



St. John the Baptist School
KENMORE

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.

Spring/Summer 2015

Annual Appeal funds Science Lab

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Upcoming Events

MIDSUMMER RUN/WALK

Friday, July 24th

Class of 1965 REUNION

Class of 1985 REUNION

Contact the Alumni Office
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Cutting edge science equipment has been acquired by St. John's thanks to the tremendous success of its inaugural Annual Campaign. This significant infusion of funds from its alums, parishioners, parents, and friends of the school has allowed the school to purchase Probe-



Eighth graders, Joe Nist (left) and Mayan Karpie-Jones (right) perform experiment with teacher, Ms. Katie Cooke.

ware and laptops for use in its middle school science lab. This complements the structural improvements that science lab underwent earlier this year that were also underwritten with these funds.

Advancement Director Michelle Salemi is charged with securing the necessary funds to underwrite the costs of such forward-thinking initiatives. "Math has long been a strength of our middle school," states Salemi. "This places an

equal emphasis on science. The acquisition of this equipment will further develop our students' abilities to critically reason and decipher information. Our focus on STEM/STREAM instills a cross-curricular mode of thinking into how they learn to process information and approach problem-solving strategies."

According to Katie Cooke, Science Chair, the probes go beyond preparing the students for high school. The probes are teaching them how to do real, authentic science including collecting and interpreting data, trouble shooting, and communicating their scientific findings. "My hope is that students will become comfortable with using this

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Bishop Malone visits St. John's School

The Most Reverend Bishop Richard Malone spent the day at St. John's visiting classrooms and speaking with the faculty to experience first-hand what our school offers. The Kindergarten children were thrilled to show him the Bibles that they created depicting both Old and New Testament stories. He also enjoyed viewing the photos of our alums dating as far back as 1930s that still line the main hallways of the school.

Bishop Malone, who taught in the greater Boston, MA area for nearly two decades before becoming its Secretary of Education, was clearly in his element among the children. His warm demeanor and genuine smiles put the children he met at immediate ease. He commented that visiting with the children in schools was truly an enjoyable part of his work.

Bishop Malone began his visit by celebrating a special Mass in which students from each grade level participated. Earlier in the month, every



Ava Richey, Kindergarten student, with Bishop Malone.

child had created two personal invitations for the Mass. One invitation was sent to parents and the other was given to a family member or friend. The parishioners were also invited. He spoke to the children about the importance of living our Catholic

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From the Editor...

It Takes a Village

By Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87

It might sound very cliché, but it truly takes a village for any school to thrive. How do we continue to grow and be our very best each and every day at St. John's? It's the countless hours of volunteerism that are virtually impossible to quantify happening 365 days a year.

The minute my oldest son (now 9) started at St. John's, I instantly felt the urge to get involved. There are no shortages of volunteer opportunities at our school so I found myself gravitating to the things I thought I could do "well." Needless to say, the key to great volunteers is the willingness to give, not the ability to do things well.

Recently, one of our major fundraisers took place. I witnessed two new volunteers take on this monstrous task without one misstep, while the former chairman watched closely nearby willing to jump in and help at a moment's notice. Talk about the willingness to give!

This is one of hundreds of volunteer led activities at St. John's. No one activity is more important than the other, but they all have one impact – they afford our children opportunities to partake in enrichment programs, sports teams, school dances, and field day just to name a few. They also bring our families and parish together to enjoy and celebrate the faith-filled community that we are.

I am humbled by the moms, dads, grandparents, and parishioners who sign up to be a lunch monitor, coach a sports team, run a fundraiser or agree to be a grade chair or room parent. And need I mention the Home School Association who tirelessly works all year organizing an ambitious activity calendar. It is you who play a vital role in defining who we are as a school community.

Because of you we are able to boast each and every year at our Open House. We don our Sunday best ready to assume our ambassador roles. We fill the activity room talking about all we offer. We act as tour guides showing off every nook and cranny of our school walls, because we are jam-packed with opportunity for every child that walks through our doors.

To the countless volunteers: you are a village raising our children in your very own, giving way. I am bursting with gratitude for all you do that makes our school so great.

Science: STEM/STREAM learning

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technology, which is currently used in the field of science at universities and in the workplace," Cooke said. This technology provides real world data in real time, allowing students to literally see the data and graphs as it is being collected."

The students first used Probeware on an experiment regarding the phase change of ice-cream. The probes were used to take temperature readings of multiple substances simultaneously, allowing them to observe in real-time the heat exchange between the milk and ice, as well as the effect of adding compounds such as salt to the substance. "By the end of the class, students had carried out the experiment, synthesized their data, created a graph, and formed a hypothesis that explained their findings," Cooke said. "Some even hypothesized the similarity of the effects of adding salt to ice-cream as salting our icy roads, which was dead on! These donated funds have made a tremendous impact on

the quality of education I am able to deliver to my students."

Students are enjoying using the new equipment. Cooke said they are especially impressed by the touch-screen computers. "It's not easy to impress students these days with technology because it's so much a part of their life. However, they are genuinely excited about coming to science class and doing the work," she said. "There is no better way to gain an understanding of a concept than to test it out and actually do it! Science should be a verb; that is to say, it is an action. It's not about memorizing facts, it's about doing the science."

This new equipment allows St. John's to continue building a focus on STEM/STREAM learning, which incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, as well as Religion and the Arts.

HELPING THE HOMELESS



The students of St. John's completed a four-week program to assist the homeless. Families and faculty collected hundreds of new socks that were donated to local agencies who assist the plight of the homeless. The project's timing coincided with two important events: the annual Sleepout for Homeless night held at Hoover Elementary in February, as well as the school's year-long liturgical theme, "Have a Heart," which creates awareness for people with special challenges. Pictured above (left to right) are students Cara Feeney, Sophie McGuigan, Jack Ernst and Ben DeSantis.

Alumni Spotlights

Brian Donovan, '81

Brian Donovan believes, "It's not who you are when you're born. It's who you are when you live." The 1981 alum moved to Hollywood to pursue an acting career in the early 1990's. Though far from his Ken-Ton home, he remained close to his family and friends, particularly the memory of his deceased younger sister, Kelly, who was born with Down Syndrome.

After graduating from John Carroll University with a degree in Business and a minor in Communications, the then 23-year-old Donovan realized three things: he never wanted to wear a tie again, he wanted to work with kids and he wanted to live as an actor. He decided to pursue a career on the west coast. He initially found work doing voice-overs for commercials and TV shows including becoming the voice of Rock Lee in the Cartoon Network series, "Naruto," and doing voice-over work on Disney's "Jetix." He went on to work for all the major networks, including ABC, CBS, NBC, HBO and FOX.

As Donovan began to experience success, he remained close to his family, especially his sister Kelly. "Each year, Kelly came out and stayed with me for two months, which was an amazing gift, but came with challenges and sacrifices," he said. "However, it was the best two months of my year and made my life whole." About 15 years ago, Donovan began taping his time spent with his sister which eventually led to the creation of a film about her life, "Kelly's Hollywood."

"I didn't set out to make a documentary," explained Donovan. "I was just capturing mo-

ments of my sister's life. However, as the time passed, it started to really affect me and I thought about it more seriously." The film explores the challenges people with disabilities face, combats the typical stereotypes, and celebrates the joy he experienced with his sister. Kelly had a particular love of everything Hollywood and the movie culminates with her 'living her dream.' She experiences her own red-carpet event as a starlet singing and dancing in front of a live-audience. The L.A. premier of "Kelly's Hollywood" took place earlier this month and is currently on the festival circuit seeking distribution.

Today, Donovan continues to work as an actor, director, and producer and over the past couple years, he's taken on the new role as being a father. He and his wife have two sons under the age of two. He recently visited St. John's during a national tour promoting his film and spoke to the students about his profession and being the brother of a sibling with disabilities.

Looking back, Donovan reminisces that although he was 'that kid' with a lot of energy, he always towed the line at school. Even though he has lived in Los Angeles for twenty-five years, his three closest friends remain his buddies from St. John's. "When it comes down to it, everything we do takes courage and for me, those roots started at St. John's," he said. "With positive energy and care, things will grow and take-off. That's what I learned. It's 'my take' from my years of Catholic education. Wonderful things can happen when you love and support one another."



Diane Gilcrist Caruana, '61

Junior High English class was no joke at St. John's. Perhaps many alums remember intense assignments if you were a student of Mrs. Diane Gilcrist Caruana, '61. Caruana spent 19 years teaching here, citing these years as some of the best in her 23 year career in education.

Caruana began her teaching career at Kenmore Middle School. She moved out to Chicago in 1970 when her husband, Anthony Caruana, was called to active duty. She was hired in a suburban school district where she was instrumental in creating a learning center for students with reading difficulties. "This was an intense on-the-job training experience," she said. "I felt blessed to have worked in this program as it exposed me to different learning and teaching styles."

They returned to Tonawanda after her husband's tour of active duty was over. Her primary job was raising her two children but was fortunate to work part-time at St. Andrew's School. She returned to St. John's full-time where she earned a reputation second-to-none. Student John Donnolly, '83 said, "As I look back at my education, Mrs. Caruana was *the teacher* who without question had a positive impact on my professional career." Besides the academic courses, she especially loved working with the students on after school activities such as yearbook, speech competition, and the school newspaper.

After spending over twenty years in education, she was ready for a new venture. When Barnes

and Noble built the store that now resides in Amherst, Caruana was hired for a position in the Children's Department. She was instrumental in building the store from ground up which was a major learning experience. "I loved every minute of it! I often remarked that I couldn't believe I was being paid to do all this," she said. Her responsibilities grew to include planning and executing children's programs and working with teachers to suggest and organize Book Fairs.

Caruana spent nine years at Barnes and Noble but with grandchildren coming into the world, she was ready to retire. Today



she is an active volunteer with the Town of Tonawanda Meals on Wheels program, as well as Roswell Park Cancer Institute. She and her husband are still

parishioners at St. John's. She serves as a lector, choir member, Eucharistic Minister and altar server for funerals.

The religious and moral values Caruana received from Catholic education have guided her in every aspect of life. She credits St. John's for instilling a strong sense of responsibility and discipline. "What I learned kept me focused on my goals even when the road tended to become murky," she said. "I learned from a very young age that if I kept trying and believed in myself, I could accomplish anything."

****This Editor still credits Mrs. Caruana for her love of writing. It was she who inspired me to pursue a college degree in Communications and Journalism. Thank you Mrs. Caruana.***

A Message from our Principal Mrs. Cynthia Jacobs



It's an exciting time to be at St. John's...with First Communion, the May Crowning, and so many traditions nearing. Many of our fondest memories extend beyond the walls of the school to our church and parish community.

The strength of St. John's School emanates from the steadfast spirit of our parish. The Voices of Angels Concert that took place this spring is evidence of the remarkable success that comes from

uniting together. The extraordinary sounds of our alums, parishioners, students, and friends are still echoing in my mind — the evening was truly a testament and tribute to our St. John's community!

Furthermore, the talents of our parents and alums enabled me to address some of the more specific needs of the school this year. A recent fundraiser at the Town Ballroom proposed by co-owner and school parent afforded us a tremen-

dous opportunity to raise funds for our athletics program. Another parent offered to tap his photography skills while an alum's desire to share his graphic arts expertise, resulted in our phenomenal new marketing campaign. These are just two examples of the countless ways so many people contribute to the strength of this school.

I am sincerely grateful to all our loyal supporters...we are truly a blessed community!

SJS ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT & SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

September 12, 2015

- ◆ Golf at Sheridan Golf Course. Tee times 8 am—1 pm.
- ◆ Dinner & Auction at Klaunder Hall. Includes live music and happy hour. Begins at 6 pm.

JOIN US FOR THE DAY, THE EVENING OR BOTH!
RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY.

Contact Michelle Salemi at 716-877-6401 or msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com



Jason Kuzdal, '00

Bishop: Thanked faculty and staff for dedication

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faith—of being kind to one another and helping people in the community.

After Mass, he met with the entire faculty and thanked them for their dedication before touring the classrooms. Principal Cynthia Jacobs said, "It's wonderful to have Bishop Malone at the school to see what we do each day. Interacting and sitting with the students allowed him to see their enthusiasm and spirit. From our littlest to our 8th graders, I was proud of how they openly discussed what their days were like at St. John's...from their academics to discussing music classes and after-school activities."

Jacobs also mentioned the students were impressed that he had spent so much time in education before becoming a Bishop. "It was really quite fun watching their little eyes dart back and forth trying to reconcile their own teachers with him...and picturing him in a classroom. We certainly would welcome a visit from him at any time!" she said.

St. John the Baptist School Alumni

We want to hear from you!

Update your contact information today:

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