



Saint Viator Students Take Steps to Fill Food Pantries



Members of the girls' soccer team, conditioning for the upcoming season, were the first to sign on for the inaugural 5K Run/Walk.

A 5K run/walk, more than 20,000 food items, and stocking the shelves of five area food pantries. Those are just some of the items Saint Viator High School students are juggling this month as they launch their “Step Up to the Plate” campaign.

They kicked it off last week on Ash Wednesday at the Arlington Heights school, with the goal of making significant donations to five area food pantries: CEDA Northwest in Mount Prospect, Catholic Charities in Des Plaines, Journeys from PADS to Hope and St. Joseph Home for the Elderly, both in Palatine; and St. Edna Parish Food Pantry in Arlington Heights.

“In these uncertain economic times, Saint Viator has chosen to focus on the basic needs of individuals and families right in our own community,” says Betsy Fons, campus ministry director.

She points out that last year during Lent the school community raised \$25,000 to help build teacher housing at their sister school in Belize. This year, they hope to raise nearly that

much --- in canned goods.

“The need to keep these food pantries stocked is great,” Fons adds. “With Catholic Charities alone, they’re seeing a 70 percent increase over last year.”

The student body responded immediately, depositing non-perishable food items into collection bins located in the hallway leading into the cafeteria. Posters hanging throughout the corridors remind them of the project, daily.

Once a week, homerooms will sponsor a monetary collection, with the prize of a dress-down day hanging in the balance. All proceeds will be used to purchase more food items to help campus ministry organizers reach their goal.

Students will take their campaign out into the community at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 13, when they mount their inaugural 5K run/walk through the neighborhoods surrounding the school.

“It allows everyone to take real steps toward meeting our goal,” says senior Tim Ivers of Arlington Heights.

Campus ministry officials already know of several of the school’s spring sports teams that will use the event as a team-building, conditioning exercise, while alumni and their families, current students, as well as area residents are expected to come out.

Given all of the different groups, they are cautiously hoping for 500 to participate, but they have ordered 800 runners’ bibs, just in case. Proceeds from each \$15 registration will go toward purchasing more food for the food pantries.

“I’m really excited to do a different kind of service project,” says senior Lauren Drolet of Inverness, “one that lets us branch out into the community.”