

OLGC Secretary Wins SMV Award

By Michelle Molz and Jen Anderson

Mrs. Lorraine Turowski received the Sister Michael Vincent Award for her devotion to Catholic Education during a special Catholic Schools Week Mass on Feb. 3.

Mrs. Turowski, of Cinnaminson, has been employed at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish School for six years. Prior to that, she was the school secretary at St. Casimir's in Riverside for 17 years before that school closed in 2004.

"I lost my job at my other parochial school, and I was very lucky to get this job," said Mrs. Turowski.

"When I had my boys, I thought I was going to be a full-time mom." She was offered the job at St. Casimir's 23 years ago, which she thought would be temporary, and it turned out to be a wonderful career. "I enjoy what I do. I am comfortable. It does not seem like work to me," she said.

Principal Jerome T. McGowan praised Mrs. Turowski for her ability to multi-task and interact effectively with parents, students and staff members.

"She is the face and voice of Our Lady of Good Counsel, and she keeps the ship afloat," he said.

She went from a school of 120 to a school of almost 500. "I thrive in chaos," Mrs. Turowski admitted. "The more chaos and the more challenging it is, the more I like it. It keeps me out of trouble."

She remains friendly and unflappable as she deals with sick children, phone calls, piles of paperwork and constant interruptions by an endless flow of visitors to her small office.

"I like to diffuse the problem before it begins," Mrs. Turowski said.

"She is the most wonderful secretary," said co-worker Sharon Malek, secretary of OLGC's Early Childhood Center. "She can keep her head and remain calm in crisis situations."

Just that small compliment provoked the sensitive Mrs. Turowski to reach for the box of tissues and wipe her eyes.

"She has great attention to detail," said Mary Sullivan, Activities Director and veteran OLGC teacher. "She does one thing at a time and does it until it's perfect."

"She's the traffic controller of Good Counsel," Mr. McGowan added. "Cool hand Luke."

Mrs. Turowski recognizes every child and parent, which she considers an essential component of her job.

"Parents are always asking me, how do you know my name? But I know everyone here, you can't get past me. I have a lot of kids to take care of, and I treat them like they're my own. If a little one comes in crying, that breaks my heart," she said.

Mrs. Turowski grew up in Palmyra and attended St. Casimir's school, then Holy Cross High School. She married her husband, Bernie, 34 years ago, her "Rock," she calls him. They raised two boys, Jason, 30, a doctor at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, and David, 28, a mechanical engineer at Lockheed Martin.

In addition to her full-time job, Mrs. Turowski is a strong practicing Catholic and cares for her 90-year-old mother.

“I say a lot of prayers,” she said, “and I pray to the Blessed Mother. She always answers my prayers.”