

School 'family' reflects on half a century of history

Lewis Center to lease school property

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APPLE VALLEY • [St. Mary's Regional Catholic School](#) elicits a flood of exuberant memories for Cheryl Clark — dating all the way back to 1953.

She recalls playing the “Y” in the annual Christmas play, making a crown of flowers to place on the statue of the Blessed Mother and the honor of being the school’s first ninth grade class. She’ll never forget wearing “ugly gray jumpers with saddle shoes.”

“I am so sorry that St. Mary's is closing,” said Clark, who plans to pay her final visit to the school today. “I always envisioned going there to volunteer when I retire in a few years. I feel like we are losing a piece of our history.”

Clark joins hundreds of local residents mourning the loss of the family environment of the 56-year-old educational institution, which today is closing its doors for good.

The Diocese of San Bernardino, which oversees St. Mary’s, is ordering the closure due to an enrollment that’s plummeted to half of what it was two years ago, said John Andrews, spokesman for the diocese.

The Lewis Center for Educational Research, an Apple Valley center that runs the Academy for Academic Excellence charter school, is signing a “temporary” five-year lease from the diocese for the property, off Highway 18 southeast of Corwin Road, said Rick Piercy, Lewis Center president. He added he hopes that St. Mary’s can reopen in future years.

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