

# K-8 schools that closed left a mark on students

When St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School in Hampden and John Paul Regional Catholic School in Woodlawn closed their doors for the final time at the conclusion of the 2016-17 school year, students weren't the only ones to experience grief.

"St. Thomas has been my career school," said

Mary Cutter, who has taught at the pre-K-grade eight school for 36 years, teaching the lower grades before becoming assistant principal in 2006 and then acting principal in 2016, while continuing to help first-graders learn to read.

Cutter taught third-grade teacher Madeline Coleman when the latter was a fourth-grader; Coleman's children were at St. Thomas when the school closed. Cutter even taught her own children, a daughter and son, who graduated from St. Thomas and are now adults.

"We have strong family roots at this school," she said, adding that most teachers have been at St. Thomas between five and 40 years.

Cutter began her St. Thomas career as a student; as an eighth-grader, she was inspired to become a teacher by the since-deceased Religious Sister of Mercy Jean Marie Hobbs, who then taught the second grade and Cutter's younger brother.

"It's sad to see the school close," Cutter said, "but God has a plan, and we have to follow that plan."

She is following it to St. Ursula School in Parkville, where she will teach fourth grade.

"Thank you, God," said Cutter, a parishioner of Church of the Annunciation in Rosedale.

Paralleling Cutter, Joanne Callahan taught at John Paul Regional, also a pre-K-grade eight institution, for more than three decades before becoming acting principal her

final year.

"I'm kind of sad," she said, days before the final day of school, June 9. "I've been working so, so hard to close out the school."

She said she will miss parents, students and faculty.

"I think our legacy is being such a family-oriented place," she said. "A lot of people choose John Paul because of its warmth and family atmosphere."

She noted that while her school served many non-Catholic students, most were enthusiastically Christian.

"The kids from here came from a lot of different churches and provided us a rich values environment," she said.

Callahan is a parishioner of St. Gabriel, which shares a campus with John Paul Regional.

It's not closing, but St. Clement Mary Hofbauer School in Rosedale will leave behind the location at which children have been educated since 1932 when it merges with St. Michael the Archangel School in Overlea for the 2017-18 school year.

St. Clement's legacy includes families such as the Singles, who had at least one student enrolled in the school for 66 consecutive years, from 1946 to 2013. Darlene (Single) Zeiler entered the first grade in 1951, when tuition was \$4. Her husband is Deacon Francis Zeiler, who serves at St. Clement Mary Hofbauer Church.

"All of us walked to school and most of us walked home for lunch," Darlene Zeiler, the second of nine Single siblings, told the Review in 2013. "The only thing they sold was milk."

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*Email Erik Zygmunt at **[ezygmont@CatholicReview.org](mailto:ezygmont@CatholicReview.org)**.*