

St. Albert Improvements Fund – UPDATE

At Long Last! Our Student Center Building Has An Elevator!

Elevator

This project was supposed to be completed by mid-July, but was substantially delayed owing to problems matching the bricks to the existing St. Albert structures. But it's finally finished, and the inspections were completed. There was an informal ribbon-cutting, and ceremonial "first rides," and Student Center Building "Open House," on Sunday, November 8, 2009, immediately after the 10 AM Mass. The addition to the building to house the elevator, and the elevator itself, were constructed at a total cost of \$270,000.00, of which \$200,000.00 was funded with grants over a two year period from the Bishop's Annual Appeal of the Diocese of Baton Rouge. So for the first time in the history of St. Albert, its second floor facilities are accessible to the mobility challenged, and furnishings and office equipment, as well as janitorial service carts, may be moved from floor to floor safely and without risk to staff and volunteers. It also now gives the same access to the 3rd floor residence annex for clergy guests and visiting student retreat directors.

Courtyard

By now, everyone has had a chance to view the architect rendition of the planned improvements to the courtyard area between the Student Center Building and Auditorium Section of the Chapel Building (on the easel near the choir loft spiral stairs). This project will turn the courtyard area into a covered pavilion and effectively join the two buildings for the purpose of receptions and student use. The ceiling of the pavilion will feature lighting and fans. It will also renovate the interior student recreation room area into a "coffee house" environment. The cost of this total plan may exceed \$100,000.00, so it is ambitious for our troubled economic times and won't be able to be accomplished in one fell swoop. But the first phase may be soon in coming. Namely, the flooring, which will be concrete "pea gravel" finished pavers, has been adopted by St. Albert's sponsored Venturing Crew (co-ed young adult high adventure Boy Scouts of America unit) as a service project!

Deck Reconstruction

This deck, which used to be located in the courtyard between the Student Center Building and the Auditorium Section of the Chapel Building, will be reconstructed outside the back door to the auditorium which opens to the back-lot behind St. Albert. So we will be able to start utilizing the back lot for student functions and St. Albert facilities, which has not been available to us earlier.

Sun-Screen Slats

Nearly all the 50 year old braces which hold these redwood slats in place on both main buildings have rotted. A number of the slats fell during Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav, and many more are in imminent danger of falling. We are in the process of contracting the re-fabrication of these braces for all sections of the slats so that they can be handled within the constrictions of our monthly operational budget and income from the Improvements Fund collections.

Re-Painting of Structural Steel

Many elements of our exposed outdoor structural steel are pitted with rust deterioration, and need attention. The repair of this deterioration will cost us upwards of \$50,000.00, which will also have to be covered within the constrictions of our monthly repairs budget and with help from our Improvements Fund collections.

Replacement of Accordion Partition Walls

These walls are 50 years old and are torn in many places and in need of replacement. Believe it or not, the estimates thus far to replace them are totaling upwards of \$30,000.00. This will also have to be covered within the constraints of our monthly repairs budget and with help from our Improvements Fund collections.

Staff & Facilities Upkeep

I am now in my 6th year as Director/Chaplain at St. Albert. We now have, on the average, over 700 Southeastern students visiting St. Albert each week, and taking advantage of the services we are providing. This has resulted in increased expenses for upkeep of our facilities and the need for more staff. **Sr. Renée Daigle, MSC**, joined our staff in January 2008, as a Campus Minister, in addition to her duties as Vocation Director for the Marianites of Holy Cross in North America. I consider myself the luckiest priest in the diocese to have her here at St. Albert! She has had job offers from around the country, but chooses to be here with us. She re-located here from Holy Cross College in New Orleans, and her presence here brings us a community of women religious which Hammond would not have otherwise. Along with Sr. Audrey, a certified spiritual director, who resides in Hammond with Sr. Renée, our community is VERY blessed! In January 2009, we were blessed AGAIN to gain **Mrs. Jacqui Courtney** as a new lay campus minister. A gifted and accomplished youth minister and catechist, Jacqui has proven to be a wonderful asset to our faith community and to Southeastern's Catholic Student Association. It was no surprise to me that she has endeared herself in a very short time to our students and support community members! Finally, **Mr. John R. "Juba" Johnson** became our Physical Plant Manager when Jacqui was hired as lay Campus Minister. "Juba," a Southeastern alumnus himself, has the most tenure of any St. Albert staff, and the greatest familiarity with our facilities and their history. He takes great pride in the St. Albert plant. Have you ever seen the terrazzo floors shine as they do today? "Juba" also heads our liturgical music ministry, coordinates our liturgy preparation groups, coordinates funeral and wedding arrangements at St Albert, helps with our RENEW groups and RCIA, and maintains his certification as a Procurator-Advocate to advance causes for Church marriage annulments. **Mrs. Cindy Scardina** is my secretary and receptionist of St. Albert to all who call or visit our office. She is also our bookkeeper. She approaches her job with the genuine heart of a mother and that of Jesus in her work. But most notably, she puts up with her very demanding boss who was a military officer and chaplain for 30 years! My point is that we are doing the very best we can to meet the needs of our students, support community members, and the mission of St Albert, and we can all take pride in the fact that we are doing such a great job in meeting the demands of the times in advancing our outreach and evangelization to Southeastern students, and we could not do it without the increase in staff. This, of course, costs \$\$\$, so thanks to your increased stewardship in the past few years, we are able to continue funding these staff positions!

Unlike a regular Church parish, St. Albert operates at a deficit of over \$100,000.00 each year, which is funded by an annual subsidy from Bishop Muench. (As you might imagine, college students are not known for their ability to kick in much to our collections.) Because of the downturn in the economy and decreased income to the diocese, our subsidy has been frozen, and we are more than ever dependent on the generosity of our visitors, friends, and support community members to fund our annual operating expenses. The hope of our Administrative Commission is to maintain our staff, and to be able to accomplish all these repairs and improvements over the next several years, from the generosity of friends and support community members to our Improvement Fund second collections, and without a major fund raising campaign. However, if any of these items, or any others, become urgent, we may have to resort to such a campaign. Let me tell you that I consider myself blessed to have been entrusted with the mission of St. Albert by Bishop Muench, and thank God every day for this privilege. I could not do what I do without the evident support and affirmation I continue to receive from visitors, friends, and support community members of St. Albert. So, thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to make sure that St. Albert thrives in our community for years to come! God bless you and yours for all you do! –
Father Randy