

## SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY STRONG ROLE MODELS FOR OUR YOUTH – MEN AT SHC (MASH)



Laura Ayo

Mick Connor figured he wasn't alone in his desire to become a more involved dad at Sacred Heart Cathedral School (SHCS). What started out as roughly eight dads helping out at the school has turned into a group of more than 100 men known as MASH, Men at Sacred Heart, working to provide a foundation for their children that is "based on faith, built on fellowship and driven by philanthropy. The concept behind it was to give dads an avenue to get more involved in the school," says Connor, whose children are in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at SHCS; he also has one child in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Knoxville Catholic High School.

Three years ago, Connor teamed up with fellow parishioner Greg Millsaps to form the group, which is expanding its focus in 2009. "One of the things men struggle with the most is balancing work and family," Connor says. "We want to offer more opportunities for dads to learn about fatherhood and share their expertise."

At its annual Men's Night Out on December 3, Deacon David Luchon led a discussion about how men can become the spiritual leaders of their homes. The group would like to host similar speakers more frequently, Connor says. There are plans to begin monthly meetings in 2009 at a regular time and place. Previously, the men have stayed connected via a quarterly newsletter and gathering for MASH-sponsored activities, such as staffing the concessions stand for student movie night in the gym and serving ice cream at an end-of-year party. "We're always looking for new meeting ideas," Connor remarks. The group is looking to develop a logo and website and is organizing an informal gathering one morning each week after the men drop their children off at school. Since its inception, the group has hosted a yearly March Madness during which the dads take on for one day all of the volunteer duties at the school. In September, they sponsor a wine tasting event. They also help with the Annual Golf Tournament, organizing the food and lining up sponsors.

Rick Davis, who has a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Sacred Heart, joined MASH to meet other fathers who have the same beliefs and principles and want to be more involved in the lives of their children. "My mom always told me the best people I would meet in the world would be through my kids. I've met people through (MASH) that I would have never met before," he states. Millsaps agrees, saying the group has helped Sacred Heart families bond. Millsaps, who is dad to a college student and a 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grader at SHCS, comments that "the big thing for me is the children, seeing the look in their eyes and the respect they gain for their parents. The kids seeing their dads there means a lot to them. I don't think dads realize that it is important to the children to see them as an example."

Connor comments that the group is open to men of the parish, whether or not they have children enrolled at SHCS. Anyone who is interested in obtaining more information can e-mail him at [mick.connors@yahoo.com](mailto:mick.connors@yahoo.com). He relates that "it's certainly rewarding any time you get involved with your kids. The most valuable thing you get out of this is the relationships. It's been the main motivation for me."

**PROUD DADS AND MASH MEMBERS**--First picture, left to right, Thad Cox, Rick Davis, Jeff Elliott, Chuck Poore, Mick Connor, Joey Ducote, Bob Bryant, Najwan Natour, Jerry Punch, and John Patterson. Second



picture, left to right, Val Gene Iven, Corey Bond, Rick Davis, Steve Plenzler, Mark Schaefer, Rob Briggs, Federico Linares, Greg Dunn, and Mark Simerlein.