



St. John the Baptist School Alumni Association

THE ADVOCATE

The SJS Alumni Association advances and promotes the health and vibrancy of St. John the Baptist School, its administration, staff, students and the school's educational mission.

St. John the Baptist School
KENMORE

Spring/Summer

Summer festival plans underway

As a St. John's alumnus, undoubtedly, you have fond memories of the parish summer festival. So, when the long-time event chair announced he would step down, members of the Alumni Association along with a group of parishioners were determined to join forces to re-invent the very popular summer celebration and parish fundraiser. This year's "Bash & Dash" will be held on Saturday, August 16th from 3 - 11 pm on the parish grounds.

"We all remember how fun the festival was when we were students here at St. John's," said Mary Beth Connolly, '89, Bash & Dash Chair, and SJS

Alumni Association VP. "The Alumni Association recognized the importance of keeping this tradition alive - not only to bring families together but also as the parish's main summer fundraiser."

This year's "Bash" includes children's rides and games as well as musical entertainment by *Kick Start Rumble* and *Murphy's Law*. Along with great music, the Bash & Dash includes plenty of food options. The parish Boy Scout troop will run the super food tent and Chiavettas will be grilling up their very popular chicken dinner.

St. John's alum Jamie

(Hetzelt) Wells, '94 and husband, Darren Wells, owners of *Sweet Beginnings Bakery* in Tonawanda invite all to the baked good tent for some super treats. Gambling tents will be rolling all night long and no festival or concert is complete without a beer tent, the perfect gathering place for SJS Alums. And, several theme baskets contributed by parishioners and school families will be available for raffle.

The "Dash" is St. John's Home School's Association USATF Certified 5K Road Race and 1 mile Fun Run. The 1

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Key ingredients for helping others

St. John's students collected key ingredients to help those in the community. As part of their Lenten preparation, students collected items necessary to make tuna noodle casserole, including tuna, cream of mushroom soup, pasta and peas. The food goods were donated to the Response to Love Center (RTL) in Buffalo in an effort to help stock their pantry with proteins and other food items.

"We've been partnering with the RTL for over a year now," Principal Cynthia Jacobs explains. "One of our alums, Dianne (LoCurto) Barrali from the Class of 1965, works with the organization and reached out to St. John's. Our junior high students volunteer at their soup kitchen helping to prepare and serve food, and this food drive was a terrific way to get our younger students involved in helping others. The timing was perfect given the Lenten season and the fact that these food items provide nutritious meals



SJS seventh graders help deliver food with Diane Barrali. Pictured left to right are Santino Martone, Cole Hollis & Jack Cleary.

for families throughout the year. Providing these opportunities is the way we instill a conscience of community and Christian values in our students."

The Advocate Contributors & Staff

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From the Editor...

To test or not to test

By Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87

It's difficult to turn on the television, pick up a newspaper or scroll through your Facebook News Feed without reading something about Common Core Standards and state testing. It is not up for debate that many opinions exist about these exact topics. It has really got me thinking about how our school is tackling this controversial issue.

St. John's school has implemented the curriculum in accordance with the Diocese of Buffalo, in conjunction with New York State. The Common Core Standards were developed to create clear, consistent benchmarks for students K – 12 in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The goal being to give students the skills needed to be successful to graduate and beyond.

As a parent of two children at St. John's, I am beginning to see changes in how they are being taught. I'm also the wife of a public school teacher who over the course of his 15 year career has seen a dramatic shift in the educational system.

I have to say, I see some strengths in the Common Core. I think it has challenged my children to think differently and become problem-solvers, which I know are critical skills companies today look for to secure a talented workforce.

On the other hand, are the newly designed standardized tests based on this curriculum a true measure of a student's success? You would think so because most school districts are ranked based on test performance and categorize each and every student, generally by a number.

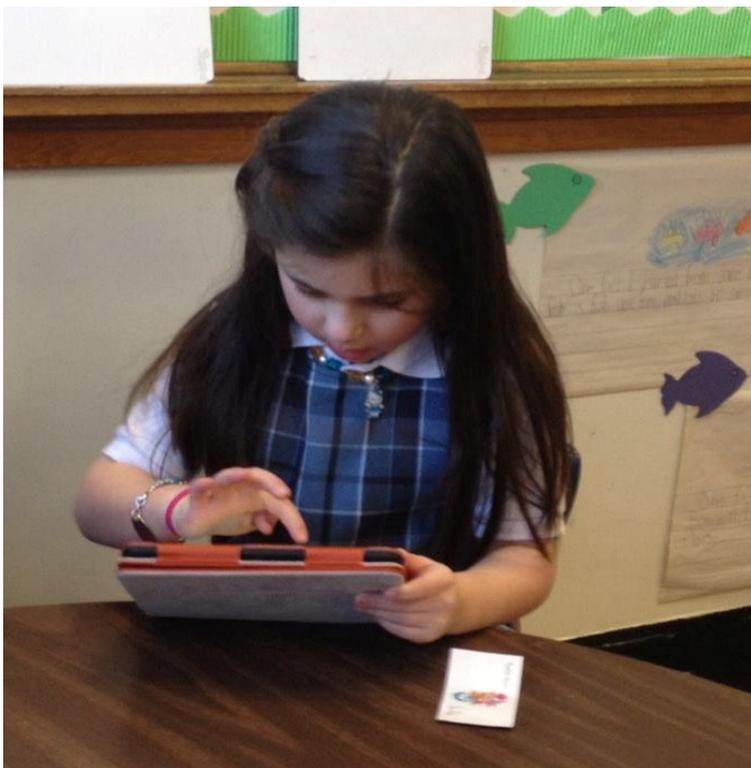
However, St. John's is not a test culture. I feel our school has done an amazing job creating a learning environment that is well-balanced. We do administer the NYS assessments in 4th and 8th grade which seems less than some schools who now spend a good portion of their school year teaching to these tests and administering practice tests which are generally given 3rd – 8th grade.

While I was always a good student, I was never a good "test-taker." For that very reason, I'm thankful my boys are in a school where we don't teach to the tests. St. John's does not create unneeded pressure on the students and teachers to perform on test day. I also don't believe these test results are a true measure of each child's ability to learn.

At St. John's, our teachers are trusted to educate in whatever way they feel best reaches their students. We still drive home the fundamentals. And, with such a low turnover in faculty, we can fill the gaps from grade level to grade level easily. We have integrated the interdisciplinary arts program in most subject areas and each teacher has the flexibility and freedom to implement a variety of learning styles.

We trust that what we've been doing since the school's inception in 1936 still works. And, that the end results speak for themselves. I'd say we are doing it right by continuing to graduate capable young men and women. Just as I remember it so many years ago.

KINDLE TABLETS DONATED



An anonymous benefactor donated forty-four Kindle Fire tablets and cases to St. John's School. Students and faculty are thrilled with the gift valued at over \$5,000. The Kindles are being shared among classrooms. Ella Friedman practices customized math and vocabulary flashcards on the Kindle tablet in Grade 1. We are so grateful to all who support our St. John's community!

Bash and Dash: Class '84 to celebrate 30th Reunion

Continued from Page 1

Mile Fun Run will begin at 7 pm and is perfect for kids. The 5K road race will begin at 7:30 pm. Registration information will be forthcoming via the school's webpage.

St. John's Class of 1984 will be celebrating their 30th Reunion the night of the Bash & Dash. "A committee has been formed to bring everyone together," said Michelle Salemi, Director of Advancement. "It's a wonderful testament to the strong bonds we hold to the St. John's school and parish community." For additional information on the reunion, contact Bill Hilbert, '84 at whilbert@gmail.com.

Connolly believes this year's event will be a celebration of the old summer festival days with a few new fresh twists. "The Bash & Dash is a true collaboration between the Alumni Association, parish members, the Home School Association and of course the many volunteers who offered to help," she says. "It's really about making this whole day something all families can enjoy."

Mark your calendar and save the date! What a great way to celebrate summer and fondly remember your days at St. John's. Hope to see you there!

Alumni Spotlights

Sr. Theresa Coughlin, SSMN



In 1932, St. John's parish school was built. At that time, Monsignor Klauder invited the Sisters of St. Mary to staff the school of 119

students, grades 1 – 8. The Sisters have continued to play an integral role in the education of so many students and perhaps one of the most recognized faces was Sr. Theresa Coughlin, SSMN, former teacher and principal.

Sr. Theresa taught 7th and 8th grade from 1960-63 and returned to teach 5th and 6th grade from 1980-81. She assumed role of Principal in 1981 and remained in that position for another 7 years. After 50 years in the educational ministry, she retired but still speaks of her years at St. John's as among the best years of her life.

"I had so many happy years at St. John's. I love to run into people from the parish," she says. She frequently sees parents at church and is so tickled to hear how well the children are doing in the business world. "It does your heart good to see the fruits of your labor."

She has very fond memories of the entire school coming together in Klauder Hall for programs and plays. "I just loved to sit back and see them do these wonderful little things. It brought the whole school together to pay tribute to each other for their talents and skills," she said.

The little ones enjoyed her visits as well. "We would be

cooking French toast and it was the savory smells that brought Sr. Theresa into our classroom," said Barbara Surra, former Pre-K teacher. "My class would stand up and say 'Good morning Mrs. Theresa!' and Sister just smiled. She truly loved those children."

Sister Theresa recalls much talk about connecting the school to Klauder Hall. "Initially, no one thought it could be done," she states. However, the school walkway fondly known as 'The Connector,' was built in 2001. "It was a miracle because we never thought it could be done. I was very pleased it became a reality," Sister said.

Sister obtained a part-time position at Kenmore Mercy Hospital for four years upon leaving St. John's. Medical problems ended her active ministry but today she keeps busy answering phones at Annunciation convent in Buffalo and supporting her friend Sr. Carol Schwartz, SSMN who works with a mission in Canada. Sr. Theresa counts donations twice a week and assembles presents at holiday time for the refugees.

The children were always the number one reason she loved St John's. While graduation days were sad ones, she was also so happy to see her students win scholarships and go to High School. "In many cases, I had the opportunity to know the children from the littlest of grades. As they stood on the altar on graduation day, I was always so proud." She is still a beloved teacher and principal in the hearts of so many!

Mr. John Philip Tarantino, Jr., '65



It's difficult to drive down Bailey Avenue in South Buffalo without noticing the 50,000 square foot distribution facility for Tarantino Foods, LLC, a family owned wholesale food distribution business.

At the helm of this operation is St. John's graduate John Philip Tarantino, Jr., '65. Tarantino's career began in retail as an assistant store manager for Super Duper, after graduating from St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute and Canisius College. After nearly two decades in retail, he shifted to the wholesale food service business by joining the company which was co-founded by his father, John Philip Tarantino, Sr., back in 1947.

Today, Tarantino Foods, LLC specializes in fresh produce and the sale of wholesale food and non-food products to restaurants, pizzerias, schools, universities, casinos, health care facilities, and more. Employing over sixty employees, they service both independently owned establishments and chains throughout WNY and Rochester.

Tarantino attributes his professional success to the many lessons learned during his early years of Catholic education. "I never really thought how learning my ABC's, Arithmetic,

Religion, History and so on in grammar school would benefit me as an adult," he says. "St. John's was the first place where I learned to interact socially with others. I learned the benefit of a good routine, of discipline, of working independently. I learned about responsibility by bringing the milk bottles upstairs from the milk cooler, wiping the chalkboards, by completing assignments correctly and on time, and as a patrol boy on our bus in eighth grade." These lessons, which still stick with him today, helped him secure his first few jobs.

Hard work and discipline has led Tarantino to professional success. He cites a few key elements that he feels most shaped him personally and professionally during his grammar school years. "Respect for others and their property. Discipline. No one dared to talk back to a priest, nun or teacher. Compassion. I always felt my teachers cared about us. They wanted us to succeed," he said.

Although the years have passed since John and his five siblings were students at St. John's, he and his family remain deeply rooted in the St. John's community. His parents are still parishioners and hold many fond memories. He mentions that his mother still cherishes the plaster hand print he made in Kindergarten. We are proud to call John one of our St. John's alums!

Annual Appeal

St. John's School has an extraordinary tradition of fostering faith, friendship, and learning.

It continues to thrive today!

We invite you to support our efforts.



http://www.stjohnskenmore.com/give_now.html

A Message from our Principal Mrs. Cynthia Jacobs



As we come to the "home stretch" of this school year, to say that this has been "quite a year" is an understatement—with all that has gone on within the Diocese with its Revitalization initiative. I am humbled by the continued support of our alums, parishioners, parents, faculty, and friends—it really speaks to our steadfast St. John's community! From our buildings and financials, to our faculty

and programs, the Diocese's decision confirmed what I already knew: St. John's is a strong, viable school with a very bright future. Indeed, it is a very good place to be!

With "Moving Up Day" nearing, we look forward to continuing our St. John's time-honored traditions that celebrate the children and families who are the heart of our school. And although graduation concludes the school year, it truly is a commence-

ment of new beginnings...from our graduates who begin the next chapter of their lives while cherishing their ties to St. John's, to welcoming the new families that will become the St. John's of tomorrow. And so, our legacy remains—steadfast and strong—and firmly in place: to continue the mission of educating our youth in a Catholic tradition, for many decades to come!

YOU'RE INVITED!

SJS Annual Golf Tournament & Scholarship Dinner September 6, 2014

Nearly a decade ago, the SJS Scramble Golf Tournament and Scholarship Dinner was introduced as a major event for our school. Each year, this event continues to thrive and grow. Since its inception, it has raised over \$150,000. These funds are now exclusively dedicated towards providing financial assistance to families in need. Golfers tee-off at Sheridan Golf course between 8 am - 1 pm.

Don't golf? Join friends and fellow Alums at Klauder Hall beginning at 6 pm for happy hour, dinner and live music followed by our premier silent/live auction. The evening promises to be one to remember!

Contact Michelle Salemi at 716-877-6401 or msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com to reserve your spot today!



St. John the Baptist School Alumni

St. John the Baptist School Alumni Association 2014 Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, May 28th

Saturday, August 16th

(join us in the Alumni Tent on campus grounds from 3 pm—11 pm)

Wednesday, September 24th

(includes Board Elections)

Wednesday, November 19th

Meetings are held at 7 pm in the Reina Community Room.

**For additional information on membership, contact
Amy Surra Schraufstetter, Membership Coordinator
alumniassociation@stjohnskenmore.com**

We want to hear from you!

Update your contact information today:

http://www.stjohnskenmore.com/alumni_contact.html

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news & school happenings!

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-John-the-Baptist-School-Alumni-Kenmore-NY/10152446556655?ref=hl>

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