

The Mustang Connection

Alumni and Friends Newsletter

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School
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Spring 2011

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God Bless America

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."

Teacher Retirements

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School has been blessed by many wonderful teachers who have made a lasting, positive impact on the lives of our students through their years of service to our school and community. Four will retire in June. Here are some reflections from: **Mrs. Joan (Zaleski) Minerath** (Kindergarten - 22 years), **Mrs. Laurie Ruselowski** (Media Center - 14 years), **Mr. Mike Powers** (Science - 28 years) and **Mrs. Kathy Green** (Physical Education - 39 years). God bless these retiring teachers!

Describe your most memorable teaching experience while at St. Francis.

Mrs. Minerath: "Every Spring since I started teaching I have watched my students observe the life cycle of the butterfly. The caterpillars arrive and we watch them harden into iridescent chrysalis. The children watch the butterflies emerge right in our classroom, and then we release them outdoors. They get so excited, and I love to hear their delightful squeals and see the wonder in their eyes as the butterflies fly away!"

Mrs. Ruselowski: "That is too difficult to answer. I have had many wonderful teaching experiences with both students and staff here at St. Francis."

Mr. Powers: "After 28 years at St. Francis, I hope you can understand why now, years later, I'm unable to describe my **most** memorable teaching experience. It's the wonderful people that work here, the hard working students and the connection with the parish church that makes this place so special."

Mrs. Green: "I have had many 'ah ha' moments at St. Francis and they all center on the privilege of teaching a new skill to someone, or encouraging someone to do or try something new, and seeing the smile and confidence that follows that."

How has teaching at St. Francis affected your spiritual life?

Mrs. Minerath: "Teaching young children about God and watching them begin to understand how much God loves them is a wonderful thing. The kindergarten students learn to say several prayers, and they learn how important it is to help others less fortunate than us. Their enthusiasm inspires me to try to be a better person."

Mrs. Ruselowski: "Being a role model for all the students has strengthened my faith. I love children and teaching has given me the outlet to demonstrate how much I have enjoyed each and every student at this school. I have become a better person by experiencing the outpouring of love and support by our parents and coworkers."

Mr. Powers: "I was fortunate to be able to put my four children through St. Francis with the help of a lot of nice people. When I interact with them now, we have a solid base of faith-filled experiences. It has been wonderful to bring God into the study of Science and we do this at St. Francis."

Mrs. Green: "I have experienced God's grace through the wonderful circle of giving and receiving kindnesses from everyone at St. Francis."

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The Pastor's Perspective



Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Let us rejoice in the many blessings of the Easter season and give thanks for this time of renewal and growth. May the miracle of Jesus' resurrection and His promise of everlasting life nourish your soul in the days ahead.

The 2010-2011 academic year at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is near completion. Once again, through the dedicated work of our faculty and staff and the thoughtful support of friends like you, hundreds of children received a quality, faith-filled education. In a few weeks, they will leave our school to enjoy carefree summer days, and several of our teachers will retire too. I wish them all, the best.

A very important initiative started this year to help build our school's endowment fund - the **Educational Trust Fund Leadership Circle**. In addition to the annual Educational Trust Fund (ETF) Benefit, this new program will help ensure the consistent growth of the Trust Fund over time. The Educational Trust Fund Leadership Circle is comprised of individuals who commit a minimum of \$1,000 annually to the Trust Fund, for 5 years.

To date, 27 families have joined the 2011 ETF Leadership Circle and committed a total of \$195,000 to the Trust Fund over the next 5 years. This is a tremendous beginning and we will continue to expand the Leadership Circle in the years to come. If you are interested in learning more about supporting St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School by participating in the Leadership Circle, please call the Development Office at 734.821.2208.

Building the corpus of the Educational Trust Fund ensures that the future flow of interest income produced by the Fund will be awarded to the school for its budget to help keep tuition reasonable for families. This year, the award totaled \$52,000, and, as of April 30, 2011, the balance of the Trust Fund totaled \$1,213,167.

I encourage you to give back to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School by keeping us in your prayers and on your contribution list. Our school can continue to thrive when we all work together.

Most Sincerely,

Fr. Jim McDougall
Pastor

From the Principal's Pen



In January 2011, we received our copy of our Validation Visit Report from the *Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools Re-Accreditation* that took place in early October 2010. The report is made up of eleven different areas of study. Here is Part 1 of the summary of that report. Look for Part 2 in the Summer issue of The Mustang Connection newsletter.

STANDARD I: PHILOSOPHY / MISSION STATEMENT

OVERVIEW: St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School has a strong sense of its Catholic identity. The school's educational environment is inseparable from the school's Christian atmosphere. The school benefits from a clearly articulated philosophy, which urges the faculty to challenge the students spiritually, academically and physically to learn, care and lead as the students work to discover the plan that God intends for them.

Comments: The rewrite of our Philosophy / Mission statement was a year-long project completed by the School Improvement Committee in 2007-2008. Thank you to all the committee members that year - Charlotte Decker, Renee Baude, Stephanie MacGillivray, Richelle Babcock, Sue Maguire, Marybeth Worcheck, Rebecca Cornell, Susan Kaniut and staff, Mrs. Shurmur, Ms. Fantone and Mrs. Hendricks. We presented the draft to the faculty and staff, Fr. Jim and the Parish Pastoral Council, and small revisions were made along the way to the final statement.

STANDARD II: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

OVERVIEW: The administration and staff at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School give high priority to establishing and maintaining positive relationships with its various publics. They have worked hard to maintain good communication with all groups mentioned in this standard.

Comments: The team also mentioned how, "*The addition of our Assistant Principal has helped to make the school a more cohesive staff.*"

STANDARD III: SCHOOL CLIMATE

OVERVIEW: The school reflects the philosophy and mission statement. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School appears to foster a pattern of interpersonal relationships among the staff and student body.

Comments: Additional strengths noted are as follows: "*It is obvious that the staff works to foster a Christ centered culture. This was evidenced by student art work on display, themed posters, classroom prayer areas and watching staff interact with students.*"

We are blessed to have a cohesive family making St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School such a remarkable place to grow and learn.

Ms. Sara Collins
Principal

Teacher Retirements

(Cont. from Page 1)

What are your plans upon retirement?

Mrs. Minerath: "There are many projects at home that I have not had time to finish, so I will do that first. I also plan to volunteer in the community, work in my garden, read, and best of all spend more time with my grandson."



Mrs. Ruselowski: "Relaxing and volunteering in the community as well as visiting and spending more time with my children."

Mr. Powers: "I have several irons in the fire and I'm really just waiting until the summer to decide. I'm sure it's going to be something where I'll be interacting with people."

Mrs. Green: "I am looking forward to more travel opportunities to visit out of state children in California and Texas."



Car Raffle Milestone

The Development Office is pleased to announce that this year's Car Raffle has seen ticket sales to date that have resulted in a cumulative \$1,000,000 raised over a total of 15 years and car raffles -- all of which has directly benefited St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School. This extraordinary achievement is the result of the great efforts of a full generation of school families, whose dedication and hard work has made this result a reality. It has been possible due to the vision and generous contributions of Ken Butman and Gene Butman Ford of Ypsilanti.

Ken and Laurie Butman's family has been a part of St. Francis of Assisi Parish for many decades, and their children attended our school. As a Ford dealer for over 50 years, the Butmans were able to find a unique way to support our school, by underwriting the Grand Prize of a Car Raffle. Ranging over the course of years from a Taurus, to a Thunderbird, to a Mustang, to this year's lease on a 2012 Focus, our school and raffle have benefited from a variety of keystone prizes. The Butman family's leadership has made possible many improvements to our school and its operation, and the staff, teachers, students and friends of our school are grateful to them for their amazing commitment to our students and families.

The 15th annual Car Raffle is still on! Though the \$1,000,000 mark represents a great milestone, there is still much work to do for our school. Our goal this year is to raise \$70,000 to purchase new science textbooks for all grades, as well as renovate the fourth- and fifth-grade hallway bathrooms. **This year's drawing will be held on June 3, at the Ice Cream Social**, and tickets are still available. E-mail Development Director Colleen Pierce at cpierce@stfrancisa2.org or call 734.821.2208 to get your tickets and participate in this year's milestone effort!

Farewell Graduating Families

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School bids a fond farewell to the 28 families listed below. (Their names are listed with their total number of years at our school.) With the graduation of their last eighth-grade student on June 6th, they will be leaving the halls of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School to explore the world. These families have experienced years of all-school Masses and assemblies, sacraments and holy days, report cards and teacher conferences, field trips and sporting events, concerts, plays and programs, and fairs and festivals. God has blessed our community with their faith and service, and we are grateful for the countless gifts they have shared throughout the years.

Arreola Family (7 years)

Blaha Family (6 years)

Blower Family (11 years)

Bourdeau Family (17 years)

Cadavieco Family (12 years)

Chavez Family (4 years)

Dalian Family (14 years)

Diedrich Family (11 years)

Dirksen Family (11 years)

Downer Family (12 years)

Dunlap Family (4 years)

Erkkinen Family (11 years)

Gallagher Family (9 years)

Hoban Family (11 years)

Libs Family (16 years)

Loftus Family (10 years)

Magagna Family (16 years)

Maninga Family (13 years)

Nearing Family (11 years)

Nunez Family (10 years)

O'Sullivan Family (14 years)

Palazzolo Family (8 years)

Pollock Family (12 years)

Quinlan Family (5 years)

Sarosi Family (11 years)

Trouba Family (13 years)

Waldecker Family (7 years)

Worcheck Family (9 years)

An Old Irish Blessing

May love and laughter light your days,
And warm your heart and home.

May good and faithful friends be yours,
Wherever you may roam.

May peace and plenty bless your world
With joy that long endures.

May all life's passing seasons
Bring the best to you and yours!



Accomplishments

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School is proud to share the accomplishments of some of its alumni:

- Michigan Promise Scholarship Recipient
- Michigan Competitive Scholarship Recipient
- Hope College Alumni Honors Recipient
- Central Michigan University Board of Trustees Elite Award Recipient
- Naval Academy Graduate

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
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Help Needed

Do you believe in supporting Catholic education? Do you enjoy building friendships and fund raising? If so, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School needs you! Our school is blessed with a team of dedicated, volunteer leaders who serve on our Development Council, but more help is needed for us to successfully accomplish our important work on behalf of our students and families. The Development Council meets in the evening once per month throughout the year, to build friendships and raise funds for St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School.

Please contact Colleen Pierce, Director of Stewardship & Development at cpierce@stfrancisa2.org or at 734.821.2208 if you are interested in learning more about this opportunity.

“Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words.”

~ St. Francis of Assisi ~

Upcoming Events



- May 30:** Memorial Day
- June 1:** Eighth-grade Last School Day
- June 2:** Eighth-grade Cedar Point Trip
- June 3:** Car Raffle & Ice Cream Social
(Drawing @ 8:00 p.m.)
- June 6:** Eighth-grade Graduation
(St. Francis Church @ 6 p.m.)
- June 10:** Last Day of School
- July 4:** Independence Day
- September 5:** Labor Day
- September 7:** First Full Day of School
- September 14-16:** Seventh-grade Ship Trip
- September 23:** Tuition Assistance Golf Outing
(Polo Fields Golf & Country Clubs)
- October 21:** Grandparents' Day



Plan now to join the fun during the 2nd annual St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School **Tuition Assistance Golf Outing** at the Polo Fields Golf and Country Clubs on **Friday, September 23, 2011**. This year, St. Francis of Assisi School awarded \$73,600 in tuition assistance to families in need. The golf outing raises money to support the continued enrollment of families in our school who have been impacted by job losses or other changes in these challenging economic times. The outing will include 18 holes of golf with a cart, drink tickets, a hot dog with condiments and lunch off the grill with an open bar, all for \$125 per player. If you are interested in participating, contact Doug DeFord, Chairman, at 734.646.7957 or Colleen Pierce, Director of Stewardship & Development at cpierce@stfrancisa2.org or at 734.821.2208.