

Fifth Edition
January 2012

St. Mary's Catholic School Monthly News

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Special Insert:

- Key Dates and Important Notes

St. Mary's Catholic School Parents,

Each new calendar year provides an opportunity to set New Year's resolutions and look forward to the future.

For 2012, we will continue our efforts to be the School of Choice in our area. Success is based upon improvement and you can never be completely satisfied with your product. The second you think you are there, the bar gets higher.

In this edition of Monthly News, we wanted to:

- Highlight some of the things you can expect in 2012.
- Share important St. Mary's Catholic School News to keep you connected to what's happening.
- Spotlight our last two teachers in our "Learning More about Our Teachers" series.

I'm proud of the continuous improvements that we are making at St. Mary's Catholic School and even more excited for the future. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the school. We are proud to have such a strong family base that believes in the future of St. Mary's Catholic School.

Blessings and keep the faith,

Gary Tomlin, Principal

December Students of the Month

Please join me in congratulating the following students for being recognized in December for excellence in the areas of respect (toward themselves and others) and responsibility (completing all assignments).

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Preschool: Noah Arpan | Fourth Grade: Lauren Hogan |
| Kindergarten: Charlie Salgot | Fifth Grade: Maureen Brunner |
| First Grade: Megan Barch | Sixth Grade: Rebekah Kehoe |
| Second Grade: Kaleb Edwards | Seventh Grade: Clarissa Zolinski |
| Third Grade: Monica Kalbaugh | Eighth Grade: David Zolinski |

All students of the month will have their picture posted in the School Activities room and celebrate with ice cream treats. Congratulations to all! Remember, good things happen when we are responsible and show respect.

Continuing Our Efforts to Be a School of Choice

At St. Mary's Catholic School, we want to be known as the School of Choice in our area. This means demonstrating excellence in all we do, including academics and the programs that we offer. Here's an update on a few things you can expect in 2012.

Plans for Catholic Schools across the State

As you may know, the Archdiocese of Detroit has been evaluating all Catholic schools across the state. We've been working with the Archdiocese of Detroit to provide information about our school, including our curriculum and facilities. Sometime in February, the Archdiocese of Detroit plans to unveil their plans.

We believe that St. Mary's Catholic School has made many improvements and positioned ourselves for a favorable review from the Archdiocese of Detroit. These improvements include:

- SMART Boards at every grade level
- Teacher laptops at every grade level for attendance, grades, lesson plans and ongoing access for parent communication
- Computers available in every classroom
- State of the art computer lab, with SMART Board
- New Science Program for all grades, including the Foss Science Program for Kindergarten through Fourth Grades and new books for Fifth through Eighth Grades
- Pre-Algebra for Seventh Grade and Algebra for Eighth Grade
- New Accelerated Reader Program
- Completely renovated Preschool and Kindergarten rooms
- New gross motor skills room
- Refinished gym floor

While we are proud of these efforts, we won't stop here. Our plan, with your help, is to continue improving our school to meet the needs of our students. We will keep you informed once we learn more from the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Common Core Standards

Over the next two years, the Archdiocese of Detroit wants all schools to adopt common core standards for curriculum, as well as a standard program for attendance, grades and other components that Fast Direct currently provides. We will begin implementing these common core standards at St. Mary's Catholic School over the next year – well in advance of the 2014 deadline. As part of our efforts, we will be holding a workshop on collaborative learning for our teachers later this year. This will allow us to map our entire curriculum from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade in an effort to enhance our ability to provide individualized instruction – ensuring our students are working up to their ability and achieving their full potential.

After-School Enrichment Programs

As part of our efforts to create well-rounded students, we will be offering after school enrichment programs beginning later this month and running through May. The programs will be available to all students in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade. Timing for the sessions will be from 3:30 – 5:30 pm with the day of the week dependent on the course selected. Potential courses include Lego Robotics, Chess, Spanish and Cooking. We'll share more information as the details are finalized. In the meantime, let us know if you have additional suggestions for this program or can offer your time to help lead a course.

Keeping Connected at St. Mary's Catholic School

School Committee News

Here is a synopsis from the December School Committee Meeting. The School Committee does not normally meet in December, however with our focus on Recruiting and Retention and knowing that Kindergarten Round-up will be right around the corner, we felt it was important to meet this year.

- With the proceeds from the Achatz Pie sales this year, the school is purchasing new Accelerated Reader title tests. This will expand the offering of books available for which an Accelerated Reader test can be taken. In addition, the school is looking to provide test taking ability in each of the classrooms. This is another tool that the teachers will use in differentiation.
- Mad Scientist day was 12/13.
- Cardinal Mooney students are lined up to run the Lego Robotics program - more information to come.
- Iowa test results are just coming in. Due to the test standard changes and format changes, we expect that scores will be a bit lower until the students are used to the new format.
- St. Mary's Catholic School won first place in the Non-Profit category for the St. Clair Santa parade. The trophy is on display in the school office.
- The Auction Committee learned that they have secured a donation for a Freighter cruise!
- The Fish Fry meeting of key personnel was postponed from January 6 due to the boys basketball schedule. A new date will be scheduled soon. We are still in need of a chair for this fundraiser. Please consider volunteering.
- The Committee split into three groups to review surveys filled out at conferences for Pre-School, Kindergarten and Fifth Grade parents. Next steps are:
 - School family letters to be written and sent to Kindergarten and younger parish families
 - Small meeting with Father Greg regarding Together in Faith - making recruiting/family assistance a top campaign priority
 - Establish relationships with other Pre-School programs to assist in recruiting
 - Buddy Family program for new families
- Next School Committee Meeting: Thursday, January 12, at 7:00 pm in the School Activities Room. Topics include:
 - Frequency of Conferences (Activities Room Survey)
 - Together in Faith
 - Catholic Schools Week
 - Recruiting and Retention Program

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 12, at 7:00 pm in the School Activities Room. Please join us if you are able. Together we can work to make St. Mary's Catholic School THE School of Choice in our area!

Keeping Connected at St. Mary's Catholic School (cont.)

Upcoming Auction

The St. Mary's Catholic School Annual Tasting and Auction will be held on Saturday, February 4, 2012. Once again, we will be offering a "taste" of the talents of many local restaurants, along with silent and live auctions, raffles, games and an open bar. The auction has become a highly anticipated event here in St. Clair, with more than a dozen restaurants and approximately 300 members of our community attending. Watch for more information throughout this month.

Many Thanks

We wanted to take this opportunity to share thanks to:

- **Mark Kehoe:** Mark was awarded a \$1,000 check for our school from his company, DuPont, for all of the volunteer work he has done. We are very grateful for his entry into this wonderful foundation.
- **Mrs Riesterer and the Sixth Grade class:** They accomplished gathering new or gently used clothing for unfortunate children that have none, including 38 coats, 11 snow pants, 13 scarves, 24 gloves, 51 hats and three pairs of boots. Congratulations to the class and many thanks to all who donated items.
- **Mrs. Sharrow and the Kindergarten class:** They brought joy to many children through their efforts to collect toys and items for Children's Hospital. Thank you to the class and all who donated items.
- **The children at St. Mary's Catholic School:** We have had two responses by phone and two by mail from parishioners who appreciated the cards from fellow parishioners – especially the children. One woman shared that she received 13 cards and said how happy and blessed she felt to receive them. She wanted to be sure that we told the children that she was wishing them all a Happy New Year!

One final thank you goes out to the **School Committee** for their hard work and great accomplishments to help improve our school. We are so fortunate to have such amazing support from St. Mary's Catholic School families.

SCRIP Program – Don't Forget

SCRIP is available for purchase six days a week on Monday through Friday from 8:30 am until 4 pm in the school office. On Sunday, SCRIP is sold in the church basement following the 7:30 am and 9:30 am masses. If we don't have what you need in stock, you will have it in a few days.

Help Needed!

Whenever we ask for help – someone always seems to rise to the occasion and pitch in. We are hoping that you will consider pitching in on this VERY IMPORTANT NEED!

The school is in need of additional help during lunch time and recess. Helpers ensure that children are able to enjoy this short break during the day to eat and be active – in a safe and organized way.

Please contact the School Office if you can help us with this critical need.

Learning More about Our Teachers

We are proud of the quality of our teachers. This month completes this series on “Learning More about Our Teachers”. We hope you have enjoyed reading more about their background, expertise and what they enjoy.

| | Mr. Gibson Eighth Grade | Miss Grace Preschool |
|---|---|--|
| What is your personal motto or favorite quote? | “You know you got it. Just do it.” | “You can’t change a person’s behavior, only your reaction to it.” |
| When did you know you wanted to become a teacher? | Very early on in my life. I have a lot of teachers in my family and knew right away it was what I wanted to do. | I have always wanted to teach. My mother was a teacher. Growing up, my friends and I always “played school” and I was, usually the teacher. I love seeing children accomplish what they set out to do, and in preschool that is almost everything....it’s never boring! |
| What was your favorite subject in school and why? | Social Studies. I really liked maps and geography. | I enjoyed most subjects. I would have to say my most favorite was Drama...I know...it’s not an academic. Putting yourself “out there” really helped me become a creative, social, personable, well rounded person. I use everything I learned in drama every day of my life...not just some things, some time. |
| What three words would your students use to describe you? | Energetic, big and fun. | Fun, happy and a little silly (but we don’t tell everyone that one). |
| What is the last book you read? | History of the Civil War. | The Polar Express, to my class. It was a little long, but I kept their attention with the “dramatics”! (See, I used drama today!) |
| What do you like to do outside of work? | Relax at home with friends and family. | When I get a chance, I love to spend time with my family and friends, especially, my “Seeesters!! In the summer we have the best time hanging by the pool. In the winter, someone is usually having a birthday, so singing karaoke is our choice of fun. |
| What traits do you most admire in others? | Honesty and respect. | Being honest, loving, and considerate. |
| What is the quality you most admire in your students? | Enthusiasm. | Curiosity! Wanting, needing, to know about everything! |
| What do you consider your greatest achievement? | So far, graduating from college and becoming a teacher. It was always a goal of mine. | My job at St. Mary’s Catholic School. I have been here for 17 years and I have educated over 800 preschool children in the area. I am proud to say I am part of this family. |
| What can students expect to learn in your classroom? | Past and present American history, Geography of the Eastern and Western Hemisphere, Grammar and writing skills. | EVERYTHING!! From covering a cough, to being kind and helping others, to learning their ABC’s, 123’s, colors and shapes. |
| What do you hope your students take away from your class at the end of the year? | The knowledge and skills necessary for them to succeed in the future academically and behavior wise. | Besides the “EVERYTHING” I just mentioned, my goal for these little ones is that they develop a true WANT to learn. Make it fun, let them use their senses, and they will learn. |
| Where did you go to college and what was your major? | I graduated from Saginaw Valley State University with a major in Elementary Education. | I am proud to say I stayed nearby and attended St. Clair County Community College. I have an Associated Degree in Early Childhood Education with over 30 years experience teaching amazing preschoolers. |
| What is your hometown? | Richmond, Michigan. | I was born in Detroit. When I was six my parents bought my great-grandparent’s house “up north”. When I was 12, they finally put in a “real” bathroom, so, we moved to what I now call my hometown of Smiths Creek. |
| Tell us about your family. | My wife Ashley and I are both teachers. We have a beautiful little girl named Emma. I have three older sisters. I have a very close family and we like to have fun! | I am the middle child of three. Both of my parents are deceased; dad when we were teenagers and mom just five years ago. My sister and brother are my family, since I have never been married or ever been blessed with children (I haven’t given up hope!). My sister has a husband of 32 years and they have three beautiful daughters and four awesome grandchildren. My bother has a fabulous wife, of 17 years, and one amazing daughter. We are a small, but very close family!! |

If you have any questions, compliments or concerns, please contact the School Office at 329-4150 or email Gary Tomlin at gtomlin@stmarysstclair.org. If you have any feedback on this newsletter or recommendations for future editions, please contact Pam Rollins at 248-514-1495 or pam.rollins@towerswatson.com.