

# Mahoney Institute of the Family supports community initiatives

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

The positive influence that Bishop James Mahoney had on his community continues to resound after his death, with thousands of dollars donated each year in his name to projects strengthening family life.

Since it was created after the bishop of Saskatoon's death in 1995, the James P. Mahoney Institute of the Family has provided program grants to a wide-range of groups within the geographic boundaries of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.



Over the years almost \$250,000 in grants have promoted stronger family life by empowering family members, fortifying relationships, and enhancing skills in such areas as parenting and conflict resolution. Support has also gone to educational initiatives and family support centres that strengthen parents and children.

“With the seed money that we provide, programs that are obviously required receive a helping hand,” said institute founder and board member Peter Zakreski. “I think you plant a seed and you watch the crop grow.”

As an example, he noted Family Ties, a Catholic Family Services program that matches families in a mentorship program of friendship and support. Receiving funding from the James P. Mahoney Institute for the Family in its early days, the Family Ties program has gone on to enrich many families. “Help at the right time can make a difference,” Zakreski said.

Grant recipients last year included the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, Columbus Bosco Home, EGADZ, the Global Gathering Place, L’Arche Saskatoon, Partners for Rural Family Support, Retrouvaille, Tamara’s House, the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, READ Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, the Saskatoon Preschool Foundation, and programs within both public and Catholic separate schools.

“I’m very pleased that since the inception of the fund, we have grown it through investments to almost \$750,000,” Zakreski said. That principal amount is never touched, but the interest it generates is awarded each year to worthy initiatives. Administration of the fund is provided through the Saskatoon Community Foundation.

The James P. Mahoney Institute of the Family's volunteer advisory board reviews applications for funding, awarding grants to family-related programs in consultation with Saskatoon Bishop Albert LeGatt.

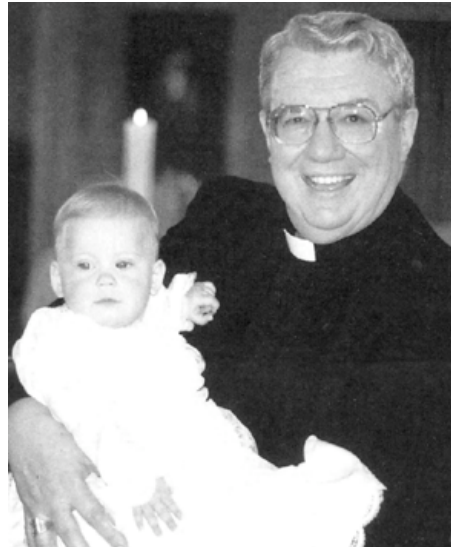
"We will not fund capital projects; only program initiatives related to family," Zakreski said, adding that those applying for funding do not have to be Catholic, but must reside within the geographic boundaries of the diocese. "That's the only restriction; there is no other restriction in terms of who may or may not apply for funding."

That open, family-centred philosophy is very much in the spirit of Bishop Mahoney himself, says Zakreski.

"It's significant that we're doing this within our Roman Catholic diocese for the benefit of the entire community and all the people within the boundaries," he said. "It was one aspect of Bishop James Mahoney, that religion didn't have bounds for him. He was friends with many and also a great shepherd for Catholics."

"Over the years, since our inception, we've probably funded in excess of 60 organizations in some form or fashion as a result of this initiative and always in the name of our friend Bishop Mahoney who did so much for us in the area of family life."

The well-remembered phrase "PPF – Put your Partner First" is one example of the solid teaching that Bishop Mahoney provided, Zakreski said.



**The late Bishop James Mahoney**

"No matter whether he was your teacher or your parish priest, or your marriage counselor or your bishop, he certainly left his mark. He was a mentor — and in many, many ways. Not only in our religious beliefs but in our daily life, in our daily approach to life," said Zakreski. "His humour was infectious. We all need to laugh once in awhile and he would bring that out in all of us. He would always have a very strong message, but he had a knack of delivering that with humour. He'd hit you with some punch line that would just stay with you."

Establishing and operating the fund in memory of someone who did so much for the community has been extremely rewarding, he added. "This fund is absolutely making a difference to family life in the diocese. Bishop Mahoney would approve."