

Godfrey S. Kobets

Godfrey S. Kobets believed passionately that all young people had a right to an education. So he helped them get it. Many of them pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, thanks to his founding of DeLaSalle Education Center.

Kobets, who died at the age of 80 after a heart attack Saturday in St. Louis, devoted what would have been his "retirement years" to opening school doors to dropouts, delinquents and other miscreants. His commitment to Kansas City youth changed community attitudes about students who had been kicked out of regular public schools.

DeLaSalle's initial success with a handful of teen-agers in the early 1970s has blossomed into a unique institution operating at seven different sites in Kansas City and recognized nationally as a system for operating alternative schools. Moreover, city leaders and philanthropists have been increasingly willing to support DeLaSalle

Education Center.

Once it was quite different; Kobets' borrowed money on his own home to start the center and its programs.

A 1939 graduate of Rockhurst College, Kobets taught at several area schools, including the old DeLaSalle High School, before it closed. After he retired from DeLaSalle Education Center in 1983, he founded Benilde Hall for adult alcoholics and drug addicts.

To honor Godfrey Kobets' memory, the DeLaSalle board has established the Founder's Award, a scholarship recognizing characteristics that emulate Kobets' work: vision, concern for fellow man and academic achievement. In addition, a permanent memorial will be placed at the school.

With Godfrey Kobets' death, Kansas City has lost a truly exemplary citizen.