



# Saint Rose of Lima Academy

*Respect, Love, and Education Through Christ*

## Students Help With Soup Kitchen

Each third Wednesday of the month during the school year, a number of students get the morning off to volunteer along with 8-10 parishioners at the St. Mary's soup kitchen in Elizabeth. They are sixth, seventh or eighth grade boys and girls who help setup, cook, serve and cleanup for the 100 or so visitors who stop by the kitchen for a hearty meal.



"I was surprised at how polite the people were. They thanked us for our time and generosity. It really made me feel good about helping," said 8th grader Alex Aiello. This same sentiment is expressed over and over by the students who get the chance to go. When they return from the kitchen their experiences are shared with the rest of the class.



Principal Diane Pollak wants all the children to have as much service project time as possible for a number of reasons. "Service is a Christian virtue which needs to be instilled in our students early and often," says Pollak. "The kitchen is one way to expose our boys and girls to some aspects of society they may not yet have seen first hand. I'm always heartened by their positive comments when they come back. By the time our students graduate, they've all had the opportunity to visit the kitchen."

"I can't tell you how much fun it is to see these youngsters help setting up and cooking and cleaning," says Anne Grasso, a long time volunteer with the kitchen. Gina Silva, the volunteer coordinator feels the same way. "I'm always glad when summer is over and the kids start coming with us. They're so mature and helpful that it makes my job easier."



St. Rose of Lima Academy's contribution to the soup kitchen isn't just student volunteerism at the kitchen itself. The student volunteers bring with them 200 sandwiches, fruit and cookies which



are distributed to visitors when they leave after the meal. "We really get to feed them two meals," says Henry Monaco, also an 8th grader, as he distributes the take home food. Each month, early on the morning of the kitchen, one of the grades troops to the Academy lunch room and under the watchful eyes of Michele Smith and Megeen Charvala the class prepares the sandwiches and bags up the fruit and cookies for the student volunteers to bring to St. Mary's. The cost of this take home

food is underwritten by the student dress down funds, collected for their opportunity to shed their student uniforms for more casual clothes.