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IN OUR SCHOOLS

# Liberty Twp. Catholic school plans expansion

LIBERTY TWP. — The only private K-8 school in Liberty or West Chester townships wants to expand its facility for the fourth time since 2002 to accommodate growing demand and shorten waiting lists.

Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School in Liberty Twp., one of only three independent, private Catholic elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, plans to build a 19,000-square-foot, $3.2 million addition.

The school, which opened in 1998 to 20 kindergartners in the basement of Our Lady of Sorrows in Monroe, now serves 460 students in grades K-8 on its 25-acre campus.

“Almost from the very beginning we’ve had waiting lists,” said Jenny Angel, the school’s development director. “We weren’t able to meet the demand and we grew the school gradually.”

The 2012-2013 school year saw MTCES add 75 students to its waiting list.

“That’s when we thought we need to take a look at this,” Angel said. “The reason the school was started is there wasn’t enough room in the surrounding Catholic schools and there were waiting lists and there was no Catholic school in the West Chester-Liberty township area.”

Building an addition would allow the school to expand the amount of classrooms from two to three for grades one through eight. It also would create dedicated space for art and Spanish instruction, free up space in the building for a library and tutoring, and expand the school’s kindergarten program.

Currently, the school has 50 students spread among three kindergarten classes. Under the expansion, that would be expanded to 75 students among four classes, Angel said.

Additional classes of kindergarten, first and second grade are expected to launch by fall 2016.

Angel said the expansion would also prepare the school for population and enrollment growth expected to follow the $180 million expansion of Cincinnati Children’s Liberty Campus, the construction of $350 million mega-retail Liberty Center, continued employment growth by GE Aviation in West Chester Twp. and explosive housing growth in Liberty Twp.

“It’s a great area,” Angel said. “We’ve got a good public school system and we have a good alternative here for people who want it.”

Ultimately, school enrollment is projected to increase to 675, but its plan is to grow slowly over the course of several years, Angel said.

“We would start with adding the younger grades and those students would fill up the school,” she said.

Noel Balster, the school’s development specialist, said MTCES provides something unique to the area.

“For one, when you come here, you’re also getting a faith-based component and we also have a very unique concept in terms of parental involvement,” Balster said. “Sister Anne (Schulz), our principal, really emphasizes that the learning doesn’t stop when you leave the classroom, it extends into the home. So we work closely, not only with our parents on that, but as well as their volunteerism.”

An open house is scheduled for Jan. 25. The expansion project won’t start until zoning approval is secured from Liberty Twp., Angel said.

**HOW TO GO**

**WHAT:** Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School open house
**WHERE:** 7197 Mother Teresa Lane, Liberty Twp.
**WHEN:** 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25
**MORE INFO:** Visit www.mtces.org, email kgilkey@mtces.org or call 513-779-6585

Top and middle, **Students travel a hallway in the original wing of Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School. The school opened 17 years ago with 20 students. It now has 460 students enrolled.** Bottom, **Students take an exam at Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School in Liberty Twp. Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School plans to expand its facility by 19,000 square feet to accommodate growing demand.** Photos by Nick Graham