



NEWS RELEASE

Friday, November 16, 2007

Bethlehem Catholic High School celebrates blessing and official opening

SASKATOON, November 16, 2007 – More than 700 people, including students, staff, parents and special guests celebrated the blessing and official opening today of Bethlehem Catholic High School. The event celebrated the school's new beginning and looked forward to its future, which will include developing and strengthening its relationships with local and international partners.

The \$22-million school, funded by the Province of Saskatchewan and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, is part of the Blairmore Centre development. This initiative includes Tommy Douglas Collegiate and Shaw Centre, the City of Saskatoon's new recreation facility, which will include a high-performance pool.

"We are pleased to help celebrate the opening of Bethlehem Catholic High School," said Saskatoon Southeast MLA Don Morgan. "For citizens on the west side of Saskatoon, this school and Tommy Douglas Collegiate have been a long time coming."

"The official opening of Bethlehem Catholic High School is another milestone for Saskatoon," said Mayor Donald Atchison. "Co-operative projects like this help to ensure our growing community continues to have access to well-equipped, modern learning facilities for our young people in all parts of the city. We are truly bridging the community together."

"This is a historic day for our school division," said Jim Carriere, chair of the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Board of Education. "We are pleased to be an integral part of the Blairmore Centre development.

"Our new school is a celebration of the distinct mandate of Catholic education," he said. "Our faith-based purpose will be clearly evident through the community that is built here, as our students are taught that they can reach out to make a difference in the world."

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Bev Hanson, director of education for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, acknowledged the role that Bethlehem's staff has played in helping plan the school and in establishing its new culture. "Your energy, your innovation and your commitment are evident in this new facility," she told them.

Hanson also had a message for the school's students, the Bethlehem Stars. "You are called to bring light to where there is darkness, through your actions with one another and the community."

Bethlehem's students are also reaching out to the wider world, through international partnerships focusing on social justice. One of its partners is WaterCan, a Canadian non-governmental organization dedicated to helping provide clean water to the world's poorest countries.

Gary Pluim, WaterCan's executive director, told the opening that his organization values its new relationship with Bethlehem and is looking forward to the school's contribution to WaterCan's mission. "As each year 2.2 million people, mostly children, die from preventable diseases caused by contaminated water and poor sanitation, we must *never* allow this to become a mere statistic."

Bethlehem is also beginning an official partnership with Kip Keino High School in Kenya. Keino, a distance runner, won Olympic medals in 1968 and 1972. He is also renowned for his ongoing humanitarian work with children in his home country. He established the first Kip Keino School, for younger children, in January 1999 and has raised 400 orphans.

As well, Bethlehem is seeking status as a UNESCO Associated School. Schools that receive this designation commit to working toward UNESCO's ideals of promoting peace and international cooperation through education.

Bethlehem's local and international partnerships were highlighted at the opening as partners helped construct a six-pointed star to symbolize their working together.

"Our Catholic faith and our relationships in Saskatoon and the wider world are an important part of who we are at Bethlehem," said Principal Scott Gay. "We wanted a tangible, lasting symbol of these bonds."

Teaching students about their responsibility to reach out and make the world a better place is one of the guiding themes at Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. Specifically, the division describes itself as Rooted in Faith, Growing in Knowledge, Reaching Out to Transform the World.

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Backgrounder

Bethlehem Catholic High School is located at 110 Bowlt Crescent in Blairmore Centre, a multi-district park and school site. Partners in the overall project include Sask Learning, City of Saskatoon, Saskatoon Public Schools, and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools. The partners have developed a unique, collaborative approach to integrate their resources (land, building, programs and services) in a common location, while continuing to respect the unique mandates of the participating partners.

Bethlehem Catholic High School will have four focus areas:

- Growing in Faith
 - Opportunities for celebrating faith and respecting the diversity of others
 - Chapel at front of school
 - Symbolic Star of Bethlehem constructed above the school's Commons area

- Social Justice
 - Partnership with Kip Keino High School in Kenya
 - Ongoing work with WaterCan
 - Application to become a UNESCO Associated School

- Technology
 - Smart Board Technology
 - Media studio that allows for video production and live feed to all areas of school

- Connecting with the Community
 - Community school coordinator on staff
 - Community classroom available for local activities; ventilated to accommodate smudges
 - Second gymnasium shared with City of Saskatoon