

A BLESSED DAY!

New Archbishop blesses new school building...

Sandwiched between a day of high winds and a day of rain, the Lord blessed us with an October day of spectacular weather – perfect for the Blessing and Dedication of the new building at Cardinal Hayes School.

Approximately 200 people gathered for the occasion – sisters and staff, parents, friends from the community, donors, and others involved in various ways with our school for special children. It was an honor to have The Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York, in Millbrook to officiate at the blessing.



From the time Archbishop Dolan arrived until he left several hours later, the smile never left his face. Obviously impressed with what he was seeing, totally focused and interested, the Archbishop began by stopping to see some of the students gathered to greet him, “Hi, nice to see you!”

One of the highlights of the day was when the Scouts, in their uniforms, came forward (some in wheelchairs, some walking) for the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by one of the students. Was there a dry eye in the group as the Pledge was carefully recited and did we imagine that Jessica’s voice became even stronger as she said “under God” – a magnificent Pledge of Allegiance!



Executive Director Fred Apers welcomed everyone and said that the Scout troop really is active, undertaking (with adaptation) regular Scout activities. “They love to put on their uniforms,” added Fred.

This day also commemorated the 25th anniversary of Cardinal Hayes School. Originally chartered by the NYS Education Department to serve up to 8 school-age children and 5 pre-schoolers, CHS within two years had 30 students. At that time, the school consisted of a small cottage, a modular trailer and two classrooms leased from the local school district.

Nearly ten years later, a permanent location for Cardinal Hayes School was acquired: the former American Legion hall and 9.2 acres of land at the eastern end of the Village of Millbrook, not far from Cardinal Hayes Home. Over the years, more classrooms and a multi-purpose activity center were built on the property. Now in 2009, the celebration of the completion of the final expansion of the school was taking place. Named the Theresa & Edward O’Toole Education Center in recognition of the generous grant received from that foundation, the new building is situated in a wooded, serene setting.

Sister Lois Pereira, Provincial of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in the U.S., in her opening prayer used the words of St. Paul, “I thank my God each time I think of you, and when I pray for you, I pray with joy.” Sr. Lois continued, *Today we can thank our God, our God of Surprises for the past 25 years since Cardinal Hayes School for Special Children began. Today we continue to give thanks to our God of Surprises for the Theresa & Edward O’Toole Foundation and their invitation to apply for a charitable grant... That grant along with the wonderful generosity of many of you here today helped to raise over \$825,000.*

Sr. Lois continued, *"We will never understand what prompted the Theresa & Edward O'Toole Foundation to contribute such a generous leadership gift. However, their name on this new building proudly serves us as a reminder of the constant presence of our God of Surprises, and so we continue to give thanks."*

Kenneth Anderson, President of the Board of Trustees of Cardinal Hayes School spoke from the heart as he related that his daughter had been a resident of Cardinal Hayes Home 35 years ago. Elizabeth Wolf, President of the Board of Directors of Cardinal Hayes Home, had further words of welcome and presented to Archbishop Dolan a basket of products of Dutchess County.



John Kading, representing American Legion Parker Haight Post No. 260, said the vets were pleased that the property they formerly owned is being used for these students with special needs. For several years Mr. Kading has driven one of the buses that transport the youngsters from Cardinal Hayes Home to the school, and he said it is inspiring to see kids who were in wheelchairs a while ago now walking onto the bus – a result of the therapies and programs at the Home and the School.

Mr. George T. Whalen, Jr., longtime friend and supporter of Cardinal Hayes Home, related some of the history of Cardinal Hayes Home which began in 1941 as a convalescent facility. Mr. Whalen said he is thrilled to have the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary sponsoring the agency that he referred to as *"the crown jewel in the system of caring for children with developmental disabilities."* He continued, *"The FMM have been valued members of the Millbrook community for over 60 years."*

With words of praise for Executive Director Fred Apers, Mr. Whalen said projects Fred undertakes are *"never about number served but about quality of care."* *"The development of the school program is an extension of the mission of the Home. The spirit remains Franciscan at heart,"* Mr. Whalen stated. He then enumerated the Values of CHH: *Respect for Life; Competent, Compassionate Care; Partnership and Cooperation; Responsible Management of Resources.*

Reverend Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director of Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese, introduced Archbishop Dolan. The Archbishop's words were brief but moving, *"I am deeply grateful for the joy and inspiration of being here. It is a blessing to be here. This has to be so close to the heart of Christ himself. This is difficult work that flows from the Sacred Heart of Christ. October is 'Respect for Life' month, and here life is treated so tenderly."* With a *"Let's go, Fred,"* Archbishop Dolan commenced the blessing of the new building. He called the priests and sisters present to come forward to assist him – *"I need all the help I can get!"* The Archbishop's voice was loud and clear as he said, *"We now call on God's blessing. We dedicate this building to the education and care of our beloved young people..."* Concluding with a very loud, *"Amen!"* Archbishop Dolan then blessed the edifice with holy water.



A tour of both buildings ensued, and the Archbishop greeted each individual student, often crouching down to be on their level. *"Everybody's here to see you – you wonder what's going on... Thank you for the smile!"* Not hurried and obviously very much at ease, Archbishop Dolan asked many questions about the school and made certain he spoke to all who were present.

A luncheon (inside and outside) brought the remarkable day to an end. Archbishop Dolan would be remembered for his kind words, gentle manner and sense of humor. Cardinal Hayes administration and staff would be appreciated for their efficiency and orchestration of a day that went according to plan. Most of all, the students would be remembered for their presence and inspiration. This was indeed a blessing and would be fondly recalled for years to come!

