



Written by Mr. Ken Raymond

WHY WAS HARVEST DRIVE CREATED?

Events in 1967 were set in motion that would forever change the then-Providence High School. Providence at its current site was run by the Sisters of Providence and the Christian Brothers who agreed to help staff Providence and run other schools in the expanding Joliet Diocese. Declining numbers in 1967 among religious orders for a variety of reasons meant hiring more lay faculty and the Diocese began running a deficit close to \$600,000. Providence contributed about 15% to that amount. Brother Daniel McMullen began his first full year as Principal that year and created two fundraisers: a month-long car raffle ending with a three-day Harvest Party in November and a candy drive in the spring selling World's Finest Chocolate. A Mother's Club and Booster Club were created to help support the school.

HOW DID IT GO AT FIRST?

During the same year the Diocesan School Board and the Superintendent of Schools Fr. Niles Gillen, O. Carm., hired an outside consultant to evaluate the best way to end the deficit. His findings and the recommendations would be announced the following fall. In 1968 the consultant believed two schools should be closed, including Providence. Both Fr. Niles and the school board agreed unanimously. Brother Daniel along with the parents' clubs began to organize fundraising efforts to influence Bishop Blanchette to keep Providence open. The car raffle became the SOS (Save Our School) campaign and the Harvest Drive to raise funds to end our school's portion of the deficit. The format was the same as the year before. Chance tickets were .25 each or 5 for \$1.00. It truly was a combined effort of faculty, parents and students led by Brother Daniel. There were homeroom competitions to see who could turn in the most money. Matt Senffner came up with the clever idea of selling ad posters for \$25 from local businesses to be displayed at the Harvest Festival in order to raise larger amounts of money. Most of us had some angle to bring in money. We were all very competitive, hated losing and loved the school. The story of a little school trying to stay open reached the

papers and spread nationally with money coming in from all over the country, priests in Rome, even soldiers overseas serving their country! To many, it was refreshing that students loved their school and were fighting to keep it open when there was so much tension on campuses across the country. The raffle alone brought in over \$30,000 that fall.

**DID IT WORK?** The Bishop announced he would make public his decision in January of 1969 at an open meeting at St. Charles Borromeo. The gym was overflowing with parents, students and faculty with combined emotions of hope and fear. The soft-spoken Bishop announced that none of the schools would close with the stipulation that we at Providence would raise roughly \$60,000 annually and our enrollment would remain steady. I was standing with Pat Sullivan next to Fr. Niles. To paraphrase Fr. Gillen's words - "That's all well and good this year but what about next year or the year after when the enthusiasm fades?" I believe we all took comments like those as a personal challenge.

The Brothers would leave Providence and the Bishop named his good friend whom he trusted and who had experience as the Principal at St. Charles to become principal at Providence. Father Kaffer (later Bishop Kaffer) soon appointed Pat Sullivan as Assistant Principal with one of his duties to manage fundraising and the Harvest Drive. A competitive homeroom atmosphere was maintained, but the drive was condensed into two weeks rather than a month. One enterprising teacher created the Harvest Journal - a printed version of Matt's idea to be handed out at the festival and given to every parent and any business that wanted one. Later the journal was opened to every student to sell ads and it became the Harvest Drive Book. Today it is an online business directory and families are encouraged to support those businesses that support us. For a brief time there were indoor carnivals, dances - even an outdoor carnival. Eventually, an event ending the drive was done away with, as was the winner of the car, and later cash was drawn at the student celebration - the Harvest Drive Olympics. This was a competition among homerooms with events such as an egg toss, tug-of-war, three-legged races and more.

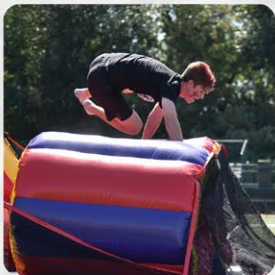
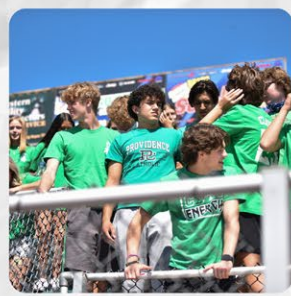
Fr. Kaffer created a position to help with recruiting and direct fundraising and when the Augustinians were given the administration of the school they expanded the process creating the Development Office. The Harvest Drive alone in 1975 raised over \$61,000 and in 1984 over \$91,000. The Augustinians created a mandatory fundraising program for each family and attached it to the drive and as a result, hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised annually. The parents' clubs

expanded their roll in fundraising as well. There have been Sunday brunches, dances with silent auctions, Las Vegas Nights, Wednesday Night Bingo, Fashion Shows, New Year's Eve Dances, other raffles, the formation of alumni organizations and new buildings.

**WHAT ABOUT TODAY?** The Harvest Drive continues to be a vital part of the fundraising. It has been moved to the early part of the school year. Gone are the homeroom competitions and all the tediousness that surrounded it. The Olympics, however, have lived on. It is an exciting competition among the four classes. It is a student celebration of our success and our commitment to advancing excellent Catholic values within a positive educational environment. It is our link to the past. The family atmosphere created by the parents, students and faculty in the SOS campaign lives on through the Augustinian values of Truth, Unity and Love. They were on display in 1968 and are active today.



2021 HARVEST DRIVE OLYMPICS



BY THE NUMBERS:

The Harvest Drive was established in 1968 to help prevent the school from closing. The first year it generated \$15,000. This year, Providence set the goal at \$279,000, and families raised over \$310,000! This is an amazing effort by the Providence Catholic community to come together and build success year after year!

Harvest Drive is our only all-school fundraiser that allows members of our community to buy raffle tickets and place ads to help support the school. Over 150 businesses place ads in our online Harvest Drive directory that is published on November 1. In celebration of Harvest Drive, each year we hold the Harvest Drive Olympics. Harvest Drive Olympics is a tradition unique to

Providence Catholic and one our students and alumni love.

**VISIT THE HARVEST DRIVE DIRECTORY ONLINE AT [WWW.PROVIDENCECATHOLIC.ORG](http://WWW.PROVIDENCECATHOLIC.ORG) AND SUPPORT THOSE WHO GENEROUSLY SUPPORT PROVIDENCE CATHOLIC!**