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New Wauconda school hires first principal

By Vincent Pierri | Daily Herald Staff

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The first-ever principal of the new Frassati Catholic Academy said it feels like she just won an Academy Award.

Diane Vida said her decades of experience in education have come together for such a time as this.

Vida comes to the Wauconda-based school with more than 35 years of experience in Catholic and public education and administration. She is currently principal at St. Mary Catholic School in Woodstock and lives in McHenry.

Heading a school that's starting from scratch won't be easy, but Vida said she's ready and focused on assembling a strong team.

"The biggest challenge will be getting teachers and staff on board who understand the life and mission of Frassati," Vida said. "His vision and faith formation will be integrated into all of the curriculum."

Opening this August, the school was formed by leaders from parishes Santa Maria del Popolo in Mundelein, St. Mary of the Annunciation near Mundelein and Transfiguration in Wauconda.

Named in honor of an Italian layman whose life's mission was to help the poor, Pier Giorgio Frassati ministered to Italy's destitute in the 1920s.

"An advocate for social justice, an expert in math and science, a skier and mountain climber, Frassati was more than all a man of the beatitudes. He took the Gospel to heart," Cardinal Francis George said during a ceremony at Transfiguration Catholic Parish last November.

The school will place an emphasis on technology, Vida said. Each of the roughly 150 sixth through eighth graders will be issued Macintosh laptop computers.

"Our students and teachers need to be moving in a paperless direction," Vida said. "Technology will be integrated into everything we do. It's a new vision all schools must have."

The school will be located in existing buildings on Transfiguration's campus. It is the first Catholic middle school in the Chicago Archdiocese, according to archdiocese officials.

The three feeder schools will keep their kindergarten through fifth-grade programs, but all middle school students will shift to the new facility, officials said.

Vida has taught at middle and high school levels and was an adjunct professor at Aurora University, according to Frassati officials.

A public reception for Vida is set for June 2, from 7 to 8 p.m., at St. Mary of the Annunciation Church, 22333 West Erhart Road, Mundelein.

For more details about the reception or registration for the 2010/2011 school year, visit frassaticatholicacademy.org.