



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 2021

Inside this issue:

Editor's column	2
Alumni Spotlights: Tom Sheehan, '46 Matt Parrino, '96	3
Impact: 3-D Printers	4
Celebrating Earth Day	5
Our Catholic Identity	6
Academic Excellence	7
Principal's Message	8

Upcoming Events

90th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Friday & Saturday
September 17 & 18, 2021

Details on page 8

The Advocate Contributors

Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87
Editor, *The Advocate*

Linda Spillman Garrity
Lead Writer, *The Advocate*
Former Vice Principal, SJS

Mary Makar
Vice Principal
STREAM Coordinator
St. John the Baptist School

Festivities for 90th announced!

In 1931, our country was a very different place. It had been about a decade since the end of the First World War and the country was in the midst of the Great Depression. Yet in this Ken-Ton neighborhood, St. John the Baptist School was opening its doors at 1085 Englewood for the first time. Some ninety years later, the mission of educating students in a rich, Catholic tradition continues—and plans are underway to celebrate this special 90th Anniversary!

“As you know, September ordinarily brings the start of a new school year and our *Annual Scholarship Dinner & Auction...and Golf Outing*,” explains Director of Advancement Michelle Salemi. “This year will look a bit different, but it will undoubtedly be *extra-special* as we celebrate our 90th.”

This year, festivities have been expanded to two days to allow the St. John's community to come together. The weekend activities kick-off with a Golf Outing at Sheridan Golf Course on Friday, September 17th.

A full-day of events will occur the next day, Saturday, September 18th. Guided tours of the campus will begin in the afternoon followed by a celebration of Mass at 4 PM in the Church. Tickets will be available for those interested in joining us that evening for a Gala & Auction at Klaunder Hall.



Photo courtesy of alum Nick Monroe pictured with his sister; the image appeared on the cover of the Courier-Express newspaper in 1951.

See Celebration: Page 2

Board of Trustees: Collaboration at its best

The overwhelming support of St. John's School Board of Trustees has been invaluable, particularly with the challenges presented by COVID-19 this year. Composed of parishioners, alums, and parents, the board is charged with safeguarding and strengthening the school. The group works diligently with the school's admin-

istrative team and focuses on long-term educational and financial objectives.

Pastor Michael Parker heads the executive board serving as the ex-officio Chairperson. Vice-Chairperson Canio Marasco, Treasurer Joseph Short '76, and Secretary Roseann (Spillman) Cook, '88 comprise the remainder of this four-member group.

There are seven additional members (Robert Scott, Joanna Eberl, Brian Mahoney, Gary Fusco, Katie O'Bryan, Mary Swist, and Chris Frye, '08) and three ex-officio members (Principal Jenny Bainbridge, Director of Advancement Michelle Salemi, and Parish & School Business Manager Carla Mazurek) who make up the

See Trustees: Page 5

From the Editor...

Strength in tradition

By Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87

As you read through this issue of *The Advocate*, one theme holds true: tradition. We celebrate 90 years of time-honored Catholic education. We recognize our very first graduates. We honor our students' participation during the most Holy season of the Church.

The irony of it all is how non-traditional this school year has been.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how schools operate and how they educate in ways that are unimaginable. My boys have attended school every day wearing face masks while maintaining classroom cohorts and socially distancing themselves from their peers and teachers. To say this year has been unprecedented is an understatement.

Yet, St. John's found a way to hold true to tradition while being challenged to adapt and change. In-person learning commenced on the first day and our children received a full year of classroom instruction in the same small, attentive learning environment we are accustomed to knowing.

Masses and prayer services occurred virtually and still allowed for participation and planning by grade levels. Ascension Thursday marked the school's first in-person Mass allowing our 4th-8th graders to safely gather and celebrate as a school community.

With in-person field trips halted, our teachers arranged virtual field trips instead—allowing students to explore and experience destinations all over the world. And the school's mandatory recess policy was expanded to include designated outdoor classroom spaces.

Finally, my husband and I were able to join our 7th grader to kick off the year-end celebrations we remember so well. A small Moving Up Day ceremony was held in the Church and our 8th graders were able to celebrate their Class Night together at a local banquet facility.

St. John's is a school community rooted in tradition. And while these traditions took a slightly different form this year, it was evident that maintaining a commitment to the academic and spiritual needs of our students were prioritized and met.

As a former graduate, life-long parishioner and parent, I'm in awe of the resilience and strength of our principal, her staff and our pastor. The foundations that built this school 90 years ago have been tested and shaken beyond belief. We pivoted, we adjusted, and we thrived.

CLASS NIGHT 2021



Eighth grade students recently celebrated Class Night with parents and faculty. This year, the event was held off-campus at Banchetti's by Rizzo's to allow for proper social distancing. The evening included the presentation of students' gratitude letters to parents and the 'premier' of their memory video. Congratulations and God's blessings to the Class of 2021!

Celebration plans under way

Continued from Page 1



GOING TO SCHOOL TODAY! First grader Gabriela Privitera paused for a quick photo before passing through the school's iconic main entrance.

Details for these happenings will be announced in the coming weeks and we will follow strict adherence to COVID guidelines; provisions will also be in place to go virtual, if necessary.

"The St. John's community never ceases to amaze me," says Salemi. "Whether planning reunions with alums or working as we did this past year to ensure our students were educated *inside this building*—it's the commitment, dedication, and love of our school and our families that continues to astound me."

A team of volunteers is being assembled as preparations are underway. "I am thrilled to be a part of commemorating this precious milestone!"

Alumni Spotlights

Tom Sheehan, '46



We had the distinct privilege of speaking with one of our earliest alums, Tom Sheehan, who attended St. John's

beginning in the late thirties. Referring to himself as 'one of the first pioneers of the original school,' this Class of '46 alum generously shared his memories of the earliest days at SJS.

"I was an altar boy and often served Mass with my classmate, John Bartell," recalls Sheehan. He explains the 'church' was actually the Neumann Chapel and Msgr. Charles Klauder was simply 'Father Klauder' back then. "At the time, Masses were said in Latin, which of course helped me later at Canisius High School where I was required to study the language for four years in order to graduate. I remember one day in particular when Father Klauder pulled Johnny and I aside and asked if we had been sipping the wine before Mass," Sheehan recalls with a wistful chuckle. "We looked at each other—paused a long moment—and then of course 'pleaded the fifth!' I'm still not quite sure *how* he figured us out!"

Sheehan shared other fond memories of his days at St. John's—from his dad being Msgr. Klauder's private physician to the nuns who taught him. "Most of our teachers were nuns and they could be pretty strict, but we sure got a great education." Sheehan eventually studied Accounting/Business Management at St. Bonaventure University and was part of the school's prestigious ROTC program. "I recall one day on campus seeing at least 30 nuns walking down the sidewalk at Bonnie in complete garb. All of a sudden, I hear one of them calling out, 'Tommy Sheehan...!' I look...

and there was Sister Roberta—who taught me 5th, 7th and 8th grade at St. John's. She immediately gave me a big hug and we talked about our days at St. John's. I was stunned that my teacher would recognize me more than ten years later—at St. Bonnie's, no less!"

After graduating, Sheehan was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army and deployed to South Korea. "My first assignment was to serve as a forward observer for the 8th Army Artillery, the most dangerous job in the Army. Eventually, I was promoted to First Lieutenant and Battery Commander, responsible for the lives of 135 soldiers at the age of twenty-two!"

Upon returning from overseas, Sheehan was hired by the Carborundum Co. and moved to Chicago. He earned the honor of being the company's top producer five times over, before eventually taking a position at RFI Fabricators as their national sales manager. He and his wife have travelled the world and share a passion for scuba diving, a sport they've proudly participated in well into their 70's. The pair still live in the same home where they raised their three children and support various ministries, including St. John's School.

"My Catholic education has been a real blessing. When I travelled, I was fortunate to experience different cultures and it gave me a deeper understanding and perspective about people from all over the world. I witnessed firsthand how we should treat our fellow neighbor—and about acceptance. All the lessons those nuns had taught me in the classroom were in fact how I wanted to live my life—and for that, I am most grateful!"

Matt Parrino, '96

How would you describe a person with superb writing skills, editing talents and broadcast charisma who also possesses expertise and a fiery passion..? You'd call him Matt Parrino! We recently caught up with the Class of 1996 alum to discuss his remarkable career as a sports journalist.

Parrino rose through the ranks of the University of Buffalo's student newspaper, *The Spectrum*, and became its Editor-of-Chief. Charged with managing both its content & financials, Parrino supervised a staff of 100, all while earning his Bachelor's in Communications/Journalism. During his senior year at UB in 2012, he was awarded the *National Pacemaker Award* that recognizes excellence in American student journalism and is unofficially known as the "*Pulitzer Price of student journalism*."

Upon graduating, Parrino worked as the sports editor of the *Tonawanda News* for two years before moving to Las Vegas to serve as the digital media director for the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship). More recently, he has returned to WNY as the Buffalo Bill's beat reporter at the *Syracuse Post Standard*. He also hosts the Bill's "*Shout*" podcast and appears weekly as an analyst for WIVB's Bill's pregame show, "*Buffalo Kickoff Live*."

"The coolest part of my job is probably the travel," says Parrino. "When I worked for the UFC, I was *octagon-side* for some of the *biggest* fights in UFC *history*—travelling to Australia, Europe, Brazil, and many other amazing places."

The opportunity for Parrino to move back to WNY was something he couldn't pass up. "Being a source for the Buffalo Bills has been something *very special* for me and my extended family,—as you probably guessed—*all big Bills fans*. I grew up a huge fan myself and to be able to talk, write, and

cover the team as they've returned to top form has been a real joy!"

Parrino holds fond memories

of his jr. high days at St. John's. "The foundation for my writing ability was built at St. John's. I enjoyed Mrs. (Diane) Caruana's ('61) English class and I seem to remember my passion for writing starting to form right around that time." He recalls the fun he shared with classmates and how inclusive the school environment felt. "The teachers I had there made a positive impact on my life," citing some close ties that remain to this day. "My mother Jill *still* works at St. John's" and has taught countless students during her nearly forty year career at the school. "I also remain friends to this day," with Ms. Mary Pfeiffer, who was his jr. high Science teacher.

When he's not covering professional sports, Parrino enjoys coaching his son's little league team and spending family time with his daughter and wife, Kaitlyn.

Recognizing the importance of mentors, Parrino says, "I wish I had more resources and opportunities to ask questions about the business or field as I was coming up." He credits St. John's as being instrumental in preparing him and is deeply committed to '*paying it forward*' to the next generation of would-be journalists. Parrino requested we share his contact information (email mparrino82@gmail.com & Twitter handle @MattParrino) for any alumni or students who may be interested in pursuing a career in journalism.



3-D Printers promote design and engineering skills

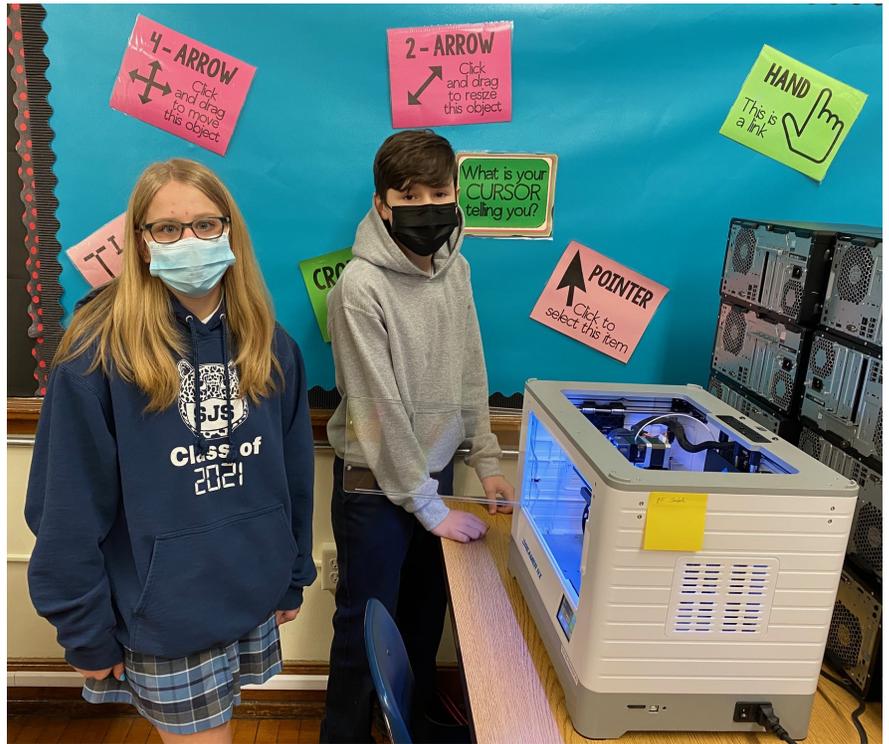
The recent acquisition of *Flashforge Dreamer 3-D Printers* is making a marked impact on the school's technology program. Using the prize money acquired from the jr. high's impressive second place win at last year's Future City's competition, technology teacher Mrs. Pat Misso was able to purchase two of these sophisticated devices & related supplies and immediately incorporated them into her program.

"3-D printers allow students to take an idea and turn it into reality," explains Misso. "Our 3rd grade students are being introduced to 3-D drawing concepts and our 4th to 8th grade students are totally immersed in the technology—they're actually designing and creating objects using 3-D printers."

3-D printing is a process that creates a three-dimensional object by applying a plastic-like material in successive layers using computer coding. Students create a digital model of their idea using a computer that is then transferred to the 3-D printer, similar to how printers print documents. However, instead of printing ink on paper, the 3-D printer contains polymers (plastics) & binders that constructs the actual object, building it layer by layer.

"I'm sure I'm raising the school's electric bill," jests Misso, "but it's exciting to see ideas become actual objects. Larger, more complicated builds can take two to four hours to complete, so there are days where I could only print out two to three items." Students were given creative license with their design concepts that yielded some diverse objects—from desk signs and cell phone holders to spaceships and castles...and even a church! Every student in grades 4 to 8 have designed, programmed, and printed at least one project each this year. The cost to print each currently designed item is a bit more than \$1, which adds up—and, larger projects requiring more filament also increases the overall expense.

Beyond technology class, Misso encourages classroom teachers to partner with her to bring other projects into the computer lab. For example, students studying canopic jars of ancient Egypt or modelling viral structures in Science class can create 3-D renditions using these printers. And regardless of the specific subject, both art and technology are automatically immersed into students' learning.



Eighth graders Isabelle Metzger and Caiden Voisinnet work with 3-D printers.

In addition to 3-D printers being a novel technology, Misso cites specific benefits for students. "These machines are readily found in workplaces today; this hands-on experience using them is invaluable!" Architecture, medicine, construction, and manufacturing are just some of the professions that utilize 3-D printing and coding technology daily. "Having students work through the entire process—from design and coding to the actual production—creates inventors and designers. Students are seeing their concepts come to fruition! It's hand-on learning at its best that engages all students, even reluctant learners. They're learning to use the tools required to solve real-world problems!"

Misso's 'big-picture plan' is to acquire additional 3-D printers, as well as a laser cutter/engraver machine, as soon as the funding allows. "I would love to add 3-D printers in our Maker-Space room—and possibly having 'floating' ones on carts that can roam the jr. high and primary/intermediate hallways. "I'm so proud of our students' success at the *Future City* competition, which allowed us to acquire this equipment. And, I'm eager to find creative ways to fund our future projects, too!"

REMEMBER WHEN...



We invite you to send your 'throwback photos' from St. John's past to share on social media.



For more information, contact Michelle Salemi at (716) 877-6401 or msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com.

Send in your photos today!

Trustees: A wide range of expertise and talents further school's mission

Continued from Page 1

remainder of the group.

Members are appointed by Father Parker and serve a three-year, staggered term. They bring their professional expertise from a myriad of backgrounds—including finance, law, administration, information technology, health services, and education—and work collectively to ensure the school remains a viable, premier entity.

“Our primary function is to offer perspectives and insights based on our own professional experiences,” states Roseann Cook, a life-long parishioner, alum, and school parent. “The wide-ranging backgrounds and skills-sets of the board creates a forum to discuss the school’s long-range, ‘big-picture’ plans.”

Trustees actively supported the school as it prepared to reopen this past September after nearly six months of remote learning due to the pandemic. “Some of our members joined a round-table, parent panel in August to review the protocols and plans for safely opening the school,” explains Cook. “We were truly impressed with the partnering, planning, and communication among the administrators, faculty, and parents in bringing the students back on campus. Whether we’re meeting around a conference table as we did in years past or participating in virtual ‘ZOOM’ meetings this past year, I am so very proud to be part of a team who are passionate to ensure St. John’s success for years to come!”

Celebrating Earth Day



Pictured: Upper center (left to right): Grace Chmura, Cameron Neal and Gwyneth Budin; lower left: Elliott Shick; lower right: Evelyn Halt.

Pre-K students celebrated Earth Day by crafting the planet Earth with recycled supplies. “The hands symbolize how delicate our planet is and the care we need to have when handling it,” explains PreK-4 teacher Mrs. Sam Testa, “and the heart represents our love for the Earth and the warmth we feel when we’re at home.” Even at this young age, students are learning about Citizenship and Science—all while becoming stewards of God’s creation!

This past April marked the 52nd year of Earth Day with over 193 countries world-wide participating to draw attention to the importance of caring for the Earth.



90TH
ANNIVERSARY
St. John the Baptist School
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**Our most sincere
thanks for your
support.**

**ANNUAL APPEAL
2021**

For more information, visit our website at www.stjohnskenmore.com.

Recognizing the influence of ancient cultures



Pictured above and below: Sixth graders observe the church’s exterior and interior architecture to compare and contrast with Ancient Greek styling.

Sixth grade students have studied past civilizations throughout this year from the Stone Age through the Middle Ages. Their recent unit exploring Ancient Greek included an exploration of the unique architecture, including the various styles of columns used on the Parthenon, the Acropolis, and numerous temples honoring Greek gods. Sixth graders took a walking tour to explore the campus grounds for examples of the architecture including Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns. Students identified several examples at the church and witnessed firsthand the influence of the ancient Greek styling right here at St. John’s!

“This is a great example of how we’re applying the STREAM approach to learning,” explains 6th grade teacher, Mrs. Tracey Rambharose. “STREAM incorporates science, technology, engineering, and math, as well as religion and the arts, into learning. As they study ancient history, students are accessing other disciplines into their learning, including technology for research and arts & engineering to decipher architectural elements. It’s this multi-faceted integration of learning that prepares our students for the rigors they will face in high school and beyond!”



FEAST OF ST. BLAISE



The Feast of St. Blaise was celebrated on his feast day in February. Pastor Michael Parker traveled to each classroom to bless the throats of students and faculty throughout the entire school. He held two crossed candles while leading the children in prayer. St. Blaise is a fourth-century bishop and martyr who is credited with saving the life of a boy who was choking on a fish bone. Today, we pray for his intercession in healing us from maladies of the throat and all other illness.

LENTEN JOURNEY



The Living Stations of the Cross was presented by 8th grade students in a creative format this year. Each year over the past several decades, the soon-to-be alums recreate the passion of Christ during a prayer service at the Church. This year, the students—along with Pastor Michael Parker—pre-recorded the special Lenten tradition, under the direction and guidance of their religion teachers, Mrs. Jill Parrino and Mrs. Katelyn Salerno. Though unable to gather in the Church due to COVID restrictions, the entire school did view the video in their classrooms simultaneously in order to join together as one “virtually” in prayer.

CONGRATULATIONS MARY!



Congratulations to alum Mary Short '17 who has been named Salutatorian for the Class of 2021 at Mt. St. Mary's Academy. She has achieved an average of 99.37% since her freshman year in addition to being involved in a myriad of extra-curricular and volunteer activities. Short will attend the University of Rochester to study computer science and she's already earned 24 credits of college coursework. We are so very proud of you, Mary!

MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED



The Neil M. Thomson '57 Memorial Scholarship was recently awarded to 6th grader Michael Christopher. Pastor Michael Parker and Principal Jenny Bainbridge presented the award during a special Mass to kick-off Catholic Schools Week to this year's recipient. Established in 2018, the scholarship was created by alum Gail (Thomson) Zorn '51 and her husband, Donald, to honor her brother's memory. The family firmly believe a St. John's Catholic education lays the foundation for future success by instilling a love of learning at a very early age. The \$3,000 scholarship has been awarded each year to a sixth grader with half of the funds being used in both 7th and 8th grades to defer tuition costs. Michael was selected this year by the Scholarship Committee for being a student who puts forth tremendous daily effort and exhibits a strong work ethic.

Honor Society installation



Pictured above and below: Pastor Michael Parker and Principal Jenny Bainbridge welcome the newest members into the Honor Society of St. John Neumann during the recent installation ceremony.

The Honor Society of St. John Neumann welcomed its newest inductees during a recent ceremony at church. Established in 2016, thirty-three 6th, 7th, and 8th graders were recognized this year for excellence in leadership, service, citizenship, and character—while maintaining an overall G.P.A. average of at least 93.5. A rigorous application and teacher recommendation process screens candidates to determine acceptance into St. John's most prestigious organization for students.

Faculty Moderator Mrs. Tracy Breinlinger explains the Honor Society was established to not only acknowledge exemplary students, but also to

honor the parish's founder, St. John Neumann. "He's considered the 'father' of Catholic education in the U.S.," says Breinlinger. "As Bishop of the Philadelphia Diocese, Neumann expanded the number of Catholic schools from a mere handful to over a hundred! However, before *that* he founded St. John's—right here in Kenmore. We wanted to honor this legacy by recognizing students who excel in the ideals that he cherished. His core values of strong academics & character coupled with faith are readily evident among our students today. I'm so very proud of them!"



A Message from our Principal Mrs. Jenny Bainbridge



As the 2020-2021 school year draws to a close, I can't help but say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the blessings that this school year has brought. Although it was filled with more challenges that we could have ever anticipated, it is wonderful to look back and reflect upon the fact that we, here at St. John's, have been holding school in-person for this entire school year. Aside from a small pause back around Thanksgiving when the Western New York area was transitioned to an Orange Micro-cluster Zone, we have not had to

transition to school-wide distance learning once this school year; and that is a true blessing.

Yes, this is a school year that has been full of unforeseen challenges, but time and again, the students, faculty, and staff have shown faith, dedication, and perseverance beyond anything that I could have imagined. We have all worked together to make school a safe and fun place to be. This fortitude is a hallmark of what it means to be a member of our St. John's community.

The current students, faculty, and staff are continuing to carry on a

great legacy; one that has lasted for 90 years. As we approach our 90th Anniversary celebration, I am sure that the first principal of St. John's, Sister Caroline Ernwein, would be proud. Though much has changed over the past 90 years, and even changed so much just since last school year, the foundation of what we do here at St. John's has remained the same. We educate children to be prepared for their future and to enter the world as a steward for Christ.



Save the Date

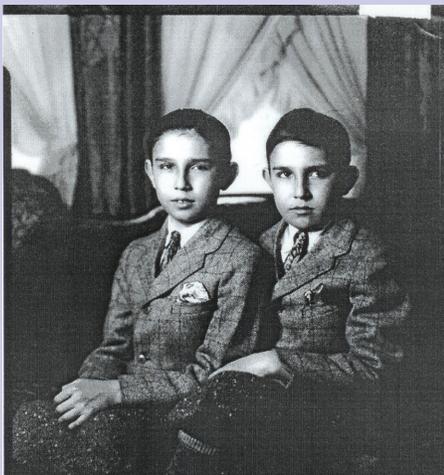
OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

Saturday, September 18, 2021
(Golf Outing on Friday, September 17, 2021)

Details Coming Soon!

**Mass ♦ Golf Outing ♦ Campus Tours
Gala & Auction**

FIRST GRADUATING CLASS



Joe and John Hammel became the first alums of St. John the Baptist School. In 1931, the brothers solely comprised the inaugural 8th grade class—graduating the following June.

Their great-great-nieces, Emma and Kelsey Hammel, continued the family's tradition—graduating from SJS in 2016 and 2018, respectively.

St. John the Baptist School Alumni

We want to hear from you!

Update your contact information today:

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

LIKE us on Facebook for the latest alumni news & school happenings!

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-John-the-Baptist-School-Alumni-Kenmore-NY/101552446556655?ref=hl>

Michelle Salemi, Director of Advancement
1085 Englewood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14223
Phone: 716-877-6401
msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com



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