



EITC helps hundreds of Catholic school students and families

By Jerry Zufelt
 EDITOR

GREENSBURG — Two recent presentations served as reminders of the importance of the EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit) program to families of Catholic school students in the Diocese of Greensburg.

While Opportunity Scholarships, or vouchers, are getting most of the attention in discussions about school choice legislation in Harrisburg, the EITC program, which is also part of education legislation, is already helping approximately 500 students and their families in the diocese.

More funds were made available for diocesan families at two events last week. The Bravo Foundation presented \$50,000 in EITC-based scholarship funds for several private educational institutions during an event at Holy Trinity School, Ligonier, Nov. 9. The Bridge Educational Foundation presented another \$18,640 in scholarship funds for



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Students and officials show the oversize check representing a \$50,000 contribution to several Catholic and private educational organizations in the diocese by the Bravo Foundation and Aetna Nov. 9 at Holy Trinity School, Ligonier.

several private schools at a Nov. 10 event at Aquinas Academy, Greensburg.

Trent Bocan, superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese, attended both events and expressed his appreciation to the state senators and representatives, the participating businesses and the foundation members from Bravo and Bridge for "their wonderful work to help children."

He said it is important for Cath-

olic school families in the diocese to understand the significance of the EITC program, which is coordinated in the Diocese of Greensburg by the Scholarship Partners Foundation (SPF).

He called on families to urge the state legislature to pass school choice legislation because it includes significant increases in EITC funding in future years along with vouchers.

The bill that recently was passed by the state Senate in-

creases EITC funding to \$100 million for the first year, increases it to \$125 million in the following year and schedules 5 percent annual increases thereafter.

EITC scholarships provided \$467,710 to 485 students attending Catholic schools in the diocese last year, according to a diocesan report.

"EITC scholarships are available to families in lower income brackets and to families that are considered middle class,"

Bocan said.

Students in households with an annual income of up to \$60,000 are eligible for SPF assistance. There is an additional income allowance of \$12,000 per dependent in the household.

Since being formed in 2001, the SPF has provided more than \$5.5 million in assistance to Catholic school families in the diocese.

"The EITC program in Pennsylvania makes a Catholic school education a reality for so many families who want the best educational environment possible for their children," said Don Favero, principal of Geibel Catholic Junior-Senior High School who is also responsible for the Scholarship Partners Foundation.

The \$50,000 in EITC-based scholarships presented by Bravo Foundation and donor company Aetna will provide assistance to qualifying families with children attending Holy Trinity School, The Divine Redeemer School, Ford City, and Mother of Sorrows School, Murrysville.

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Three other educational programs will benefit from the funds as well: Keys Montessori School, Indiana, the Ligonier YMCA and Happy Time Preschool, Blairsville.

State Sen. Don White (R-District 41) and officials from Aetna attended the event and expressed their support of the EITC program.

The \$18,640 in EITC-based scholarship funds presented by the Bridge Educational Foundation and donor companies AWI (Associated Wholesalers Inc.) and CSX Transportation will provide assistance to qualifying families with children attending Aquinas Academy, Christ the Divine Teacher School, Latrobe, Queen of Angels Catholic School, North Huntingdon, and Clelian Heights School for Exceptional Children, Greensburg.

At the event, representatives from Bridge, AWI and CSX Transportation talked about their support of EITC, as did state Sen. Kim Ward (R-District 39) and state Reps. George Dunbar (R-District 56) and Timothy



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Students and officials celebrate an \$18,640 scholarship contribution presented by the Bridge Educational Foundation, AWI and CSX Transportation Nov. 10 at Aquinas Academy, Greensburg. The funds will be shared by four Catholic schools in the diocese.

Krieger (R-District 57).

Through EITC, companies that have a state tax obligation can receive a 75 percent tax credit — 90 percent for a two-year commitment — on funds donated to approved, nonprofit scholarship or educational improvement organizations.

The Harrisburg-based Bravo

and Bridge foundations seek scholarship opportunities for families in Pennsylvania by partnering schools and businesses.

For information about EITC and the Scholarship Partners Foundation, contact Favero at dfavero@dioceseofgreensburg.org or 724-331-8840.