

NEED St. Mel tops fund goal; will open in fall

By Meg O'Connor

PROVIDENCE-ST. MEL High School met the \$150,000 goal Wednesday that will enable the school to remain open another year.

"We've replaced the subsidy that we lost," said principal Paul Adams.

Providence-St. Mel was threatened with extinction last March when the Archdiocese of Chicago announced it would eliminate a \$150,000 annual subsidy to the school.

In fact, the school topped its goal by \$10,000 when Banker's Life and Casualty Company presented Adams with a \$25,000 check.

"ALL OF business has a stake in the future of this country, and nothing is as crucial to that future as the education of our youngsters," said Robert P. Ewing, Banker's Life president, in a ceremony at the firm's headquarters, 4444 W. Lawrence Av.

"Providence-St. Mel has clearly shown that it is a school that works," he said.

"We are going to do everything we can to help the school through these next years."

In response to the subsidy cutoff, Adams and the staff legally severed the school's ties with the archdiocese and reorganized Providence-St. Mel's as a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt Illinois corporation.

"It's by no means over," Adams said. "We've got a lot more money to raise."

THE \$10,000 above the fund-raising goal will be applied to the next goal, \$200,000 earmarked for remodeling, he said.

"I don't know how I'm going to do it," Adams said. "But in March I couldn't have told you how we'd raise \$150,000. Yet people came through."

School opens Sept. 5. Enrollment is at 300, about 40 fewer pupils than last year. "The struggle we went through really hurt enrollment," Adams said. "But he's hoping new students will register now that it is certain the school will open."

NEED St. Mel's: 'Nobody can lose'

"It's a victory without losers. The parents won. The community won. The teachers won. And the kids won. Nobody can lose when a school like this lives on."

That's Harvey Gross, teacher, marking the opening of Providence-St. Mel's, the old West Side school that wouldn't die—even though the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago abandoned it, even though it is surrounded by tough inner city problems, even though it is still desperately pinched for money.

St. Mel's not only lives, but works. The kids learn—without the trouble-making belligerence and numbing indiffer-

ence that characterize many inner city schools. The teachers teach—not babysit. The principal cares enough to work part-time as janitor and endlessly as fund-raiser.

St. Mel's knows something, is doing something right that we can't afford to overlook. Those who think help should go to those who help themselves, who care about kids, who value learning, who think it's possible to pull out of poverty by hard work, have a working example in St. Mel's. They also have good reason to make a contribution to what will still be a long, hard, financial struggle.

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