

Late push

Students rush to complete GEDs before new test comes out next year. **F1**



Taking advantage

LH grad making most of sixth year of eligibility. **C1**

No stampede

Steelers must stop the run against Buffalo. **C4**

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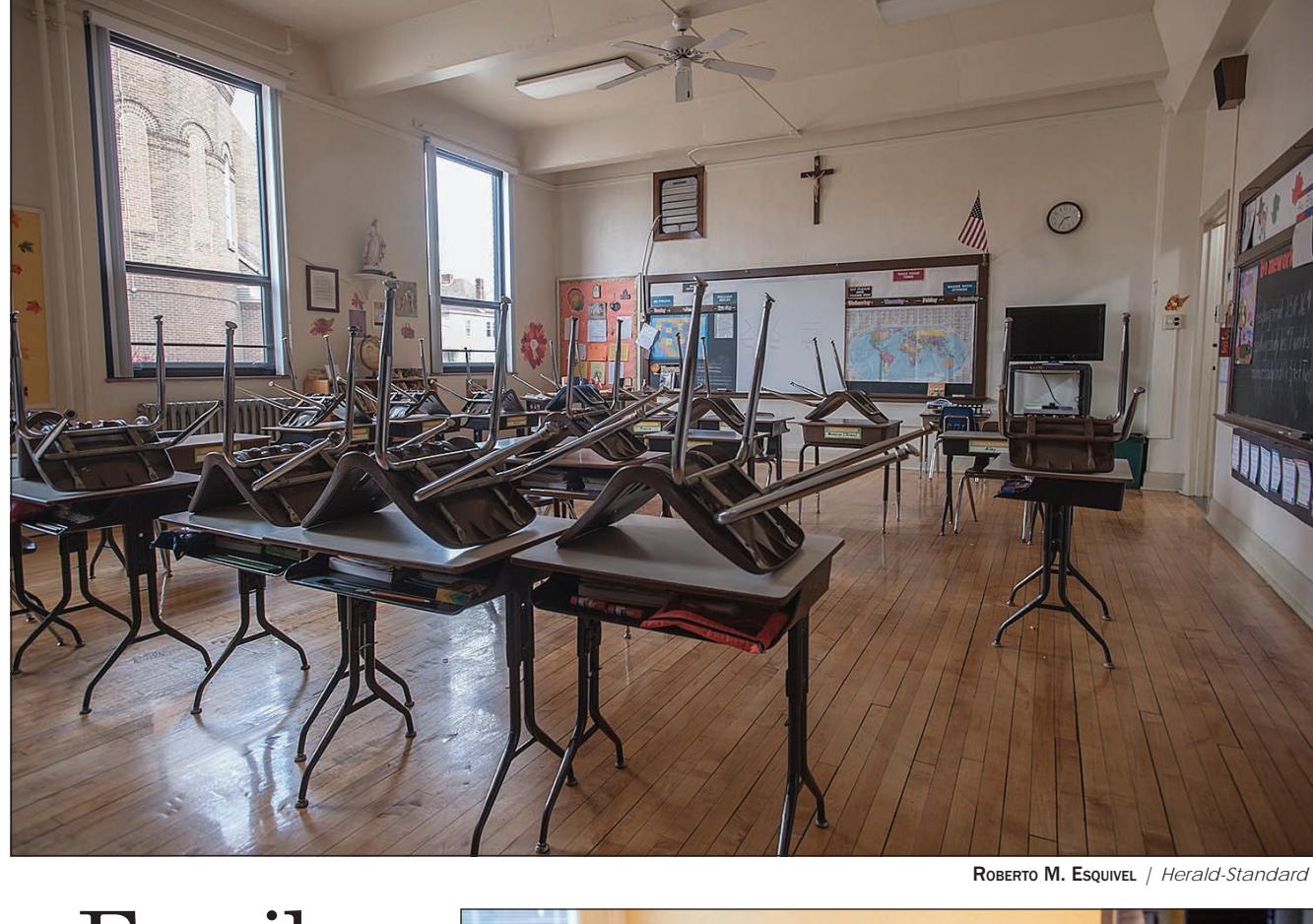
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ROBERTO M. ESQUIVEL / Herald-Standard

Family deals with school's closing

By FRANCES BORSODI ZAJAC
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Jon and Julie Krizner's four children attended St. Mary Nativity School in Uniontown, but when the decision was made three years ago to close the school, the couple said they felt like they lost their family.

"That was a big shock to all of us."

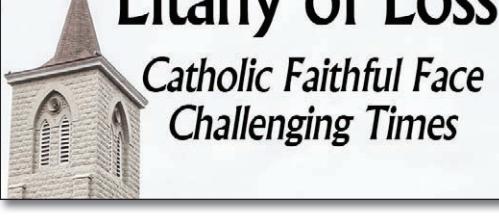
Visit our website for the video documentary.

FAMILY, Page **A8**



AMANDA STEEN / Herald-Standard

Above: From left, Maren Krizner, 11, Blaise Krizner, 8, and Julie and Jon Krizner pray together before eating dinner at their Uniontown home. The Krizner family chose to keep their four children in Catholic school after St. Mary Nativity School closed, now sending their children to St. John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School. **Top:** A classroom at St. John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown sits empty Friday afternoon following a regular school day. The National Catholic Educational Association reports that Catholic enrollment reached its peak in the early 1960s but to date that total Catholic school enrollment for the current academic year is slightly over 2 million.



Catholic education spiraling downward

As enrollment drops and schools close

The following is part of an occasional series on the changing face of the Roman Catholic Church in Fayette County due to population declines in members and priests that are affecting parishes and schools.

By FRANCES BORSODI ZAJAC
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After a recommendation was made to close All Saints Regional Catholic School in Masontown in 2005, the community and Roman Catholic Diocese of Greensburg worked together to keep the facility open.

But according to the diocese, the sharp decline in enrollment, 100 students in 2007-08 to just 62 last year, hit too hard and caused the school to run a deficit.

With only 41 students registered for this fall, the diocese announced the school would shut its doors for good.

The closing is another in a steady trend of fading Catholic schools in the county as diocesan officials report that as the number of children attending parishes in Fayette County decreases, so do the chances of a climbing enrollment.

At one time, Fayette County was thriving

SCHOOLS, Page **A8**

Typhoon ravages Philippines

TACLOBAN, Philippines (AP) — The central Philippine city of Tacloban was in ruins Saturday, a day after being ravaged by one of the strongest typhoons on record, as horrified residents spoke of storm surges as high as trees and authorities said they were expecting a "very high number of fatalities."

TYPHOON, Page **A3**



A resident passes by toppled car outside an airport terminal after powerful Typhoon Haiyan slammed into Tacloban, Leyte, in the Philippines on Saturday.

Crime lab analysts testify at homicide trial

By STEVE FERRIS
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WAYNESBURG — Blood stains containing DNA from one or both of the defendants accused in the 2012 shooting death of a Fayette County man were found on three guns and other evidence, crime lab analysts testified Friday.

Analysts from the state police crime lab in Greensburg testified about the evidence they examined in the case against Jason Roe, 36, and his wife Lana Roe, 41, of Daisytown. Both are on trial in Greene County Court for allegedly killing Cordele Edward Patterson, 38, of Grindstone in a secluded

TRIAL, Page **A3**



8 99450 00101 5

Index

Business D1
Classified . H1-J4
Features E1
Law & Order . A6

Obituaries B2
Opinion A4-5
Puzzles E3
Sports C1-8

Obituaries

Bane, Josephine, Millsboro
Barnes, Arthur, Uniontown
Bennett, Eva, Bitner
Brashear, Marjorie, Uniontown
Brundge, Bernard, Ralph
Deli, Andrew, West Virginia
Dolobach, Helen, Brownsville

Hill, Calvin III, Brownsville
Masi, William, Hopwood
McClain, Mary Belle, Richeyville
McClay, Robin, Point Marion
Metts, Betty Jean, Amend
Mihok, Joseph, Lemont Furnace
Polink, Mary Ann, Uniontown

Seefried, Aileen, Uniontown
Striner, Robert Sr., Connellsville
Tomotchko, Charles, Thompson 2
Williams, Harold, Maryland

See details on B2.



Today
High: 45
Low: 28
See B4.

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SCHOOLS

Continued from A1

with Roman Catholic schools — as many as 16 of them covering communities including Brownsville, Everson, Leckrone, New Salem, Perryopolis, Republic, Connellsville and Uniontown. There were also two Byzantine Catholic Schools in the county, including St. John the Baptist in Uniontown and Mount Macrina Academy in North Union Township.

But today, only three Catholic schools remain in the county. The schools still in operation are St. John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown, Conn-Area Catholic School and Geibel Catholic Junior-Senior High School, both in Connellsville.

Trent Bocan, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Greensburg, which includes Fayette, Westmoreland, Armstrong and Indiana counties, said demographics has played a large part in the declining enrollment in Catholic schools in the county.

"The entire population is decreasing, so the amount of potential students has been decreasing," he said. "It's the same in public schools."

Bocan also blames economic factors, especially for the school in Masontown where a loss of jobs has left some residents unable to afford a private education for their children. And despite the diocese's attempt to help with tuition costs, the tough recession makes it difficult for area families to keep up with bills, let alone parochial school tuition.

"You have to make choices," said Bocan. "Those who choose to stay with Catholic schools include many families who make a sacrifice even with financial aid."

Jerry Zufelt, managing director of communications



AMANDA STEEN | Herald-Standard

Blaise Krizner, 8, center, a third-grade student at St. John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown, listens to his teacher in class. After St. Mary Nativity Catholic School closed, the Krizner family continued sending their four children to Catholic school. Julie Krizner said, "It would have been nice to be a part of the process and decision making instead of the word just handed down and a 'deal with it' kind of attitude."

for the diocese, said what is happening to Catholic education locally is part of a nationwide trend.

The National Catholic Educational Association reports that Catholic enrollment reached its peak in the early 1960s with more than 5.2 million students attending nearly 13,000 Catholic schools across the nation.

But the association reports that total Catholic school enrollment for the current academic year is slightly more than 2 million, and only 6,685 Catholic schools, about half the number from five decades ago, are operating in the country today.

In the Greensburg diocese, Zufelt said that in 1963, there were 18,686 students enrolled in Catholic schools, but by last year, that number had dropped drastically to 2,923. This year, there are 533 students enrolled in Catholic schools in Fayette County.

The numbers also show that there are more students in the elementary grades attending Catholic schools, but enrollment drops off at the secondary level.

Zufelt said some parents will make the decision to send their children only to Catholic elementary schools to get the early

foundation including the sacraments — First Holy Communion, first penance and confirmation. But a more probable factor, he suspects, is financial as tuition at the secondary level is higher.

The state reports that tuition and fees to attend Geibel was a little more than \$9,000 for the 2012-13 year.

"Parents are thinking 'Do we make the financial sacrifice for tuition in high school or do we save for college?'" he said.

Bocan said another factor in why the enrollment has declined is rising tuition costs, in part due to a decline in the number of nuns who taught at Catholic schools.

"In 1965, women religious made up 66 percent of our staff. Today, it's 1 (percent) to 2 percent," Bocan said.

Bocan said that was significant because nuns in the past were paid very little. He said they are now paid the same wages as lay people, and despite the fact that employees of Catholic schools typically make less money than those in public schools, the increase in wages have impacted tuition rates.

Numbers from the diocese indicate that the three remaining Catholic

schools in the county are faring well against the pressures facing Catholic education. In fact, enrollment is holding steady at one of the schools and increasing at the other two.

According to the diocese, St. John has 210 students, about average for the school in the last several years.

The biggest increases

can be seen in Connellsville where Conn-Area Catholic became part of the Geibel campus in 2011. There are 158 students enrolled at Conn-Area Catholic in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, a 54 percent increase from 2011-12 when the school had 101 students.

Geibel Catholic has 165 students registered in grades seven to 12, an increase of 25 students or nearly 18 percent over last year.

Zufelt said diocesan officials will continue to pay close attention to what is happening to Catholic education in the area and help the remaining three schools in the county flourish with more financial aid opportunities and advanced academic programs.

"Obviously, you can't sit back and say all's good," he said. "You have to continue to work at it."

FAMILY

Continued from A1

It was a source of heartbreak," Jon Krizner said. "We think of the school as an extension of our family."

But a Catholic education for their children was important to the Uniontown couple, so they enrolled Maren, 13, Isaiah, 11, Eliana, 9, and Blaise, 8, in St. John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown.

"There are other religious programs for the kids — CCD, faith formation and youth groups. But our kids are away from us for the biggest part of their day in school," said Jon Krizner. "They spend more time in school than anywhere. It's comforting to us to know they are in a place where the values we try to instill in them are being supported and promoted and not undermined in any way."

While the Krizners chose to continue Catholic education for their children, Greensburg diocesan officials report that as many as 70 percent of students do not move to another Catholic school following a closure of their school.

"That's a big loss spiritually for those kids," Jon Krizner said. "It's a big loss in their academic background, and ultimately, it's a huge loss to the community as a whole"

For others, like Sue Quinn of Uniontown, the decision to transition from Catholic school to public school wasn't based on a closure, but instead financial reasons.

Quinn's five children attended St. John's elementary school and later transferred to the Uniontown Area School District.

"I knew I was not going

to be able to afford Geibel, so I wanted to get them acclimated into public school, starting in junior high so it would not be all brand new in high school," she said, noting that two of her children transitioned to public school while still at the elementary level.

She believes the years in Catholic school gave her children a good foundation and noted, "All of them are still active in the church."

But Quinn knows all too well the heartache that comes with a Catholic school closure. In 1976, she herself was a junior at St. John the Evangelist High School when it closed. She finished her last year of high school at Geibel.

But that wasn't Quinn's last involvement with a Catholic school closure. Years later, she found herself as one of the volunteers packing up the classrooms at Brownsville Catholic after the decision was made to close that school as well.

Quinn didn't have to be a student or a parent of a student there to know the loss it brought. "It was heart-wrenching," she said.

The Krizners plan to send their children to Geibel Catholic to complete their education before college.

Julie Krizner said it is still heartbreaking when looking back at the St. Mary school closure, and she hopes that in the future, Catholic education is better promoted and encouraged in the parishes, and more financial help is offered.

"I'm not sure all the congregations and pastors appreciate the value, and I think they need to see it as a long-term investment," she said. "I think the Catholic Church, as a whole, needs to start doing a better job of taking care of its future, because our future is these kids."

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