

News

Groups join forces to shore up aging monument to Pope

By Charles Sercombe

After standing tall and proud for some 23 years, the monument of Pope John Paul II is showing signs of aging.

The foundation needs some shoring up. The statue itself is in good shape.

A fundraiser is underway to make the repairs, estimated to cost over \$250,000.

Hamtramck's Knights of Columbus and the city's Chamber of Commerce have joined the Piast Institute in the fundraiser.

Virginia Skrzyniarz of Piast said the goal is to collect \$500,000 to set up an endowment for ongoing maintenance needed well after the repairs are completed.

The park is city-owned, but the city does not have the finances to get the work done.

Although the fundraiser is now a year old, only \$1,200 has been collected. Skrzyniarz said it's been slow going because Piast has been getting its non-profit status finalized. She said the fundraiser will be kicking into high gear in the coming weeks.

"Word is getting out," she said.

During the past two weeks, throngs of visitors have come to Pope Park as a way to pay respects to the Pope, who died April 2.

Visitors are still stopping by to leave behind flowers and candles.

Concern over the monument began over a year ago. Preserve Our Parks is looking into federal or state funding to help with the repairs.

The problem is with the foundation. The sand underneath has eroded.

Skrzyniarz said correct materials were used back in 1982, but time and weather have worked against it.

"It has broken down at the base," she said.

She also said that the repair will likely require the statue to be taken down

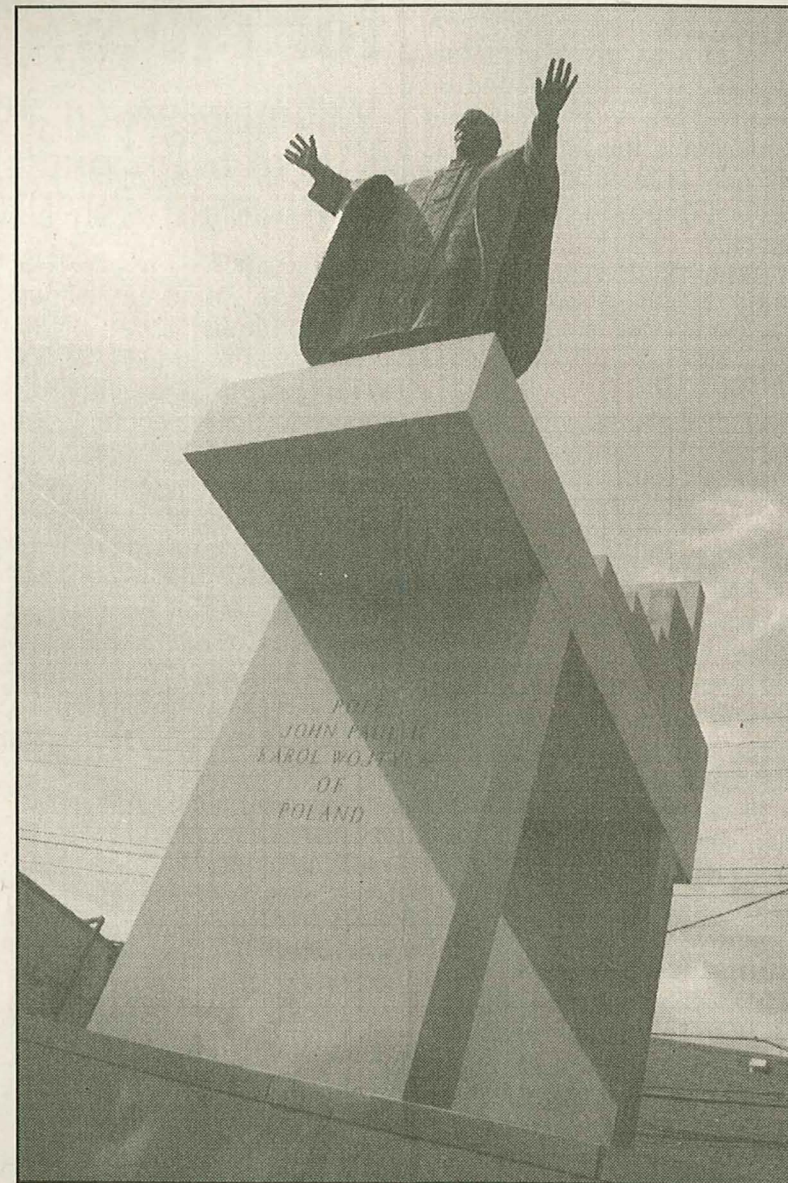
and the base outfitted with support beams.

The plan is to have the work completed in time for the first anniversary of the Pope's death.

Skrzyniarz said more benches are needed and some other touches to make the park more spiritually "reflective."

"We want this to be a destination spot," she said.

Piast is also looking to persuade the state highway



A fundraiser is underway to repair the foundation supporting the monument of Pope John Paul II. The foundation, at left, shown with flowers left behind by mourners, needs about \$250,000 worth of work.

department to install a designation marker on I-75 to lure visitors.

If you'd like to make a donation, make a check out to: "Pope Park Project," and mail it to: Piast Institute, 2926

Caniff, Hamtramck, MI, 48212.

Piast also has a website on the project, which can be found at: www.popeproject.com.

SCHOOL BELL

School Bell is a weekly round-up of activities in Hamtramck's public and parochial school community. If you have news to share, drop off information or mail your letters to: School Bell, The Citizen, 11901 Jos. Campau, Hamtramck, MI 48212.

■ "Spring Fling" will be held Thursday, April 21 at the Early Childhood Elementary School. The event takes place 5-7 p.m. and includes a potluck. The organizers ask people who attend to bring an ethnic dish ready to serve. There are no warming devices available. Teachers will also be available for activities and there will be a book fair.

The school is located at 11680 McDougall St.

■ The residency office of the Hamtramck Public Schools is holding registration for the

2005-06 school year. Students from preschool through grade 12 can register for the next fall semester.

Registration is between 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

April 19: Holbrook Elementary School, 2361 Alice St.

April 26: Kosciuszko Middle School, 2333 Burger St.

May 3: Hamtramck High School, 11410 Charest St.

For more information, call 872-9270, extension 29.

John E. Melton Attorney and Counselor at Law

- All Immigration Matters
- Criminal Defense
- Civil Litigation

1840 Hilton, Suite 2, Ferndale, MI 48220
248-336-2779

E-Mail: meltonlaw@att.net
On The Web at: www.johnemelton.com



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