
Plans progress for new Catholic high school

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By Donna Poston Williams
Correspondent

"How many times in your life do you get the chance to create a legacy?" Anna Lange mused, explaining her decision to co-chair the capital campaign to build Austin's newest Catholic high school.

Anna and her husband Kevin Lange, the young parents of five children, are spearheading a \$15 million fundraising effort, "so that our children, and our children's children and many future generations will be able to have a Catholic education," Anna said. "It is a huge commitment of time and treasure, but a small price to pay in the long run."

The new high school, St. Dominic Savio, named for the 19th century teenage saint, is expected to open its doors in the fall of 2009. Located in north Austin on a 45-acre tract adjacent to Holy Family Catholic School, the site was selected because of the projected population growth in that area.

"Today, Austin has only two Catholic high schools, and both are located south of town," Anna said. "As our city continues to grow north, many Catholic families, including ourselves, are left with the difficult choice of either driving across town every day or going to a public high school. St. Dominic's will change that. My husband and I are very committed to Catholic education and want to make it a real possibility for more families like us."

Austin is a relatively young diocese, only 60 years old, and has seen a steady increase in the number of Catholics.

"As more and more people relocate here, the number of Catholics continues to grow, and they bring with them an expectation of conveniently-located Catholic schools," said Ned Vanders, the diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools.

"The increasing demand for Catholic education in Central Texas is good news. Many dioceses in the northern part of the country are closing down their schools, while here in the south and southwest we have a thriving community and our need for an updated long-range education plan has become urgent."

Bishop Gregory Aymond, a strong proponent of Catholic education, was assigned to the Austin Diocese in 2001, and quickly began strengthening Catholic schools. Since then, he has focused a great deal of his time and energy creating a vibrant vision for the future of Catholic education in Central Texas. The creation of St. Dominic Savio is part his overall plan.

"I'm awed by the dedication of Kevin and Anna Lange and so many others, who are working tirelessly to make St. Dominic Savio a reality," Bishop Aymond said. "This school fills a deeply felt void in our diocese, opening the way for many more families to experience an outstanding high school curriculum in a faith-filled environment."

"This will be a diocesan high school, rooted in the Catholic tradition," Bishop Aymond continued. "Its academic, athletic and extracurricular programs will challenge students to go beyond excellence, to reflect on the needs of others, to be committed to faith and to become public servant leaders."

St. Dominic Savio's facilities will be built in three phases. The first phase, to be completed by opening day, includes 83,690 square feet of new construction with 13 classrooms, a self-standing cafeteria with a stage, a drama, band/orchestra and choral suite, an art studio, a gym, two science learning centers with laboratories, a computer learning center, a chapel, a library/media center, administrative offices with reception area, conference room, student health and teachers' work suites and three athletic fields. Additional classrooms, science labs, technology and computer classrooms and fine arts rooms are planned for future phases.

Opening in the fall of 2009 with a freshman class, St. Dominic Savio will add a grade each subsequent year, with full enrollment by 2012. Construction plans are designed to ultimately accommodate 750 students. The school will be dedicated to serving diverse cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds.

According to Debbie Ortiz, a fundraising consultant with Community Counselling Services, the cost for the construction of phase one of the high school is approximately \$21.5 million. The capital campaign has the task of raising \$15 million of that, while the diocese has agreed to carry the anticipated debt.

"This effort can only be successful with passionate leadership and the financial support of many," Ortiz explained. "We are truly blessed to have the Langes at the helm."

The capital campaign is on track according to Anna Lange. "We have raised about half of our goal to date, but we still need to raise a minimum of \$5 million by October of 2008."

Bishop Aymond will be on hand for the groundbreaking ceremony on April 20 at 3 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend the ceremony. Actual construction will begin this June.

"This is an exciting time for Catholics in Austin," Anna Lange said. "We have the opportunity to make a huge impact on the

future. I encourage any and everyone that feels strongly about Catholic education, to help us in the campaign. Children face tough choices in today's world, no matter where they go to school. The difference is that in a Catholic school they can discuss how God would want them to behave. As our children navigate through life, it is important to give them this other piece of the puzzle that they cannot get in a public school."

Sessions inform public about new high school fundraising efforts

Informational sessions on St. Dominic Savio Catholic High School and progress to date on the "Today's Gifts: Tomorrow's Hope" Capital Campaign will be held on the following days.

April 7 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Theresa's Family Center Library, 4311 Small Drive in Austin

April 15 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary Special Events Room, 1101 W. New Hope Drive in Cedar Park

April 22, 5:30 to 7 p.m. at St. Mary Cathedral, Bishop's Hall, 203 E. 10th Street in Austin

April 24, 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. William Parish Activity Center, 1000 McNeil Road in Round Rock

April 30, 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. John Neumann, St. Timothy Room, 5455 Bee Cave Road in Austin

May 7, 7 to 8:30 p.m., St. Helen Parish Hall, 2700 E. University Ave in Georgetown

Please register with Debbie Ortiz at (512) 726-0449 or debbie-ortiz@austindiocese.org no later than 24 hours prior to the session you plan to attend.
