

# Golisano offers \$3.4M to buy Kearney property

Steve Orr, Staff writer 5:28 p.m. EST February 19, 2014



(Photo: KRIS J. MURANTE STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER)

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Golisano, the billionaire founder of Paychex Inc., is one of the area's leading philanthropists
- Kearney's building and 42 surrounding acres are currently owned by the Christian Brothers Institute
- Golisano, who retired a decade ago, is described as "a major benefactor of the school"

B. Thomas Golisano, already a major supporter of Bishop Kearney High School in Irondequoit, is seeking to buy the school building itself from its bankrupt owner.

Bishop Kearney, at 125 Kings Highway, is a co-educational Roman Catholic school with about 460 students in grades 7 through 12.

Golisano, the billionaire founder of Paychex Inc., is one of the Rochester area's leading philanthropists. He has given several million dollars to Bishop Kearney in recent years, most recently creating a scholarship fund for its students.

If the intended purchase goes through, the building would continue to be used by the school, which identifies itself on its website as a "Golisano Education Partner."

At present, Bishop Kearney's 201,000-square-foot building and 42 surrounding acres are owned by the Christian Brothers Institute, a part of Congregation of

Christian Brothers religious order that is based in Ireland.

The institute operated numerous schools in the United States and Canada, including Bishop Kearney, which the order co-founded in 1962.

Citing a decline in the number of men entering the order, the Christian Brothers in 1999 turned over operation of Kearney to a nonprofit group run by the school's board of directors. The order retained ownership of the real property.

For more than a decade, however, members of the order in this country and elsewhere have been beset by allegations of sexual and physical abuse of children in their care, and numerous legal claims were filed in American courts.

The only lawsuit here involving the Christian Brothers Institute arose in 1993, when a woman who had attended Bishop Kearney claimed a member of the order had abused her. The case was later dismissed.



B. Thomas Golisano reacts to the ovation from students at Bishop Kearney thanking him for a previous donation in 2006. (Photo: Carlos Ortiz, Staff file photo 2006)

The flood of more recent claims drove the Christian Brothers Institute to file for protection from creditors in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in 2011. Because the institute is based in New Rochelle, Westchester County, the case was filed in White Plains.

The order agreed in August to a reorganization plan under which it will pay more than \$16.5 million to resolve abuse claims, which number at least 400. The plan called for sale of the order's assets in Irondequoit to help fund that settlement.

Golisano, who has financially supported Kearney since the mid-2000s, has offered to purchase the building and land for \$3.4 million, according to papers filed last week with the bankruptcy court.

Golisano, who retired a decade ago as Paychex's chief executive but still chairs its board, is described in the papers as "a major benefactor of the school (who) intends to purchase the property for the benefit of the school."

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert D. Drain is scheduled to consider an authorization of the sale on March 4.

Golisano did not return a call seeking comment. The school's president, Tom O'Neil, said only that it was premature for him to comment.

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