

St. Mary School readies for the coming school year

by Phyllis McCrossin
Herald Editor

There is a lot of positive energy going on at St. Mary School in Alma and school principal Lisa Seely and Father David Jenuwine, parish priest are pleased with the prospect for the coming year.

The school's enrollment has reached 125 students which includes four sections of pre-school classes – three sections for four-year-olds and a special section for three-year-olds.

There are 65 students enrolled in the pre-school and 60 in the K-6 school.

While the school is divided into six classrooms for grades kindergarten through sixth, the students are also divided into "families" with multi-age groups working together on projects. Classes are small and students receive individualized attention.

"It gives the older students the opportunity to work with and mentor the younger students," Seeley explained.

The school is able to offer a Spanish curriculum to students for the second year in a row, according to Seeley. She noted the school is one of a few in the

state that offers a foreign language to elementary students.

Father David, who joined the parish in July said it is his goal to get out into the community more and also plans to work with students on spiritual outreach programs.

Older students often help out with the service outreach programs by assisting with Mass at the Masonic Home in Alma and Schnepf Health Care Center in St. Louis. Students also write letters to shut-ins at the Masonic Home.

Although the school is faith-based, about 33 percent of the students are from non-Catholic families.

"We welcome all faiths," Seeley noted. "But it is a faith-filled environment that all the staff shares."

Seeley noted that there are also behavioral and academic expectations. Students place well in the Iowa Basic Skills Test.

Father David said he enjoys visiting the school and having lunch with the children and according to Seeley the students love Father David.

"I am proud to have this school," Father David said. "It is the pride of the Parish."

He noted since coming to Alma he has worked steadily to get to know his parishioners as well as the community.

"There is great joy in being the father of a parish and the father of a school," Father David said. "I love being a spiritual Dad."