Involvement key to Vermilion Catholic's success

By Bruce Murray
Vermilion Bureau Writer

A group of Vermilion Catholic students entered the school business office during a recent school holiday and attacked the rooms with paint, according to Vermilion Catholic administration officials.

The students, thought to be four or five in number, also altered the contents of the room and rearranged furniture and decorations, officials said.

No damage was done, however. In fact, the entire front office was left remodeled, repainted and redecorated.

The incident is typical of Vermilion Catholic's school spirit and the involvement of its students, according to Phyllis Guilbeau, who is both a parent at Vermilion Catholic and the school's bookkeeper.

"How many seniors would do that during a holiday?" Guilbeau said. "They did that to prepare for Blue Ribbon, and they weren't even going to be here (when the award time came)."

Principal George Laird said student involvement was one of the unique elements for which Vermilion Catholic was cited in its recent national award as a Blue Ribbon school.

"They clip the hedges outside, they wash the building, they cut the grass," he said. "That's the key. If public schools could get their students involved in those things, then when they had a child who vandalized the school, don't you think his peers would be a little upset?"

Principal George Laird said strong parental involvement was another key element in Vermilion Catholic's Blue Ribbon award.

"We have set up virtually the same type of educational system (as other schools), but we do it for less money. Why? Because we have a lot of parental involvement, and it keeps our costs down. They help us write grants, they donate computers and let us do other things, so we don't have to go back and increase tuition," he said.

Theresa Gaspard, a parent at Vermilion Catholic, recently helped form "Eagle Vision" — which she said would be the equivalent of a parent-teacher organization at a public school.

"We just started last summer. We're fresh off ground," she said. "I felt we had a need for an organized group. In the past, parents have always been very supportive, but there was no organized effort to tap parents."

Gaspard, whose daughter, Tricia, is a sophomore at Vermilion Catholic, spearheaded the group with parents Patricia Delcambre and Tony Broussard.

"We call it Eagle Vision, because we have a vision of the future for Vermilion Catholic," Gaspard said.