

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School

The Mustang Connection

Alumni and Friends Newsletter

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School
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Ship Trip - A Student's Experience

Ship Trip is an educational field trip that the St. Francis of Assisi School seventh-grade students go on every year to Northern Michigan. This year, it was from Tuesday, September 14, through Thursday, September 16. The three-day adventure included main stops along the way in Gaylord, Traverse City, Leelanau, and Empire.

Highlights of the trip included Hartwick Pines and Pyramid Point on day one, the Ropes Course and the Ship on day two, and Sleeping Bear Dunes on day three. It was a great trip and an incredible experience. The 'schoolship,' a schooner built to replicate schooners of the 1800s, is basically the whole point of this expedition on Lake Michigan.

On this boat we sampled and tested water, poked and prodded zebra mussels and minnows, learned how to steer the ship, and talked about how we can protect and preserve the Great Lakes. For me, the most spiritual and memorable experience was the hike up to Pyramid Point. Something about it made it not so very easy to forget. That is the way this whole experience was for a lot of people.

By Claire Vogel, Grade 7

Philosophy and Mission Statement

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is a family-oriented mission of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish community where each student is valued, respected and nurtured as a unique creation of God. We challenge our students spiritually, academically and physically to learn, care and lead as they work to discover the plan that God intends for them. As followers of Christ, we strive always to instill in our students the words of St. Francis of Assisi ... "Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words."



Seventh graders out on the Inland Seas educational ship.

Did You Know? Each year, Ship Trip is partially funded through either School Appeal or Car Raffle proceeds!

The Pastor's Perspective



The season of autumn is upon us. Here in Michigan, we are surrounded by colorful scenery, which helps us reflect on the beauty in our lives. This season is also one of harvest and abundance, when we reap what we have sown.

Now, after months of summertime preparation, the faculty and staff at St. Francis of Assisi School are educating hundreds of children for the future. Each and every day they work through their vocation to positively influence our students and inspire their minds, their consciences, and their hearts and souls. In a society that is intertwined with “isms” - individualism, hedonism, minimalism and consumerism, we are all challenged to sow seeds of our Catholic philosophy in our young people. That is integral to the teachings at St. Francis of Assisi School.

Our doors are open at St. Francis of Assisi School and the 2010-2011 school year is actively underway. We welcome every child and family that desires a Catholic education and we are grateful to our loyal and generous friends who help us provide that priceless gift to so many. The faith formation and academic experiences we provide are valuable seeds that can last a person a life time. That is our purpose ... that is our prayer.

Take time to celebrate this bountiful season as well as special moments in every day. May you and your family be blessed with God's love and grace.

Most Sincerely,

Fr. Jim McDougall
Pastor

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty Father, you are lavish in bestowing all your gifts, and we give you thanks for the favors you have given to us. In your goodness you have favored us and kept us safe in the past. We ask that you continue to protect us and to shelter us in the shadow of your wings. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Principal's Pen



Our school year is off to an excellent start with 420 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade and an additional 28 pre-K students. We are grateful that we are able to keep our enrollment steady amidst the struggles that many schools are experiencing due to the economy.

“How is St. Francis of Assisi School able to maintain enrollment?” This was one of the many questions the Accreditation Visiting Team asked us when they spent two full days observing, interviewing and verifying our documentation on October 6th and 7th. The re-Accreditation, by the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, takes place every seven years; however, the process of writing the self-study begins a year earlier. The faculty and staff spent hundreds of hours working on the self-study consisting of 12 different standards, plus 13 different curriculum areas. It has been a powerful and enriching process as we worked to accurately portray the many strengths of our school and also the areas we need to focus our attention on to improve.

The presentation of the report was read on October 7th, and we were extremely pleased with the results. The Accreditation Team made special mention of the strong sense of our Catholic faith present throughout the curriculum and also noted how the students and teachers work together. We were commended for our level of collaboration and the use of Professional Learning Communities. We received especially positive comments about our student services with traveling folders and the development of the Achievement Team model for working with students with varying learning needs in a Catholic school. School Climate was mentioned for being Christ-centered and for integrating our faith throughout areas of the curriculum.

We are looking forward to receiving our written report in a few months. All in all, it was an incredibly inspiring experience for each of us as we continue our journey towards improvement.

In the Peace of Christ,

Ms. Sara Collins
Principal

Preschool at a Glance

St. Francis of Assisi School's full-day preschool is now in its fourth year! This classroom serves 28 students who are four years old. Strong Catholic values are at the base of everything this classroom does to help these children grow to be kind and caring people.

The preschool classroom has a theme-based program that focuses on the religion curriculum **God Made the World**. Each week the classroom explores an aspect of the world that God has created. From family and friends to the seasons of the year to dinosaurs, this classroom is an active place with a lot of hands-on learning!

In addition to the weekly thematic program, preschool students go to weekly art, music, physical education, library and Spanish classes.

Three wonderful staff members work full time in this classroom. Lead Teacher Mrs. Patricia Strassburg is joined by Teacher Mrs. Emily Vigo and Preschool Aide Mrs. Lisa Bozzi.

Mrs. Emily (Carr) Vigo is a proud alumna of St. Francis of Assisi School. Following in mom's footsteps, all three of Mrs. Vigo's daughters are enrolled in St. Francis of Assisi School.



Mrs. Vigo helps a student create a masterpiece.

Golfers Swing into Action

The need for tuition assistance at St. Francis of Assisi School is ever present; this year, 22 families have been awarded financial help totaling \$66,150. Those figures will likely increase. The 1st Annual Tuition Assistance Golf Outing on September 21, at the Polo Fields Golf & Country Clubs, raised funds to help meet this important need. Ten foursomes took part in the enjoyable day!

Golfers Swing into Action

(continued)



Chairman Ed Walsh (on left) in his foursome.

7:00 a.m. A hint of orange is seen in the distant sky. The sun is rising and the hum of golf carts is easily heard. For weeks, prayers have been said for fair weather today.

7:15 a.m. The first early bird volunteer arrives with a smile. Set-up begins and excitement brews!

8:00 a.m. Golfers enter the club house and start checking in. Continental breakfast is served; range balls are hit and friendly skins games arranged.

9:30 a.m. The sun is beaming and the sky is blue; golfers are ready for play to begin. Seated on carts, the participants are given an explanation of the game rules. Then, one by one, they drive away.

1:30 p.m. The first foursome finishes; nine others will soon follow. Scores are tabulated and anticipation for game winners looms in the air. The temperature soars to nearly 90 degrees.

2:00 p.m. Grilling begins and lunch is served. Prizes are awarded and stories are shared. A celebratory ambience is everywhere.

4:00 p.m. The day winds down leaving lots of fun memories. Everyone has time now to practice swings and putts and recruit foursomes for next year!

St. Francis of Assisi School is sincerely grateful to Chairman Ed Walsh as well as Doug DeFord and Dave Schroeter for their leadership with this special event. Thanks, too, to Patrice Deutschmann, John and Theresa Ewald, Julie Fantone, Doris Filisko, Kristy Huige, Steve Lavender, Cathy Nichols, Paul Ward, and Rick Worcheck for volunteering on game day. Because of the participation and support of so many people, the 1st Annual Tuition Assistance Golf Outing raised nearly \$7,000 in projected net proceeds.

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Save the Date - ETF Benefit

The 10th Annual St. Francis of Assisi School Educational Trust Fund Benefit has been set for **Saturday, March 5, 2011!** This year's theme is "Mardi Gras" and the event promises to be as fun as ever. It may also help you beat any mid-winter blahs! Plan now to join family and friends at the Four Points Sheraton in Ann Arbor for an exciting evening on behalf of Catholic education.

Kristin and Sergio Scarcella and Jane and Mark Vogel will co-chair the event. Watch for more information on it soon. In the meantime, please save the date! Let us all celebrate Mardi Gras together next year on **Saturday, March 5, 2011.**



Upcoming Events

- November 24 No School
- November 25 Thanksgiving
- November 26 No School
- December 8 9:15 a.m. All School Mass
(*Feast of the Immaculate Conception*)
- December 14 Christmas Program
- December 16 Advent Communal Penance
- December 20 Christmas Break Begins
- December 25 Christmas
- December 26 Middle School Choir Leaves for Rome
- January 1 Happy New Year!
- January 3 Back to School

