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GATE OF HEAVEN SCHOOL WILL CLOSE

Dallas school joins four other Catholic elementary schools in two counties.

By SARAH HITE
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Students and parents of the Gate of Heaven School community are mulling difficult decisions after Scranton Diocese officials announced at a special meeting Monday evening that the school will not reopen for the 2011-12 academic year.

Bishop Joseph Bambera announced the closing of four Catholic elementary schools in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, citing financial constraints as primary reasons.

Students leaving Gate of Heaven School on Tuesday afternoon were despondent about the decision following a difficult and, at times emotional, school day.

"At first I wasn't upset because I'm graduating and moving on," said eighth-grader Jennifer Ringsdorf, of Shavertown. "But when I saw the teachers crying, it was very emotional. Then everyone was crying."

Eighth-grader Christina McFarlane has been through a school closing once before — she was a student at St. Boniface before its doors were shut in 2007. Her father, Garfield, said it's disheartening to see the environment in which he chose to have his children educated diminish before his eyes.

"The schools provide an environment that foster learning and that's the goal in itself, to get a good quality education," he said. "I'm shocked. It's surprising."

Garfield said Christina will go on to Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre after her graduation from Gate of Heaven this June. Christina said she is unsure where her younger

Related story, page 11.

friends may be placed after the end of this year.

"The other kids won't get a chance to graduate," she said.

Parents talked about the closing of a school that provided a different atmosphere for their children, as opposed to public and other private schools in the area. They noted Gate of Heaven's personal attention to students, made available due to small class sizes.

Maryann Grandinetti, of Dallas, is disappointed in the diocese's abrupt decision to close the school, which her 12-year-old son, Anthony, attends.

"I'm all about being fiscally responsible, but I don't think it was done the right way," she said. "I think they should have involved the parents. Now, they're going to take away graduation from me and my son."

Miguel Divasson, 14, of Dallas, said his first year at the school after moving to America from Spain was more than he could have hoped for.

"I feel so bad (about the school closing). I like my friends, and the teachers are so good with me," he said. "Now, we're going back to Spain."

Antoinette Morrison, of Dallas, was once a teacher at the school, and she's surprised the Gate of Heaven doors will be closed at the end of the year.

"I'm very sad and shocked. I think everyone is," she said.

Morrison noted teachers employed at the school were "more like family" than at other work environments. She's unsure of where her daughter will continue her education.

"It's still hard to believe," she said of the closing.

Lynn Ringsdorf, of Shavertown, heard rumors about the school closing, but said the news



Friends Vanessa Ryan, left, and Madison Riley talk in the school yard after dismissal at Gate of Heaven School Dallas on Tuesday, the day after it was announced that the school will be closed at the end of this school year.

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was still hard to swallow when she watched the details on TV Monday night.

"It's sad," she said. "My daughter has been here since she was in preschool."

Ringdorf said the small class sizes and the ability of students to learn about their faith in school drove her to choose Gate of Heaven over other schools in the area.

"It's a small, private school community," she said.

While Jennifer is graduating this year, other students, like 13-year-old Jillian Ambrose of Harveys Lake, are worried about

what's going to happen next. "I'm mainly upset because I don't know what's going to happen to my friends," she said. "That's what we were talking about all day in school."

Rummage sale nets bargains

By SARAH HITE
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While carefully examining a small wooden sled, Wayne Felty, of Shavertown, weighed his purchasing options at the Lehman-Idetown United Methodist Church Rummage Sale on Saturday, April 9.

"My daughter might like this sled," he said. "She likes decorative things."

Felty had a leg up on the shopping competition — he had helped at the rummage sale the day prior and was now moving in on the items he'd already scoped out.

"There are definitely good buys," he said of the sale, held bi-annually at the church in Lehman. "You can't beat finding things for free."

Although Felty didn't have exact items in mind while browsing, he said he often needs to "think outside of the box" when looking through tables and shelves full of donated items from the church community.

"You never know what you might find," he said. "If I go camping, I might think something looks like a nice pad for underneath a sleeping bag. And



Millie Weaver, of Dallas, loves the color and pattern on this shirt at the Lehman-Idetown Methodist Church annual rummage sale.

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I can always use dress shirts for \$1."

The small church was packed with fellow bargain hunters, which also enjoyed soup and a bake sale which benefitted community projects.

"It meets a great need in the community," said Pastor Beverly Butler.

Tables piled with clothing and linens, which seemed to outnumber other items featured at the spring sale, were a big draw.

Althea Clark, of Lehman, was a part of the "sales team," but that didn't mean she kept her eyes closed to good buys.

"The T-shirt I'm wearing was found three rummage sales ago," she said.

Clark believes Bag Day, when

customers can fill paper bags with items for just \$1, gives those looking for the thrill of the find even more incentive to root around for exciting steals.

She said she's often responsible for pricing the hundreds of items displayed, so she knows a quality bargain when she sees it — and she often sees it first.

"There have been some lamps, toaster ovens, irons, coffee pots," she said. "Today, people can come in with a few dollars and leave with bags full of things."

Mary Ladish, of Lehman, does most of her shopping at rummage sales, and she's proud to take part in helping her community while recycling materials.

"Almost everything I have on right now used to belong to someone else," she said.

In addition to work and weekend clothes, Ladish said the anticipation of finding inexpensive Christmas gifts always draws her to a sale.

"I picked up this jar because my brother collects Christmas things," she said of a small jar printed with smiling reindeer and the likeness of Santa.

Bagging bargains is a family affair for Carol Yakimo, of Florida, who attended the sale with her daughter, Kyrston Stauch, of Harveys Lake.

The pair hit sales all over the area. Stauch's 4-year-old son, Cameron, enjoys the sales be-

See RUMMAGE, Page 11

NATURAL GAS ISSUE

Williams gas company withdraws application

By SARAH HITE
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UP NEXT

Representatives from the Williams natural gas company withdrew applications for land development and subdivision plans at a Dallas Township Planning Commission meeting Tuesday evening, with intention to resubmit at a later date.

About 15 residents in attendance were surprised by the meeting's abrupt ending, but Planning Commission Chairman Jack Dodson said the action is not unusual and the company "didn't have everything together."

Tulsa, Okla.-based Williams had applied for land development along Sedlar Lane for a 33-mile pipeline project and subdivision of a 4-acre parcel off Hildebrandt Road where a metering station is planned.

Williams' attorney Richard Bower said after speaking with William McCall, the planning commission's solicitor, it was decided the company would withdraw its applications until it goes before the township zoning board at a hearing scheduled for May 16.

The zoning hearing will decide whether the company's use of the 4-acre parcel is permissible in terms of the zoning ordinance, and McCall said the commission could not provide a decision on

the application without knowing what the land's usage will be.

Township Engineer Tom Doughton also said a letter was received from Jack Varaly, the township's planning consultant, advising the company to withdraw its applications. Residents Allison and Rob Friedman were prepared to make statements against the proposed projects, and even solicited the aid of an attorney in reviewing the company's applications.

"I'm surprised — I had a lot to say," she said. "I guess this buys us more time."

Williams Midstream Oper-

See WILLIAMS, Page 11



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