

Opening from page A1



Intent: Seventh grade student Chaz Audette listens to the day's first lesson on life science.

Catholic school, on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.

According to St. Fabian Principal Sister M. Lorettelle, O.S.F., the additional grades likely will relieve a perennial scheduling problem for families.

"Last year they (seventh graders) probably had to go to six different schools," Lorettelle said, "because there was not enough room at Our Lady of Sorrows. They were filled to capacity. So they ended up going east, west, north and south."

The fresh paint and carpeting are among finishing touches to the \$7.6 million facelift, now nearing completion. By the time it is over, in late September, the estimated 420 students will have new classrooms, computer labs and a cafeteria, among other enhancements.

For the first two weeks of school, however, kids will stick to a St. Fabian tradition - eating lunch in the classroom.

Lorettelle concurred about how parents are excited to keep their children in one facility all the way from kindergarten to seventh grade and need not worry about transferring after the sixth grade. (Eighth graders will attend St. Fabian beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, Lorettelle said.)

"Parents are unbelievably happy," said Lorettelle, in her 24th year at the St. Fabian helm.

Vucinaj listed reasons for the prevailing parental happiness.

"There's a new lunchroom, a new gym, ... a separate library and computer room where before it was in one room," Vucinaj said. "So it's going to be a much more enjoyable experience."

Tuesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony was led by the Rev. Brian Chabala, who introduced students and staff. He remarked about how, as a facility for students in grades one-six, St. Fabian never was really complete - until now.

The ceremony also featured Lorettelle receiving an official key to the school.

As uniform-wearing kindergartners marched in single file out to the playground for recess, Lorettelle beamed about the new look school.

"It's a dream come true," Lorettelle said. "And it only happened because God wanted it to happen."

St. Fabian was established as a parish in 1957 and as a school eight years later.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DICKERSON

Celebrate: St. Fabian students gathered Tuesday morning to celebrate the opening of a new wing that allows students grades kindergarten to seventh to stay at one school. Above, students applaud the ribbon-cutting ceremony that opened the new facility.

She also credited construction contractor Barton Malow of Southfield and architect Giffels, Hoyem and Basso of Troy for their efforts in retooling the building.

"The children have no hazards here," Lorettelle said. "There's no dust flying, we're very fortunate."

"... Nothing has been omitted in this school. We have first-quality everything, every code, every regulation. It's equipped for the handicapped. Everything you need is right here."

Playground space was not curtailed to make room for the new portion of the school, Lorettelle said. Another 50 parking spaces were added to the lot.

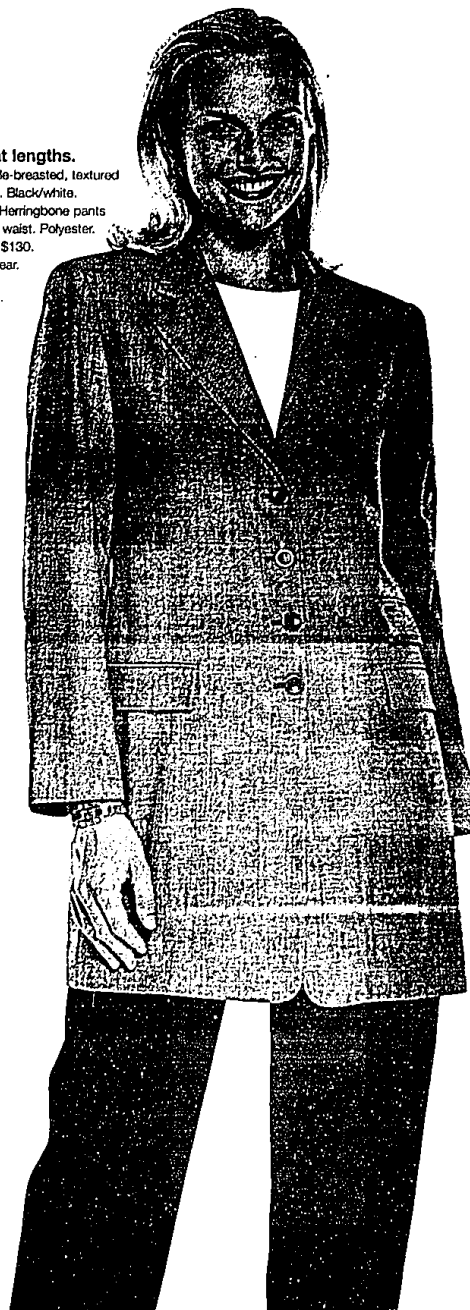
About half of the project's \$7.6 million price tag was raised by parishioners' donations; the other half was borrowed from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

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Cautious:

The first junior high classes enter their classrooms Tuesday morning after a ribbon-cutting celebration. The renovation gives students a new lunchroom, a gym, a library and a computer room. Before these functions were in one room. Parents say they are happy to keep their children in one school from kindergarten to seventh grade. The school is at 32200 W. 12 Mile in Farmington Hills.



Silhouette Artist Joyce Redman

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