

New San Antonio fund gives financial aid to parents

SAN ANTONIO – A new initiative is under way in the San Antonio Archdiocese to provide financial assistance to parents who want a Catholic education for their children but cannot afford it.

Called “Hope for the Future,” it will raise funds to help eligible families pay tuition and to give grants to Catholic schools.

A recent study of Catholic schools conducted by a research team led by Richard Gambitta of the University of Texas at San Antonio found that the greatest barrier to parents sending their children to Catholic schools is the financial cost.

“Hope for the Future” aims to give hundreds of elementary- and secondary-level students the opportunity to attend Catholic schools through tuition assistance and provide financial support for programs and services that will allow Catholic schools to meet the contemporary demands of education, while providing a link to their Catholic roots, values and identity.

“Hope for the Future will provide an opportunity for generous people throughout the archdiocese to invest in the future of our greatest treasure, our children,” said Archbishop Jose H. Gomez when he announced the initiative in October.

“Their investment will make it possible for Catholic schools to continue to form hearts, build minds and change lives,” he said.

The archbishop was presented with a check for \$118,000 to jump-start the fundraising effort.

He noted that Catholic schools in the archdiocese have a 98 percent graduation rate, and 98 percent of those graduates enter a college, university or technical school. In addition, 717 high school graduates in the class of 2007 were awarded more than \$33 million in scholarships and grants.

“When you consider the academic achievements of Catholic school students, it becomes increasingly clear that for the sake of our community and our nation we must make Catholic education available to as many children as possible,” Archbishop Gomez said.

“More importantly, each day our students are given the opportunity to explore their Catholic identity and enrich their faith,” he added.

He pointed out that the class of 2007 performed more than 58,000 community service hours last year. “This act of service proves that our young people have accepted the challenges of being responsible Christians in their world today and tomorrow,” he said.

The first phase of the initiative will last five years. Although children and schools will be assisted beginning in 2008, it will take several years to build an endowment.

Funds will be raised through major gifts selection programs, “adopt a ...” programs, and special events as well as annual giving and planned giving programs.

Donors can adopt a school or a student. These programs have been designed so that donors and students can interact.

To adopt a student, a minimum donation of \$3,000 is requested to assist an elementary school student, and \$5,000 for a secondary school student. Donors must make a one-year commitment to fund tuition expenses.

After adopting a student, the donor will receive letters written by him or her throughout the year, reporting on his or her progress in the classroom. Donors will have the opportunity to meet their recipients at an annual donor event. They will select students that principals have recommended, assuring that youths with the greatest financial need will benefit.

To adopt a school requires a minimum donation of \$20,000 to cover expenditures for facility improvements, teacher and classroom assistance, and technology or library enhancements. A \$10,000 minimum donation is asked to adopt a class. Suggested expenditures include the cost of a teacher’s aide, supplies, textbooks, field trips and enrichment programs.

All donations are tax deductible. Annual reports will be provided showing all monies received during the calendar year.

Eligibility to receive “Hope for the Future” funds extends to any parent or guardian with a kindergartner through 12th-grade student registered in a Catholic school in the archdiocese. Families must demonstrate need for aid to qualify for consideration, and must also commit to paying a minimum amount of tuition for their children.

The initiative will be managed by the Catholic Community Foundation, a separate entity from the Archdiocese of San Antonio.