

Finney lands \$100,000 in grants for scholarships

Despite the good news, the Penfield school is looking for more help as part of its annual appeal.

By **AMY CAVALIER**

Messenger Post Staff

Educating students at the Charles Finney School costs about \$6,000 per pupil. Tuition at the high school is around \$5,300 per student.

It's up to the Penfield school's board of directors to come up with the money to make up the difference, but help is on the way in the form of a private endowment and two anonymous donors.

Finney has been awarded \$100,000 to endow a needs-

based scholarship program that will provide tuition assistance for income-eligible eighth- and ninth-grade students who reside in Rochester.

Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP and M&T Bank are providing \$80,000 for the endowment fund, and an additional \$20,000 was given by two anonymous donors.

"We have our offices here," said Stephen Tierney, a member of Woods Oviatt Gilman's management committee. "We employ a lot of people who live in the city. We thought this would be a good way to help city students who can't afford an education at an institute like Finney."

Eligible students will receive tuition assistance for four years.

"We're hoping to follow these families year after year so we can see these kids through to graduation," said Dan Burns, regional president for M&T Bank in Rochester.

The Finney/Rochester Enrichment Scholarship program was announced at the school Tuesday. On average, 40 percent of Finney's students reside in the city.

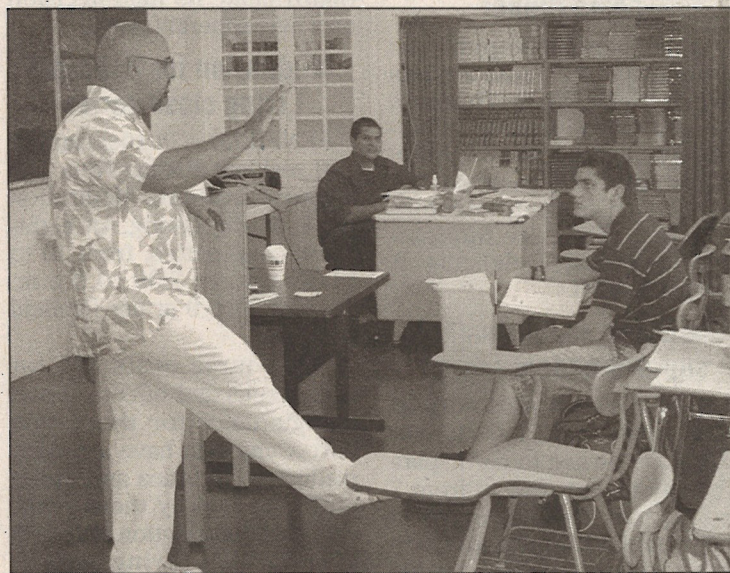
Roberto Peace, a senior at Finney, lives in southwest Rochester. He's involved with the school play, the worship team, the choir and basketball at Finney.

"I believe that we're one of the top schools, but we just don't get the exposure that other private schools get," he said.

Angela Monello, 17, is a senior at Finney. Formerly a student in East Rochester, she started at Finney this year. She said everyone has been very welcoming at the school. The secret to the school's success, she said, is "they care."

"They want you to pass and they'll do what they can to see you succeed," she said.

The grants will help the school, but this year alone, the school will ask the community



STAFF PHOTO/AMY CAVALIER

Michael Belmont, president and principal at the Charles Finney School, teaches a class earlier this week. The school recently received \$100,000 for a scholarship endowment fund.

for help raising \$250,000 in its annual appeal, according to Michael Belmont, president and principal of the school.

Finney also relies on alumni and parents of alumni to keep the school on track financially.

Finney is now in its 15th year as a K-12 school. While there were hundreds of inquiries last year, Belmont said, enrollment is down, but holding steady at around 300.

The economy and layoffs in the area are making it difficult for people to be able to afford to send their children to Finney, Belmont said. A small endowment fund created a few years ago helps the school weather the ups and downs, but the school practices "belt-tightening."

"We have made non-program budget cuts this year for the most part," he said. "One of the things we do is we ask our staff, 'How can we cover everything effectively?' We have teachers here teaching and interacting with students seven out of the eight periods a day."

Even though numbers are down, the school is still grow-

ing, thanks to the support of the community.

A recent gift of \$110,000 from Penfield resident Lenny Papano, president of Fantasy Football Draft Sharks Inc., allowed for the creation of an entrepreneurship program at the school. Now Finney is offering a course in business ethics and law, as well as a seminar in entrepreneurship.

Finney's challenges are no different than those faced by other private schools in the area, Belmont said.

"For older schools, 50 years and older, they have had time for their alumni to help build an endowment, so when they have bumps or slight downturns in enrollment, they are able to weather that by using proceeds from endowment," he said.

In the meantime, Belmont said, they "pray hard no matter what."

"The Bible says to make your needs known and to write down your vision and cast it forward," he said. "It's about any of us here around this table. It's about these kids