

Noonan Elementary Academy

Our Story



August 2014

It was early spring of 1993. Joe and I had been to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia where the Blessed Mother is reported to be appearing. We met all six of the visionaries, witnessed the miracle of the sun numerous times, in addition to other awesome miracles, we had also been privileged to be present when one of the visionaries had her apparition.

On every trip, we were inspired by the stories of ordinary pilgrim Catholics like us who had returned to their hometowns energized by the Holy Spirit to do extraordinary things to spread the faith. Catholic radio and T.V. programs, travel agencies that led Catholic pilgrimages, religious stores, prayer groups, Catholic magazines, and the National Marian Conference are a few of the apostolates that started around the country by Medjugorje.

Sister Margaret Sims, our guide on most of our trips, told us that we were all called to Medjugorje for a purpose. Since our first trip in 1985, we watched our fellow pilgrims use their talents to do God's work. We wondered what we were supposed to do. Every idea we had, and there were many, seemed impractical or impossible. We were conjuring up and discarding new ideas on a daily basis for years. Nothing seemed right for us until that day in 1993. My granddaughter could not get into St. Mary's school because my son lived in St. Anthony's parish. This year because of the growth of St. Mary's parish, children living outside the parish were excluded for the first time.

Maybe our mission was to help start a parish school at St. Anthony's. We prayed for and received a sign that this was our job. We contacted the pastor, Father Memenas, for guidance. He directed us to survey the parish. If enough parishioners wanted a school, he would support us 100%. Unfortunately, the parish voted against a school.

We were confused by the vote since we had received a very clear sign that a school to form children in their faith is what God wanted us to do.

As we ate breakfast after Mass one morning shortly after the St. Anthony's vote Joe looked at me and said, "It will be the biggest thing we've ever done and it will really strain our resources but if you want to we can do it ourselves." Noonan Elementary Academy was born that spring day in 1993.

We began by donating the property on Henry Drive to the Academy that we had purchased years before for another daycare center. We contacted Olivieri Brothers to draw up the plans and build the first building. To save money we raided our daycare centers to equip the Academy's

preschool, nursery, and kindergarten classrooms. We used our childcare office staff to do all the payroll and bookkeeping. We equipped several classrooms with discarded teachers' desks, science tables, and student desks from Lockport public school.

To insure a top-quality program, we transferred some of our best and most reliable childcare center staff. Without Mary Beth Pratt, Mary Meyers, Karen Pedigo, and Meghan Stocker we would not have been as successful or grown as fast as we did.

We opened in August of 1994 with 20 children in nursery, 36 children in pre-k, 20 students in kindergarten, 18 students in 1st grade, 8 students in second grade, and five students in third grade. Most of the kindergarten and 1st grade students came from our childcare centers and many of the 2nd and 3rd graders were our grandchildren or other alumni from the childcare centers.

The principal hired initially did not have the experience needed to insure the success of such a new venture. In December of 1994, we turned over my responsibilities at the childcare centers to Judy Nevell, a very trusted and competent staff member and I assumed the role of principal at the Academy.

The school attracted wonderful families from the very beginning. They helped to keep our overhead manageable by donating many hours of their time cleaning, assembling furniture, doing lawn maintenance, lunch duty, etc.

The enrollment grew the second year and we were on our way. By the third year, it was evident that we would soon outgrow our present building. Our growth was in God's hands and he kept sending us great kids and holy families. To accommodate our growth we built three more additions, we added twelve new classrooms, a library, offices, a full-sized gymnasium, and a state of the art computer lab/library.

In approaching our 20th year, we now have close to four hundred alumni who diligently carry on our tradition of academic excellence centered on a strong spiritual core. These young men and women, our students, will ultimately write the end of the story.

Mrs. Roberta Noonan

