

St. Jerome's to launch major capital campaign

This summer, St. Jerome's will be launching its first capital campaign ever. Over the years, the College has appealed to its graduates and friends for ongoing support, but faced with raising \$3.5 million to cover the purchase of Notre Dame College and the reconstruction of the J.R. Finn cafeteria, St. Jerome's has decided to launch a broader appeal.

The College is determined not only to carry on but to build on the legacy of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. "They have provided an atmosphere in which women can realize their potential and go out and make a difference in the world," observes College President Doug Letson, "and we're going to try to continue that tradition. At the same time, I think there have been enormous societal changes over the past 34 years and St. Jerome's, too, has evolved to the point where it's possible for the men and women who live in the two residences to collaborate more closely in the building of community than they have in the past."

To this end, the house councils of the two residences are being amalgamated. As well, instead of two four-member don teams there will be one eight-member don team, under the direction of Darren Becks, formerly the director of the men's residence.

"The two buildings will become one residence," says Becks. "This is a great opportunity to take a look at why we do things the way we do, to think about whether we can do things differently."

The only major structural change that will take place at Notre Dame will be the addition of an overhead passageway connecting it to the J.R. Finn residence. "A physical connection is important to make it clear that the residences are really one now," says Letson.

The cafeteria at Notre Dame will be closed, and the cafeteria in J.R. Finn will be expanded to accommodate all the students in residence. "I think it's clear from an efficiency point of view that you just can't have two cafeterias running within 50 yards of each other," says Letson. "And from a community point of view, it makes sense to integrate the two. A single cafeteria will give the men and women who live in residence a chance to mingle on a casual basis, to get to know each other, build friendships, and develop intellectually."

The newly-renovated cafeteria will be open to all members of the St. Jerome's community, including the more than 500 students who register through the College but don't live in residence. "The whole effort is to make the cafeteria bright and inviting, to let people know that they're welcome to drop in," says Letson. "I think there's potential here to build community that's really quite exciting."


"The students are looking forward to the changes," says Becks. "Meal time is often the only time students have to socialize. The new cafeteria will give them more opportunity to interact."

Erin Thomson, a third-year kinesiology student who lived at Notre Dame during her first two years, is currently living off campus, but will be returning to the women's residence as senior don in the fall. "I'm really excited by the implications of the changes," she says. "They're the reason I'm coming back. The whole idea of a cafeteria for the whole community, a meeting ground for everyone, is really exciting."

"University is all about breaking down barriers," says Ronan Quinn, a third-year history student who has lived in residence since his first year. "I'm looking forward to increased interaction between students." Quinn, who will be senior don in the men's residence in the fall, is also looking forward to more menu choices. "There will be more flexibility. The new equipment will make it possible to offer more healthy choices, a wider vegetarian menu. Our new cafeteria will be one of the best facilities in Ontario."

Though \$3.5 million is by far the largest amount of money the College has ever tried to raise, Jack Griffin, Director of Development at the College, is confident it can be done. "It's the greatest challenge the College has ever faced," he says, "but I believe people rise to the occasion."

Beaver Foods, a long-time supplier, was first off the mark with a major donation. "We've been here a long time," says Bob Henderson, president of the company. "I have a niece and nephew who have gone through this place. My brother-in-law went here 25 years ago. So there's a strong connection, and we want to carry it on."

That's the kind of response Griffin is counting on. "John Veltri, S.J., a long-time friend of mine, says, 'each person carries within images/thoughts that have power to bring about new life even more beautiful than before.' I'll be counting on every member of the College community – faculty, staff, students, board members, and graduates – to help make this campaign a success." 

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*– Jack Griffin,
Director of
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Architect's drawing of the new cafeteria: A bright, inviting place to meet

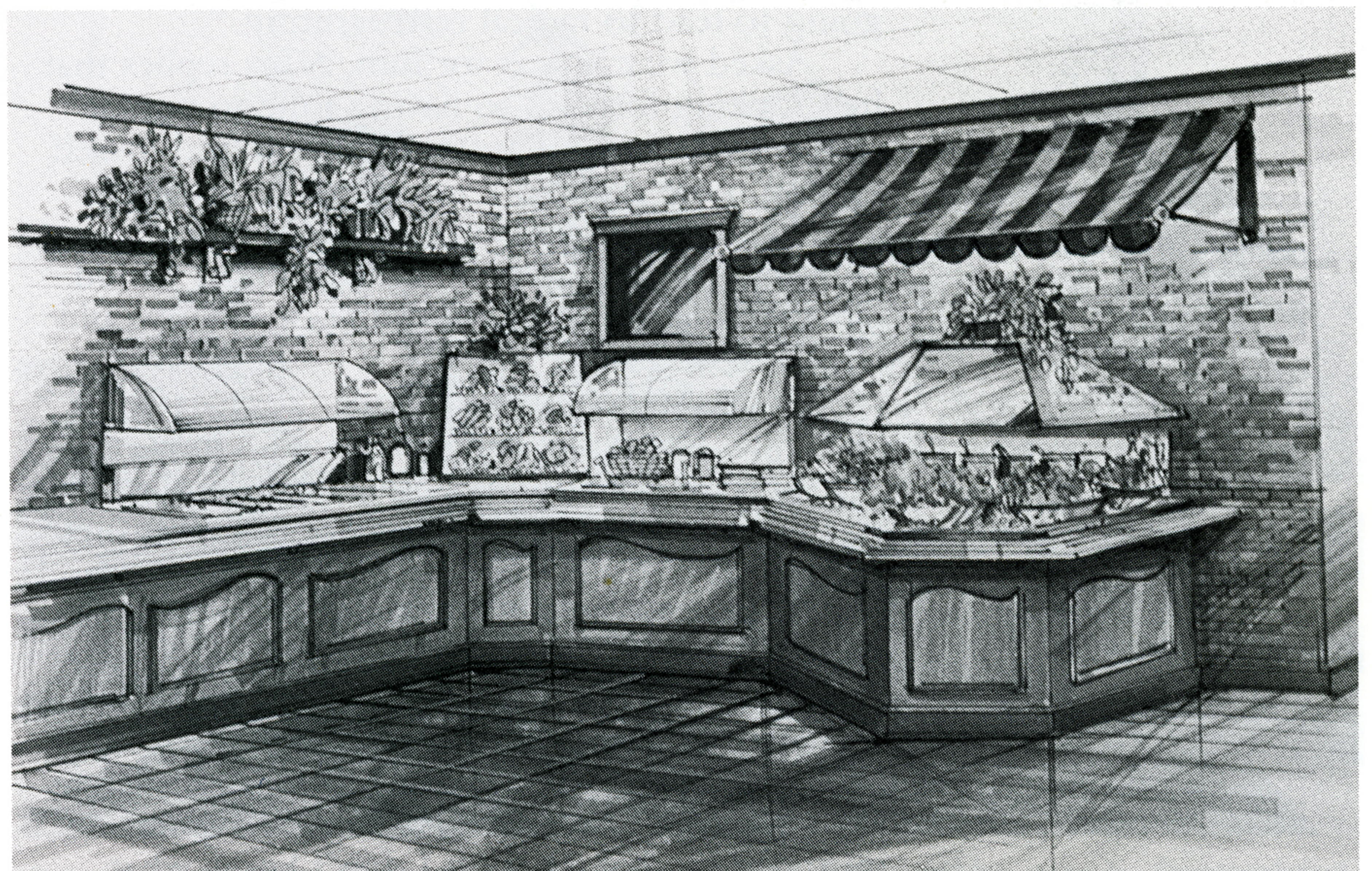


Photo: Ron Hewson