in 1987. I quickly became involved with the school, albeit behind-the-scenes while raising small children. Chuck was very busy but we

Reflections on the Future

As we march toward our second quarter-century, the energy and momentum at the Holy Family Ministries Center is palpable.

We will be providing a foundation in faith to an even greater number of children this year! Fifty boys joined our student body, a result of nearby St. Gregory Episcopal School closing in June. This is a 20% enrollment increase, our largest one-year jump ever and an acceleration of our growth plan. We are grateful to the caring adults who guided these boys through their years at St. Gregory, and for the gracious way they have helped the boys transition into Holy Family. Happily, some of these individuals are joining our board of directors and an administrator and a teacher are joining Holy Family’s staff.

Another very significant change this year is Pastor Infelt’s move to part-time status. After 35 years of ministry to urban children and families, he will now focus his attention on the Holy Family church congregation as they begin the process of saying goodbye to their much-loved pastor of 35 years. Pastor’s spiritual leadership has touched all our lives and has helped us to grow in faith and character. His influence will continue to
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developed the habit of speaking on the phone nearly every
day—a practice that lasted over ten years as we strategized
and problem-solved how to keep the school afloat. We shared
worries, laughs, and more than a few dramas. There was never
enough money and yet always enough money, thanks to the
ever-growing, generous community of Holy Family partners.

In those early years, we had some terrific advisors. Especially
influential was Dick Sayther, managing partner of Gronlund
Sayther Brunkow. Dick was and is today a wise coach and
wonderful partner. Among other things, we’ve learned from
Dick to step aside from the day to day frenzy a few times a
year, think strategically, and always have a long-term plan.

We couldn’t possibly have made it through the early years
without the partnership of many, many generous and caring
volunteers and donors. In fact, we might not have made it past
the first year of the school’s operation without these partners.
Dick Ferris, former pastor of Kenilworth Union Church, is the
first person who stepped in to help in a big way. Dick rounded
up almost all of our early donors, and all were from KUC. He
personally wrote beautiful letters thanking them for their
support. We still have copies!

By the early 1990’s, we had acquired local partners in the form
of a school Advisory Council, predecessor of today’s HFM
board of directors. Early members, some of whom are still
involved at Holy Family, were Dick Tribble, Marge Phemister,
Edie Hicks, Brooke Hummer, Thelma Schwartz, Rev. Al Bergh,
Nancy Nagel, Paul Soderholm, Karen Balsbaugh, Konrad Bald,
Jan Conlin, and Rev. Dick Ferris. We planned the very first
benefit event for Holy Family at the Orrington-Evanston. Today
these events remain key to Holy Family’s enduring mission to
open the doors of Christian education to underserved
communities.

By 1998, Holy Family Lutheran School had grown beyond the
“start up” stage and Chuck was also operating an after-school
youth program in Cabrini. Chuck and I switched from phone
calls to meetings. And more meetings. Eventually all those
meetings resulted in a plan to form an organization with paid
staff, a real office, meticulous financial records, specialized
committees, ramped up fund raising, and a Board of Directors.
We hired a staff person but it didn’t go so well, and before long I
was making a career change and filing papers to incorporate
Holy Family Ministries.

Between 2000 and 2010, we enjoyed a decade of tremendous
growth, doubling the number of children served, expanding our
youth programming, recruiting a wonderful board, and building
a permanent home! We acquired many more coaches and
donors.

I must first salute our community-based School Board, a savvy
band of seven individuals headed for 23 years by Janet Stewart
and now by her daughter Fanisha Davis, a Holy Family alum. A
few other members of the School Board have also served the
entire 25 years. Their love for Holy Family School is boundless!

I want to single out our fabulous Board of Directors, led by two
truly outstanding leaders since the board’s founding in January
2000: Joe Pringle and John Mjoseth. Their importance to Holy
Family’s growth and success is simply immeasurable! Each in
his own way has given heart and soul to seeing that Holy
Family succeeds. Their huge gifts of time and energy, as well
as their financial leadership, have inspired and attracted other
wonderful board members and donors. (see page 3)

Two school leaders have proven the solid foundation for many
years. Marilyn Hawkins is “the rock” who for a decade has
been the trusted confidante and guide for Holy Family parents
and kids. Cheryl Collins, principal for the last six years, is an
exceptional leader—talented, strong, led equally by her values
and intellect. She has taken our students and staff to
previously unseen levels of accomplishment, bringing the
school successfully through its first try at accreditation and
raising our test scores to record levels.

I want to salute a few donors who made gifts that were turning-
point donations for Holy Family in the hundreds of thousands of
dollars—but they don’t want their names published! They know
I’m talking about them, however, and to them I say, You are a
key part of Holy Family’s history. We think about you with great
affection. Our students had an opportunity they never would
have had if not for you!

And finally, to all the partners who have supported Holy Family
with love and consistent giving over many, many years, we say,
Your commitment is touching. Your faith is inspiring. You are
the backbone of the ministry. Thank you for being our partners!
shape us, even as he steps back.

The School enrollment increases will also impact our out-of-school programs. Some of the new boys have younger siblings to populate our pre-school/child care center. They also have working parents, enabling growth in our after-school and summer camp programs. With 35 eighth graders this year, our mentor program is expanding too. Our associate board, called Young Professionals, guide our students as they select, apply to, and enroll in preferred high schools. The Young Professionals have first-hand and recent experience applying to colleges — a process that is very similar to that of private and selective public high schools. Our goal is to avoid sending our grads to the underperforming public high schools in our neighborhood.

As we hone our business model and further establish Holy Family Ministries as a successful model of social ministry, we are gaining attention, especially in the world of Christian education. Too often, Lutheran and other faith-based schools in Chicago and across the country are facing enormous challenges.

It’s probably fair to say that the era of the traditional urban “parochial” school, owned and operated by one congregation, is struggling. That model is simply not working anymore in most urban areas, where changing neighborhoods over the last few decades have created financial and cultural issues for the schools. The congregations on which they’ve traditionally relied for both students and financial support are themselves challenged by diminished resources.

Holy Family is one of the few Christian elementary schools in Chicago that is not owned and financially supported by a parent congregation. From the beginning, we have been supported by a network of caring individuals and congregations whose members believe in the power of religious education to nurture and educate the next generation of leaders for the inner city. The children we serve, like those of almost all inner-city faith-based schools these days, are not primarily Lutheran (nor the new students primarily Episcopal). People of faith and good will are increasingly joining together in an ecumenical effort to provide faith-based education to children regardless of their religious tradition.

Holy Family is at the forefront of this movement. We are demonstrating for others a way that faith based education can succeed academically, spiritually, and financially. Ours is a model that works. Beyond that, it is God-pleasing work. By educating tomorrow’s leaders, Holy Family is doing its part to end poverty and strife in some of Chicago’s most challenged neighborhoods.
It was 1985 and Charles Infelt had a dream. The pastor of one of the poorest churches in Chicago dreamed that the children in his congregation and community would have a school so filled with love and acceptance that they would be empowered to aspire to heights as inconceivable as the dreams Infelt dared to dream for them. Now, 25 years later, Infelt's dream is a reality, having enriched hundreds of children over the decades.

“It sounded great, but it seemed impossible to me. It was a vision Pastor Infelt had: his vision was to provide quality education to low-income children, kids on welfare,” reflected Janet Stewart, a member of Holy Family Church since 1965 and a long-time leader at the church and school. “I didn’t think it was possible that any of us would be able to send our kids to this school he dreamed of.”

Infelt wanted to implement a philosophy that would empower inner-city children by combining principles of sociology, psychology and theology.

“The urban child needs to be a go-getter. But the assertive behavior that we so covet, wasn’t being enabled in the public school system,” explained Pastor Infelt. “We were trying so hard through after school programs and Sunday School, but it wasn’t enough. We needed a school to transform children and their families.”

That school would be based on Jesus’ principle of Shalom, a feeling of peace, completeness and welfare. But as drugs and gangs took over a crumbling inner-city, it seemed an impossible goal.

“(Gangs were) a problem, but not the problem,” explained Infelt. “The problem was that the schools did not build on the strength of families, did not value the children and did not encourage and empower them to achieve.”

So Infelt went on the road to suburban Lutheran churches and non-denominational churches, explaining his vision for inner-city children.

“Along came Charles with his dream. I went down to the church and saw firsthand the trouble and problems and wars that the neighborhood and the church was experiencing,” said the Reverend Richard Ferris, then associate minister at Kenilworth Union Church on the North Shore. “I
saw the bullet holes on the side of the church and I was dumbfounded to think that he would even continue as pastor there when I felt he surely must have been in danger."

Mary Anderson, a member of Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Barrington and zealous supporter of the school recalls the first time she heard Infelt’s plea. "Here was this inner-city pastor, saying, 'We need to have a school for our inner city kids.' We wondered how he would do it, even with help from churches."

With funding from five suburban churches, Holy Family Lutheran School began in 1985. Over 25 years, the small school that began with one inconceivable dream continues to flourish, based on the philosophy that children who love God and feel God’s unconditional love are hopeful and optimistic children. Roadblocks get interpreted as challenges and ever-expanding experiences build a “go-getter” mentality, anchoring children as they bask and grow in the love of God.

Looking back on those past 25 years, recalling the torrent of challenges and constant trickle of hope, Infelt says simply, “It never dawned on me that we couldn’t. It began with a name with all types of positive connotations…and it crescendoed. This school is a coming together of people and cultures, students, parents, staff, supporters, volunteers. It’s life as it should be.”

The Christmas Gift
...Pastor Chuck Infelt

The school was six years old, now at the Islamic College, when just before Christmas - students and teachers gone for their break - Chuck Infelt walked into the unheated school to finally face the cold realities of school finances.

"It was a terrible time in the city. I had been concentrating so much on the problems and violence in Cabrini, but I finally came up for air a few days before Christmas, and looked at the books," recalled Infelt. "It was then that I realized we wouldn’t be able to open the school after Christmas. We had no money."

Distraught, he called his wife, to share the bad news. When she didn’t answer the phone, he hopelessly went to the school’s office and opened a letter containing a check from a someone he had never met. It was a check for $5,000, the largest donation the school had ever received. It wasn’t enough to open the school, but it gave Infelt hope as he went back to the church office to finish some work. At the church another check greeted Infelt, also for $5,000.

The first gift came from a young man, David Gorter, who was grieving a loss. David and wife Lauren had heard about the work Holy Family School was doing from friend Brooke Hummer. As a last minute gesture, the Gorters wrote out the check in hope that the Christmas donation would heal some of their grief. His parents, so heartened by their son’s generosity, matched his donation.

The two checks totaled the exact amount needed to open the school...to the penny.
A vision and 40 students helped launch Holy Family Lutheran School initially as a cooperative with Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the former Bethlehem Lutheran School. Two years later the school leased space at Josephinum Catholic High School on the third floor, and included grades kindergarten through four.

Verna White was the first principal, followed by Linda Berg, a member of Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Northfield.

“I was going for my Masters in Administration while I was at Holy Family, but really I learned more as principal there than in any Masters’ program,” observed Linda Berg, now a principal at an alternative high school in River Falls, Wisconsin. “The school gave me the courage to do things I never thought I’d be able to do, to take leadership, to ask for equipment, supplies, and books from complete strangers. I had to, it was the only way we could survive.”

In those early years, despite financial challenges, Holy Family continued to grow, increasing its enrollment to 80 students within five years.

Like a faith-filled, gospel-led gypsy, Holy Family School would relocate four times, forced out by the need for space or by escalating rent costs as property values rose. Indeed, God had plans for this little school, moving each time to neighborhoods in need of Holy Family’s message of hope, faith and quality, affordable education.

“We needed space and relocating to the Irving Park location gave us that,” noted Nancy Nagel, a long time supporter of the school from Lutheran Church of the Ascension. A former high school and college math teacher, Nagel tutored students, even filling in as principal for several weeks. “But that was about all it gave us.”

When the school expanded to the third floor, it meant more clean up with more volunteers pitching in. But this vastly improved space meant the landlord was able to lease it to a Chicago Alternative School at a higher rate, and gave Holy Family the option of occupying the basement or moving out. It was July.

Joan Sherman, Nancy Nagel, Dick Tribble, and Susan Work set out to find a new location. “It was July, the middle of the summer and there was no A.C. After calling around, nothing seemed a possibility,” remembers Joan Sherman. But God must have wanted Holy Family to look westward, because the next location they found was the Rose of Sharon Community Church at 4256 W. Walton. “We walked into this place, it was perfect. It even had a playground, something the school had never had.
Here we were, a small ad-hoc group, with a vision that wouldn’t be dimmed. We made the decision the very day we first saw it. That was very exciting for me.” recalled Dick Tribble.

Added Nagel, “As bad as it was it was far superior to what we had at the Irving Park location. The new space might have been smaller, but it was in better shape and now the school had a playground!”

With 100 volunteers working over 2300 hours, the school was able to open within three weeks of the move. To these urban explorers the building was a bright bloom in the midst of a struggling urban neighborhood.

But the move meant that some former students weren’t able to make a longer commute. With enrollment down, Holy Family recruited in nearby neighborhoods, discovering an even greater need for Holy Family’s message on the West Side.

An Unlikely Support System
...Susan Work, President HFM

Flyers notifying nearby residents of their new neighbor were printed. But the staff and volunteers were far too busy unpacking boxes and getting the new school set up to hand out flyers.

“I thought perhaps the guys I saw standing across the street could help us out,” recalled Susan Work with a chuckle. “And they did, putting them on windshields and handing them to passers-by. I soon realized I’d hired the local drug dealers!”

A few years later, when two TVs went missing from the school after Christmas break, one of these men came to Dean of Students Marilyn Hawkins to tell her that a newly-hired staff member was stealing from the school.

“I want you to know that that guy (the staff member) isn’t good enough for your school; he’s got to go. He’s trouble. Not good enough for your kids.”

“We had trusted them with our flyers, perhaps naïvely, but we trusted them. And they returned that trust by respecting us and the work we were accomplishing in the neighborhood,” explained Susan Work. “Funny, isn’t it, how God is able to use people—even the ones you don’t think are equipped to do God’s work.”

By 1998, following over a decade of volunteer-led fund raising and friend-gathering, the School was flourishing with 130 students in grades K to 8 and another 25 children enrolled in an after-school program in Cabrini. On Saturdays in Cabrini, Pastor Infelt was leading a community improvement program, assisted by volunteer Bob Jewell who supervised the visiting youth groups as they cleaned up and painted vacated apartments so that new families could move in.

Holy Family’s volunteer-led fund raising program was becoming increasingly sophisticated and keeping up with the need was daunting. Neither the After-School nor Volunteer program enjoyed a sustainable revenue source, as government funding was becoming harder to obtain. Management was also becoming complicated as the number of students and staff grew. Conversation swirled around the possibility of forming a new non-profit entity to provide fund raising and administration for the programs.

Throughout 1999 work was undertaken to plan and incorporate a new entity and to file for tax exempt status. The first board was comprised of 13 people organized into four committees: finance, personnel, programs, and development.

On Jan. 1, 2000, Holy Family Ministries came to life as a 501(c)(3) organization. The following year, under the guidance and support of ELCA’s Ruth Reko, HFM was accepted onto the roster of Lutheran social ministry organizations. In 2001, Joe Pringle became Chairman of the Board; Susan Work was named President; Carrie Dauner joined as development staff, and Dave Watt was contracted as CFO. The budget was $1M.

The Wrestling Scholarship ...Susan Work, President

I remember a very special gift that arrived in the mid ‘90’s. It was September—not a huge time for charitable giving—but I opened a plain white envelope and pulled out a $20,000 check! That was one of our biggest donations to date, and I didn’t even recognize the donor’s name. There was, however, enough info on the check to connect the donor to a youth mission group from Pennsylvania that had spent some time that summer painting apartments in Cabrini. I called, and the pastor kindly gave me a phone number. I reached the young man’s mother. She and her husband were faithful Christians and hard-working rural people who scrimped and saved all their lives until they had enough money to fund their son’s college education. In the end, however, he won a full wrestling scholarship and didn’t use all the savings. He thought about buying a nice car. Or saving it for a “some day” house. But while on the mission trip to Cabrini, he was greatly moved by the immense need in Cabrini and by Holy Family’s ministry to the residents. He wanted to do so much more than paint apartments. But what? He prayed about it until his path was clear. He would donate his leftover college funds to Holy Family! I was so surprised that I asked his mom if she wanted us to return the check. He was, after all, just 22 years old. But she declined. Her son knew what he was doing. It’s a story of such amazing generosity that even today when I need inspiration, I remember that young man’s selflessness.
Dr. Patricia Colfer, a former Catholic nun, provided fearless and innovative leadership as principal of Holy Family Lutheran School. When Dr. C., as she was called by everyone, first came on board, she reinstituted class trips believing that travel and interactive experiences broaden the mind, encourage learning and open up all types of unexpected possibilities.

But just planning for a trip to Washington DC, (for many their first trip ever), opened those 8th graders to experiences they had never dreamed of. Going to Costco with Dr. C., the students loaded up her car with M & M’s and then set to work selling them…to unsuspecting, but always willing visitors to the school, church members, to neighbors in their housing projects. Working feverishly, students hoped that each box of M & Ms would bring them a bit closer to Washington DC. In truth, they were still miles away from their dream trip.

“What gave crowning impetus was Mary Schmich’s article appearing in the Chicago Tribune,” recounted Colfer.

“Kids Earning Trip One Sweet Tooth at a Time,” heralded Schmich’s March 29, 1998 column, prompting readers to donate money and even suitcases for the novice travelers. “Donations poured in, providing not only that years’s 8th graders a trip to DC, but for three succeeding years, as well,” said Colfer.

The trip idea also spurred the beginning of taking the 7th graders to Springfield for a day, exploring Lincoln sites and topping it off with a water park experience - for some kids a first.

Working to fund the first class trip taught students and everyone involved that there is goodness in the world in the most unexpected places. All it takes is one principal’s crazy dream, a few boxes of M & Ms and a classroom of hardworking, faith-filled 8th graders.
Upon the closing of Bethlehem Lutheran school (alma mater of Leslie Hunter), Pastor Infelt and members of Holy Family Lutheran Church start Holy Family Lutheran School to offer Cabrini families an affordable alternative to poorly performing public schools.

HFLS opens with 40 students in K-4 in classrooms rented at Josephinum High School. The Rev. Verna White is principal.

Support for the school is provided by Kenilworth Union Church (Kenilworth), Lutheran Church of the Atonement (Barrington), Redeemer Lutheran Church (Hinsdale), Lutheran Church of the Ascension (Northfield), and Trinity Lutheran Church (Evanston).

1985

1988

Holy Family Advisory Council (A.C.) is formed by Susan Work, Marge Phemister, Edie Hicks, Charles Infelt, Dorothy Runner, Casey Hoffman, Karin Balsbaugh, and E. Patrick Jones, to lend management expertise and to provide resource development for Holy Family Lutheran School. The A.C., eleven years later, evolves into the Holy Family Ministries Board of Directors.

1990

Having outgrown the space at Josephinum, HFLS finds new quarters at the American Islamic College at 640 E. Irving Park Rd.

1992

Cabrini Alive Youth Development Programs are founded. Activities include after-school programs, sleep-away camps, e-camp, and two youth clubs.

1997

Three weeks prior to the start of school, HFLS is asked to move the school to the basement. Instead, HFLS began an intensive search for an alternative location. Thanks to 100 volunteers who put in over 2300 hours in three weeks and an anonymous gift to defray moving expenses, HFLS relocates to the Rose of Sharon Community Church, 4256 W. Walton St., and school opens on time!

1999

Holy Family Ministries is established as the umbrella organization for HFLS and Hope Alive (formerly Cabrini Alive). Susan Work is named president and treasurer. The staff and board of directors provide management and administration for the programs as well as governance, financial oversight, and fund raising leadership.

2000
By 2004, Holy Family Ministries was in full gear. The Northfield staff had increased to two full-time and two part-time staff, and the Board had gained strength and momentum. Chuck and Susan agreed that Susan’s primary role in the early days of HFM would be to build ‘the engine’ - meaning a strong board of directors. All across Chicagoland, talented and generous individuals came forward, eager to help pull the train. By 2004, Holy Family had attracted 20 directors and was ready to soar.

In the same year, Cheryl Collins became principal. She had been the Lower School Director at the well-regarded Providence-St. Mel School. With her innovative and skilled leadership, enrollment increased, curriculum expanded and students flourished.

The time had come to consider purchasing a building to provide a more stable environment, less subject to escalating property rentals. A task force was formed to seek out potential properties.

“For the next couple of years, the committee drove around the West side of Chicago looking at open lots, or abandoned buildings. We talked to alderman, developers, or anyone else who we thought might want to help us with this endeavor,” recalled Joe Pringle, a member of the Board of Directors and chair of the Capital Campaign. “It had the feeling of Moses wandering in the desert. We never really made any progress.”

The task force, however, had made progress on envisioning their ideal school. Practical goals like a safe building meeting all fire codes, expandable classroom space, a safe environment for teachers, staff and volunteers, adequate space for administrative staff, a gym and lunchroom.

Once the group got started, it didn’t take long for crazy ideas to take flight, like a swimming pool so students could learn to swim; affordable health care; ball fields; easy access to the expressway for volunteers, teachers and staff; a garden. Joe Pringle would shake his head, estimating these dream accommodations could cost $30 million.

It would take a massage therapist to bring it all together. One day, Susan Work was chatting with another tenant in HFM’s Northfield office, telling him about the fruitless search for land on the Westside. He offered to introduce her to his client, developer Charlie Shaw. At that time, Shaw was working on Homan Square, a redevelopment of the original Sears property in the economically challenged North Lawndale neighborhood, not far from the school. Shaw also had been dreaming of a school for the area.

Turns out all those “crazy” ideas from the task force meetings were addressed. Homan Square had: a Chicago Park District swimming pool the school could use; Lawndale Christian Health Centers were also on the property; the location was just off the Eisenhower Expressway; it was not too far from the old school. The area was established and safe, but in the heart of an area in need.

“God had provided a location that already had $20+ million of our needs and wants covered. What a lesson for us all,” said Pringle. “Nothing was working out when we searched for what WE could build. All doors opened when we started to investigate the possibility of building what God wanted us to build. Led by John Mjoseth, chairman of HFM Board of Directors and Pringle’s Building Hope Capital Campaign Committee, leaders began by asking one another for pledges, resulting in 100 percent participation and $1.8 million. Eventually $6.7 million was raised, and on April 3, 2007 Holy Family Ministries broke ground for the Holy Family Ministries Center.
Groundbreaking Ceremony—April 3, 2007
HFM Chair John Mjoseth, HFLS students, Principal Cheryl Collins, Pastor Charles
Infelt, HFM President Susan Work, Capital Campaign Chair Joe Pringle

Model of Holy Family Ministries Center
Architect: FGM Architects
Builder: W.B. Olson, Inc.

Through the Eyes of A Child
...Mary Anderson, volunteer and friend

Mary Anderson has been Miss Mary to first graders at Holy Family School
for the past 15 years. She recalls one incident as most exemplifying the
spirit of this School.

“We had a brother and sister together in first grade and one day they were
having a fist fight. I managed to break it up and tried to find out what the problem was. After everyone
had settled down a bit, I asked the sister, Dominique, why they were fighting. "He said something bad
—she paused—you were white, so I let him have it."

“When I asked her, what color she thought I was, she said, ‘Why you’re just like me.’

“Ahh,” sighed Miss Mary, “If only the world could see through the eyes of Dominique.”
On June 3, 2008, a jubilant celebration was held as Holy Family Ministries Center was dedicated. Today’s enrollment is 435 children: 230 students in the school, 45 in the preschool, 85 in the after school program, and 75 in the summer day camp, Adventures in Learning.

Now in a state-of-the-art educational facility, children learn and thrive. The school builds a sense of pride, providing bricks and mortar proof that a loving God does indeed love and care for his children.

“The building stands as a giant symbol of what Holy Family School strives to be. There aren’t very many new buildings in the Lawndale neighborhood. The fact that the center stands there sends a message to people who live in Lawndale. The building tells them that other people are willing to invest in their children,” exclaimed Susan Work, PhD, president and treasurer of Holy Family Ministries. “We, meaning the Holy Family community of donors, believe that all God’s children have endless potential. They just need an opportunity.”

In 2008, Holy Family moved into our brand new facility. On the day of our opening, students, parents, board members and guests poured into the facility for the first time for celebratory speeches, tours and photos. I still hear the voices of the students and remember the large grins and wide eyes filled with joy. One student said with pride, “This is my new school!” One student even proclaimed, “I don’t want to go on summer break. Can’t we start school right now?” I knew instantly that the children had taken ownership and that they would take care of the building as if it were a precious jewel.

The Precious Jewel
...Cheryl Collins, Principal
Over the course of 25 years, Holy Family has benefited from the efforts of hundreds of wonderful volunteers. Their donations of time save HFM tens of thousands of dollars every year, as detailed in our annual financial statements. Volunteer-in-Chief is John Mjoseth, who is admired and loved throughout the Holy Family community for his tireless and passionate service as Chairman of the Board. John has chaired the HFM board since 2004 when our first chair, Joe Pringle, stepped aside to make way for another leader. Joe left big shoes to fill but John stepped in with enthusiasm. “Holy Family brought everything together for me. I had previous board experiences and I knew what I was looking for. I had come to a full appreciation of the huge role that education plays in urban America, and I was ready to jump in.”

He jumped in in a big way. Six years later, John is known at Holy Family for his gracious ways, personal warmth and generosity, and supportive and loyal presence. Children and staff alike greatly appreciate John’s frequent attendance at all key—and many not-so-key—Holy Family events. He shows up to celebrate Dr. Seuss’ birthday. He’s there on Career Day. He’s there for the Thanksgiving feast. He brings guests to chapel. And he was present when Barack Obama was elected. He jokes about his perk as chair—“a golden hall pass.”

That commitment to being present has led to some very special moments. “My most unforgettable moment at Holy Family was the Wednesday chapel service after Obama was elected president,” he reminisces. “Principal Collins brought in a copy of the Chicago Tribune with a huge picture of Obama on the front page. The students just erupted. It was a cyclone of joy and hope.” And for Mjoseth, it was a moment of crystal clarity. All his time and investment in these children had been worthwhile. They were on fire; they would succeed.

Two decades of charitable involvement led up to that pinnacle moment of satisfaction. “I went through four organizations, four boards, before I found my North Star at Holy Family,” Mjoseth comments. “My first board involvement was at a large social service agency, and I don’t know why I even said yes to that. I was a come-to-the-meetings-and-vote type of director. I wasn’t about the mission and consequently the experience was not very fulfilling. As the years went on, I came to understand that if you immerse yourself in the mission 100%, you end up getting way more out of it than you put into it. And I decided to invest that effort in the field of urban education.”

Mjoseth comes to visit the school and programs so often because in those visits, he can see first-hand the outcome of his investment. “I see it working. It’s not hypothetical.” He invites all other Holy Family investors to come down and experience the children themselves—or if that’s not possible, visit Holy Family on Facebook or on the web, www.holyfamilyministries.org.
The period from 2000 to 2010 has been an exciting time of rapid growth for Holy Family Ministries. A decade after its founding, we are blessed with a beautiful new $7.8M building. We serve nearly 300 children (100% growth). We operate programs serving children 12-hours per day, year-round. We boast 31 talented and devoted governing board members. We have over 60 people on payroll. And an alum, Fanisha Davis, is president of the school board!

In recent years, HFM’s youth programs have expanded beyond the school, the school day, and the school year. Programs include the school, Little Learners Academy preschool, the after-school program, and the Adventures in Learning summer program. Many donations of materials and volunteer time have helped make this expansion possible.

AFTER SCHOOL
About 75 go-getters stay after school at the Center to get help with homework and to participate in activities like basketball, volleyball, gospel choir, praise dancers, cheerleading, step team, martial arts, and Greeters and Guides Club. After a snack break, the first hour is devoted to homework, and when homework is completed, other enriching activities take the lead. We’ll tell you about some of them.

Holy Family Angels, the basketball team, coached by middle school science teacher Jamie Lambert, had a good season last year, finishing in 2nd place in their league. Boys play boys and girls play girls, and Holy Family will field seven teams in 2010-2011. Games are scheduled against other teams in the league, made up of Chicagoland Lutheran elementary school teams.

Sing with their voices and their hearts is what the 16-member Holy School choir does. Director Viola Collins-Brown rehearses the choir after school 2 days a week. Rehearsals involve memorizing the music and words of songs, learning to sing while listening to the sound and harmony of the entire group, learning good singing and breathing techniques, and especially, having fun singing!

The Praise Dancers, also under the direction of Viola Collins-Brown, practice their graceful, joyful, and prayerful movements twice each week, learning to express songs of praise through movement, while also developing concentration and focus, balance, flexibility, and sharing a goal as a group.

The step team, with students from kindergarten through 8th grade, practices calls and steps once a week for two hours. Precision is what makes the impression, so they work at making each move in step with each other. A caller leads the “theme” step as an example, and the team follows with step variations of the same beat. They practice hard so the entire routine has rhythm and flow and energy!

Examples of other after-school groups are Volleyball Team coached by Missy Mulert, Cheerleaders, Martial Arts, 3-D Animation, Track, and Art.

ADVENTURES IN LEARNING
During the summer, Holy Family conducts two 4-week full day/full week sessions of fun educational activities centered around the principles of Kwanzaa, the seven basic values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing family, community and culture: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). All of these principles are integrated into the entire program of rotating mini-courses in Fine Arts, Academic Fun, and Fitness.
The students then proceed to activities. In the past, “Adventurers” have enjoyed math and science in the guise of cooking and baking, art and puppetry, beading, reading and storytelling, computer games and activities, planting and tending the rooftop garden, soccer, music and drama, plus individual and team fitness activities on the playground and in the gym.

On Wednesdays, the daily schedule is suspended, and invited guests share their specialties – for an hour or all day! For example, on a “Wacky Wednesday” one summer, volunteer Dick Tribble showed them how to twist and combine balloons into animals and other figures. When Mr. Freeze came from Fermi lab, they enjoyed a cryogenic show. They learned stories told in stamps from Mitch Work. All Wednesdays are called “wacky”, but they’re special days for the campers because of the unique fun brought by the visiting individuals or groups.

Four field trips during the summer contribute to both the “adventure” and the “learning.” Thanks to Grace Lutheran Church and School in River Forest, a bus and driver, when available, are offered for these field trips. Adventures in Learning culminates during the final week with a carnival on the playground and a trip to Foster Beach for swimming and a picnic.

LITTLE LEARNERS ACADEMY

Coming to Little Learners Academy every day, our 3-5 year-olds enjoy experiences that build their understanding of themselves, their families, and the world around them. The ambitious curriculum, aligned with Illinois learning standards for this age group, makes learning an exciting process of discovery for the 50 children in three classrooms. Children enjoy active outdoor activities and quiet story-time activities. Their classrooms are set up with learning activity centers such as construction, discovery, writing, imaginative play, music and movement, art, cooking, and more. They enjoy special events, too, like a camping “trip” to the playground, complete with tents and camp food.

EIGHTH GRADE MENTORING PROGRAM

As part of the drive toward continual improvement – Holy Family School has implemented an 8th Grade Mentoring Program.

During their eighth-grade year in school, all Holy Family students are involved in an exploration and decision process about the high school they will attend. So during the spring of 7th grade, in preparation for this major project, each student is matched with a young professional mentor. Together over several months of their 8th grade year, they learn about private and public college-prep high schools; about the application process and deadlines; about financial aid opportunities and applications. They work on school applications, essays, financial aid applications, and practice for interviews. They may also enjoy fun social activities together.

By early spring, most of the students know the schools at which they’ve been accepted and many have decided where they will enroll. A celebration brunch for all student and mentor participants marks this important milestone.

The “mentees” are all of the 8th graders. All of the mentors are volunteers, many of them young professional members of Holy Family’s Associate Board. Leading the program is volunteer Suzanne Gibson, MSW, with primary assistance from alum Fanisha Davis, Principal Cheryl Collins, HFM President Susan Work, and HFM staffer Cynthia Bakle.
In 1989, the original Holy Family Advisory Committee—Marge Phemister, Edie Hicks, Joan Sherman, Jan Conlin, Brooke Hummer, and Susan Work—organized a cocktail party at the Orrington Hotel, Evanston to benefit Holy Family Lutheran School. The benefit was a success and raised the much needed funds. In the days that followed, however, Holy Family realized that the success of the benefit went well beyond the money. Joining together in a common goal began to build a sense of community and commitment amongst friends, bound by a love for children and a belief in the power of education. Today, Holy Family Ministries continues this tradition by hosting three benefits a year; Partners in Hope on the North Shore, Evening of Hope in the northwest/west suburbs, and the newest, Seeds of Hope, which is attended primarily by young downtown professionals. This enormous feat is possible only with the help and partnership of the 40 talented volunteers on our three Benefit Committees, who energize each event and continue to make every benefit a success. Staff leadership, consistent over many years, is provided by Carrie Dauner, Cynthia Bakle, and Margaret Flanagan.

Holy Family has also had the good fortune of being the beneficiary of many inspired giving events throughout these 25 years. The Computer Angels walkathons around Lake Geneva, sponsored for many years by the Pringle Family, raised money to help the school’s technology program come of age. In 2007, the John Buck Company honored Holy Family as the beneficiary of its spectacular Spring Fling fundraiser. More recently, Sue & Tom Carey hosted a fabulous luncheon and review of her Broadway musical, Love is the Reason, for which the response was so overwhelming that she added a second performance. And every Tuesday in February, since 1993, Chicagoland Hooters has generously donated a portion of its wings sales proceeds to Holy Family. We can’t even begin to mention all the generous collections and drives made by church groups, Sunday schools, and various other groups and individuals, which we have come to count on every year. They provide school supplies, books, computers, food, emergency funds, educational toys, sporting equipment, Christmas gifts, and even a water fountain when we needed it!
"Godcidents"
...Joe Pringle, Board Member

Joe Pringle calls them “Godcidents”—times when it’s clear that God is in the middle of any coincidence. At Holy Family there are plenty of times when good luck and God coincide. Here are just a few of the “Godcidents” Joe has observed at Holy Family.

When Joe and Tami Pringle’s daughter was in 8th grade, she noticed that the school had only two working computers...a sharp contrast with her Barrington school computer lab. A friend suggested that since the family had a family vacation home up on Lake Geneva, a walk-a-thon around the lake would be a great way to raise money.

"Computer Angels" was born from miles of walking and fellowship, raising over $25,000 at the inaugural walk-a-thon. The annual event raised more than $100,000 over the years, funding our first computer lab, a teacher, and when it came time to move into the new Center, newer and more powerful computers.

“I am not very computer savvy, and I was not sure how we were going to get the computers installed and networked. But when there is a need, God always provides,” said Pringle. That provision came in the form of Bob Provost, a South Barrington resident and William Hayashi, founder of IT firm Hayashi Associates, as well as the computer support staff at the firm where Pringle worked.

Now that the lab had 27 new computers, it needed some desks and chairs. Pringle explained to a friend who had recently started an office furniture company that the school needed some furniture but didn’t have much of a budget for the equipment. When Pringle’s friend found out he’d need 27 computer desks and matching chairs, the friend exclaimed, “This is crazy, I just received a return of 27 unopened boxes of the desks you need. I’ll give them to you at my cost.”

“Just another one of the miracles of Holy Family,” Pringle said.
Congratulations to our Holy Family School graduating class of 2010!

The high schools our graduates are attending this fall are:

- **Loyola Academy**
  (Suburban Private Catholic)

- **Fenwick High School**
  (Suburban Private Catholic)

- **Mount Carmel High School**
  (Private Catholic)

- **Providence St. Mel High School**
  (Private)

- **De La Salle Institute**
  (Private Catholic)

- **Gordon Tech High School**
  (Private Catholic)

- **Hinsdale South High School**
  (Suburban Public)

- **Westinghouse College Prep**
  (Selective Public, 2 students)

- **UIC College Prep**
  (Public Charter, 2 students)