

# Schools celebrate Blue Ribbons

Karen Smith and Karen Murphy shared a hug Nov. 6 inside the parish hall of St. Timothy in Walkersville.

The best friends had spent several days being toasted by the country's educational leaders. Finally, they had a moment together.

Smith and Murphy, principals of Frederick's St. John Regional Catholic School and Ellicott City's Resurrection-St. Paul School, respectively, had represented their schools in Washington Nov. 3, when they received National Blue Ribbon School awards from the U.S. Department of Education.

The honor recognized the schools' academic superiority. Only 50 non-public institutions were honored, while more than 300 public schools were designated Blue Ribbon Schools this year.

Murphy supported Smith by attending part of St. John's Nov. 6 celebration, which featured a ceremony at the school and a reception at St. Timothy.

St. John received citations from national, state and local leaders, as well as archdiocesan officials.

When people arrived at the school, they were greeted by blue pinwheels. Students displayed many of the things they had learned at the school, including American Sign Language, dance and song during the ceremony.

"This Blue Ribbon is shared by the students, faculty, staff and parents who all contribute to making our school faith-filled and academically excellent year after year," Smith told attendees. "It is appropriate that we reach this goal during this school year when we have chosen 'dreams' as our theme."

Resurrection-St. Paul had 11 straight days of celebrations. It was awash in blue objects, even fortune cookies that included quotes about success.

St. John serves seven parishes: Frederick's St. John the Evangelist and St. Katharine Drexel; Buckeystown's St. Joseph on Carrollton Manor; Ijamsville's St. Ignatius of

Loyola; Libertytown's St. Peter the Apostle; Middletown's Holy Family and St. Timothy.

The school, a sparkling structure which shares a campus with St. Katharine Drexel, was completed in 2005.

"We put in a lot of effort to build it," said Father Keith W. Boisvert, pastor of St. Katharine Drexel. "That was a big collaborative effort among all the parishes. This is confirmation that it was worth all of that."

Dr. Ronald J. Valenti, superintendent of Catholic schools, presented a Blue Ribbon School plaque. Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski presented a flag that will be flown outside St. John.

"These schools serve as models for other schools throughout our nation," Bishop Rozanski told students. "So, a great responsibility, as well as a great grace, is placed upon you this day."

Resurrection-St. Paul serves two Ellicott City parishes, Church of the Resurrection and St. Paul.

Students at the latter raised more than \$2,000 in a walk for the homeless Nov. 6. Father Matthew T. Buening, pastor of St. Paul, was presented a check for the parish's homeless outreach. Murphy thanked parishioners and handed out Blue Ribbon bookmarks.

"The school would not have been possible without the spiritual and financial contributions of St. Paul parishioners these last 86 years," said, Murphy, who visited Resurrection the week before.

Both Smith and Murphy reminded students that there is room to improve.

"We continue to do what we do every day, we pray and work together," Smith said. "We work hard. We reach out a helping hand to others and above all, we thank God every day for all that he has bestowed upon us."

Although she was humbled to receive the Blue Ribbon award, Murphy said she

learned something in Washington.

She said public school leaders were told about various stimulus programs. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan could not answer how much money, if any, will go toward private institutions.

“It definitely spurred me personally to realize, ‘We’ve got to get everything we can,’ and fight with the department of education to make sure (we receive support),” Murphy said.