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By Neal Simon

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Prayers answered: St. Ann's Academy buys building in Hornell for school

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PHOTO/ PROVIDED

"We have to thank Stacy Scheider and Marilyn Grillo at Real Inc. who were instrumental in helping us find an appropriate building at an affordable price," said Jerome O'Connor, an academy board member. "They handled all the negotiations with the out-of-town seller Chuck Robertson and even helped arrange the financing."

Enrollment has increased during the current academic year, the first for the school. School officials had set their sights on securing a permanent home for the academy, which came into being after St. Ann's School was closed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester at the conclusion of the spring 2012 semester.

The new St. Ann's Academy starting next fall: 41 Genesee St. in the City of Hornell.

The academy, which currently leases classrooms for pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade at the United Presbyterian Church in Hornell, will have almost 10,000 square feet of space at its new home. Classrooms will be on the first and second floor, and O'Connor said there is a large room for school assemblies. There is parking on site, making the school more accessible to buses. Officials say they are pleased with the school's proximity to the Hornell Public Library and St. Ann Church.

"We looked at every building that was remotely feasible and this building came out on top," commented O'Connor, who added officials were committed to securing a location in Hornell.

Several fund-raisers are being planned. O'Connor said the academy benefits from Our Lady of the Valley parishioners and community members who are committed to the idea of a continuing the option of a private school and a Catholic education in the Hornell area. The New York State Board of Regents granted the school a three-year, provisional charter earlier this year.

Board member Laura Picco predicts student registrations will increase some 50 percent from September 2012, when the academy began with about 21 students. Enrollment has edged upward since the school opened, which made finding a larger building a greater priority for the school board. Academy officials say the educational framework is the same as the former parish school, with an emphasis on rigorous academic standards, integrated with Catholic values

"We want to provide a caring environment, with lots of one-on-one time where a child can progress at a rate that is tailored to their needs and abilities," Picco said.

The St. Ann's accepts children of all faiths and denominations. School officials have talked about the desire to add a grade level each year.

There will be an open house at the new facility Tuesday, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. To help St. Ann's Academy financially or to talk about registering your child, supporters call Laura Picco at (607) 545-4060 or go to www.SAAcademy.org.