

December 12, 2006

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DENVER CATHOLIC REGISTER

Week of August 27, 2003

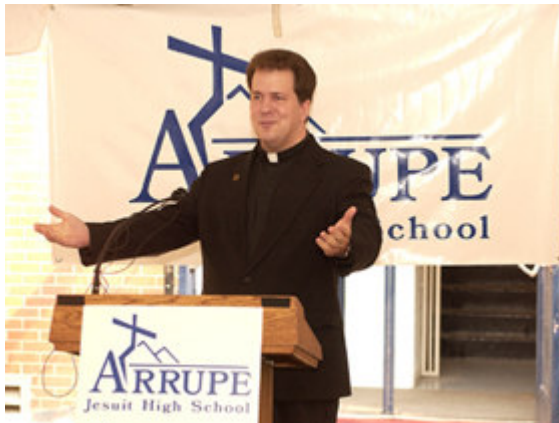
Local News



Arrupe Jesuit High School celebrates opening

New school is 'chance of a lifetime' for inner-city students

Laurie Dunklee



Sixty-four eager ninth-graders, the first class to attend Arrupe Jesuit High School in Denver, were on hand Aug. 21 as a line-up of dignitaries, parents, friends and corporate sponsors blessed their new school and encouraged them to go far in life.

"Arrupe is a chance of a lifetime for me," 14-year-old Jovon Benson told the crowd of approximately 150. Among those participating in the opening celebration were Colorado Attorney General Ken Salazar, State Rep. Rick Garcia and

Father Timothy McMahon, provincial of the Jesuits of the Missouri Province.

Arrupe Jesuit High School is part of the Cristo Rey Network, a national association of high schools that provide quality Catholic, college preparatory education to young people from mostly low-income families.

The school offers a combination of traditional education with an innovative program of on-the-job white-collar experience. Through Arrupe's corporate work-study program, students offset the cost of their education by working one day per week in area businesses. Fifteen corporate sponsors have signed on to hire young workers for entry-level jobs and special projects.

"The cost of tuition would be \$7,500 per year, but because the students are able to earn about \$5,000, their families only pay \$2,400," said Father Steve Planning, Arrupe president. "We can also help offset that amount with financial assistance."

Students will work in a variety of industries, including banking, health care, law and architecture.

"This is an opportunity for the kids because it gives them a vision of what professional life looks like — how to dress, how to talk," said Donna Boreing, vice president of operations at sponsor

company Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield. "We hope to bring the students back year after year and put them in progressively more responsible jobs."

Arrupe is the fifth such school in the United States to be modeled after Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago, the first school of its kind, opened in 1996. Denver was chosen for Arrupe because of a need for more Catholic secondary education in the city, according to Father Planning.

"Several Catholic high schools have moved out of the center of the city, and several have closed," Father Planning said. "We saw the need for an affordable Catholic high school alternative for inner-city young people."

Arrupe will start the first year with 64 in the freshman class, then add a class each year until the school has about 350-400 students. The new high school is taking up residence in the former Holy Family Grade and Middle School building at 4343 Utica St. in northwest Denver.

"Getting this building was a great opportunity for us," said Father Planning. "We haven't had to do a lot — Holy Family had already done a lot of renovation — so all we did was repaint and spiff it up some."

The building now sports the Arrupe school colors: navy blue and gray.

Richard Campbell, chairman of Arrupe's board of directors, told the crowd, "Though Holy Family had to close, by the grace of God Catholic education will continue here."

The school is named for Pedro Arrupe, the 28th Superior General of the Society of Jesus.

"Father Arrupe told us that we as Jesuits should be about educating men and women for others," said Father McMahon. He told the students present: "You honor us by trusting us with your minds and hearts."

Michelle Spreutels, 13, said, "Being the first class at Arrupe means we need to be an example to future generations of students. I know I'll put forth my best effort to achieve that goal."

"My contribution to this gift I've been given is to work hard and not give up," added Benson.

The ceremony concluded with the blessing of the new school by Father McMahon and a ribbon cutting performed by students, sponsors and board members.

For more information about Arrupe Jesuit High School, call 303-455-7449 or visit online www.arrupejesuit.com.

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