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**Local News**

**Celebrating Sister Catherine**

*St. Anthony School family gathers to honor beloved principal*

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It was a night of bittersweet celebration in honor of Sister Catherine, principal of St. Anthony School in Union City, a school that is closing. Members of the school community, as well as Mayor Brian Stack and the Sisters of the Filippinis order, attended the school's annual fundraiser dinner last Saturday to honor the beloved principal of 21 years.



**CELEBRATION** - Joining the Saturday night festivities honoring Sr. Catherine at St. Anthony School was the school community, and special guests the Sisters of the Filippinis including Mother Provincial Sr. Ascenza Tizzano.

"I am very happy that all my sisters could come out and support me, especially our Mother Provincial Sr. Ascenza Tizzano," said Sr. Catherine Santorsa. "This was really a surprise."

In the upcoming school year, St. Anthony School will be merging with Mother Seton School, also of Union City, into one parochial community. The school has experienced some financial difficulties over the last year. However, before they give their final farewell to St. Anthony of Padua, the school community wanted to take the time out to honor and thank Sr. Catherine for her years of dedicated service an unwavering loving heart. Sr. Catherine is of the order of the Sisters of the Filippinis, which follow the teachings of St. Lucy Filippini, whose credo was to "Go and Teach" and "Love God, Love God."

"This had started out as a fundraiser, but since the school is closing, we decided to take this opportunity to honor Sr. Catherine," said Ralph Morilla, parent and coordinator for

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the event. "She has served as principal of the school for 21 years. [She] tutors after school, and has always helped parents with the tuition."

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**Honoring Sr. Catherine**

Organized by Morilla and the St. Anthony's School Committee, the evening began with a few words from Mayor Brian Stack. A former student of St. Anthony School himself, Stack has continued to be involved with the school community, and has formed a close friendship with Sr. Catherine over the years.

Sr. Catherine met Stack when he first became mayor of Union City. Last week, he presented Sr. Catherine with a citation from the county in honor of her many years as an educator and principal.

"I really love him. He's been very good to me and to St. Anthony School," said Sr. Catherine. "Mayor Stack, you know you have a special place in my heart, and I will continue to do my best while I'm still here in Union City."

In addition to her honor from the county, Sr. Catherine also received an award from the parents and students of St. Anthony, which was presented by her Mother Provincial Sr. Ascenza Tizzano.

"We are so happy to be here because you have always served," said Sr. Ascenza. "Your legacy is that if you have to do it, you better do it right. Accept the honor and applause showered upon you this evening. You've earned it. You didn't seek it."

Sr. Catherine, who is not used to such public, was very humbled by the whole gesture, and took great joy in the simple fact of having all those whom she loves at her side.

"I'm so happy to see everyone, especially my children, but it's a bit of a sad occasion [due to the school closing]," said Sr. Catherine. "I've been here 21 years and I've enjoyed every memory. We have had happy times and we've had sad times, but the happy times are more than the sad."

Following her awards was a speech entitled "Touch by an Angel" written by eighth grader Caitlin Pereiras about her wonderful experiences with Sr. Catherine since her first day of kindergarten, and a special performance of Frank Sinatra's song "My Way" by fifth grader Dante Carrasco.

"Caitlin is so happy she can do this because she loves Sr. Catherine. She's a second mother," said Isabel Pereiras, Caitlin's mother.

"I wanted to do this since the beginning because Sr. Catherine has always touched my heart," said Caitlin, 13. "She has done so much for our school and for our community. She really deserves this."

**Staying close by**

The evening ended with dinner and dancing for all the guests, and Sr. Catherine even took to the dance floor for a little salsa rendition.

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As written in the event program, "Sr. Catherine adheres to the 'Filippini' definition of 'principal,' [in] which is one called to act as a mentor, teacher, counselor, spiritual advisor, nurse, plumber, electrician, janitor and occasionally, referee."

To the school community of St. Anthony of Padua, Sr. Catherine represents all these things and more. Students remember her for her love and support through their years at the school, and are pleased to know she will continue to be close by at St. Rocco's Church on 45th Street and Kennedy Boulevard.

"I want to thank all my parents and students for all the support they have given me through my 21 years. They have been a tremendous support to me and I will always be there for them," said Sr. Catherine.

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