

LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

For Our Children and the Future

ST. SUSANNA EXPANDS, BUILDS COMMUNITY WITH HELP OF CAMPAIGN

JOE GODE, A RETIRED AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER, WAS ST. SUSANNA'S HANDYMAN. "HE FIXED THINGS BEFORE THEY BROKE," SAID FATHER KEVIN MORRIS, THE PASTOR AT THE PLAINFIELD PARISH. After Gode passed away, Wally Carr began filling in as handyman but didn't have as much free time, so he asked for some extra help.

Through Carr's simple request for help, the Men's Club Work Group was formed at St. Susanna. Every Tuesday, a group of men work on various projects, saving the parish a great amount of money on repairs and building projects.

"To me, that's just one example of people seeing a need and stepping up. Whatever needs to be done, they do it," Father Morris said. "And that's just one example of about every family here."

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St. Susanna's vision is simple: to build community. And through various stewardship programs in the parish, in its school and in its religious education programs, the Church is strengthened.

"Through {stewardship}, we find that people get introduced to everyone. Parents are getting to know parents of their kids' friends. Now you're not going someplace to be with strangers from Church, but you're going to be with the people you know" Father Morris said. "The more the community grows, the more you become 'us,' and the more you realize God is a part of us."

As the Plainfield civic community continues to expand, St. Susanna grows as well. With the archdiocese's *Legacy for Our Mission*, St. Susanna is just one example of how parishes benefit through



St. Susanna School recently built an addition to its building in order to accommodate its growing student body. Now, St. Susanna is focusing on expanding its worship space as well.

the capital campaign. Funds from *Legacy for Our Mission* contributed to building St. Susanna's new addition to the school in order to accommodate its growth.

St. Susanna was one of the first parishes to participate in *Legacy for Our Mission*, and its goal was approximately \$1.1 million. The parish, however, raised \$1.6 million with more than \$630,000 received in gifts to date, reaching numbers well over the initial goal.

Now the school is bigger than ever, with approximately 300 students. Its religious education program has about 500 student-participants and includes Sunday evening youth group meetings and weekend classes for students who don't attend a Catholic school.

"We are very young," Father Morris said. The average age of a parishioner at St. Susanna is 31.5 years, and the largest demo-

graphic of the parish is children under 10 years of age. "We have baptism around here all the time. It's a wonderful thing. A lot of older people enjoy seeing all those young people at Mass."

Simply attending a celebration of Mass confirms the growth of the Church. While there are some seats available at Sunday's 7:30 a.m. Mass, the other three Masses are standing room only. When St. Susanna's current building was constructed in 1971, people originally thought that it would be too big.

"We're growing, but we're still small enough to have that family feeling," Father Morris said.

Now St. Susanna is working with *Legacy for Our Mission* on starting a building fund in order to expand its worship space and fix the limited seating at Mass.

"Right now, we have about 1,000 families at our four Masses. But the priest shortage is here, and one of these days, I'm not going to have four Masses (at St. Susanna)," Father Morris said. "But 1,000 families at three Masses is a lot more standing-room-only problems."

By expanding the worship space, the Church can prepare for its future growth, and its community can continue to grow stronger.

"[The best part of my job] is being with wonderful people. There are so many volunteers around here and so many things going on," Father Morris said. "I'm proud to be here, and I feel very blessed."

Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's ongoing capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries. Contributions to Legacy for Our Mission will directly benefit every parish in the archdiocese through gifts that the parish will retain for its capital, endowment or direct ministry priorities.