

THE CATHOLIC ACCENT



SPECIAL EDITION

The Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Greensburg

2026



Dr. Nancy A. Rottler

Superintendent Message

Catholic schools across the Diocese of Greensburg are growing a future of faith, excellence and leadership. This statement captures the spirit alive in each of our 12 schools as we prepare to celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2026, Jan. 25-31, throughout the Diocese.

As Superintendent of Catholic Schools, I know this is more than a slogan — it is our commitment to the families who sacrifice to provide the gift of a Catholic education. Through that sacrifice, students are formed academically, spiritually and morally as future leaders and disciples of Christ.

Catholic Schools Week offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made over the past year. One of our most significant areas of growth has been in faith formation. The Office of Catholic Schools and the Office of Faith, Family and Discipleship — under the leadership of Managing Director Vincent Reilly — have worked collaboratively to strengthen Catholic identity across our schools. Starting last fall, twice a year, teachers and

principals participate in a Diocesan in-service day that includes theological formation and catechist certification. This important initiative equips our faculty and staff to more effectively partner in forming students in faith and deepening their understanding of what it means to live as disciples of Christ.

We have also seen notable improvements across all areas of our educational mission, as reflected in our annual Catholic Schools Survey. Each year, parents and guardians provide invaluable feedback, and the results this year are especially encouraging. Parent satisfaction with our religious education programs increased from 88% to an outstanding 92%. Additionally, 80% of parents reported that their school principals inspire and lead their communities toward educational excellence — up from 76% the previous year.

Another significant improvement measured through the survey is parent engagement and community connection. Parent involvement has increased markedly, with 83% of parents reporting that they are involved or very involved in their school communities, up from 70% last year. This 13-point increase reflects the welcoming and supportive environments cultivated within our schools and demonstrates the strong partnership between our families, faculty and administrators.

Our commitment to academic excellence continues to bear fruit. Diocese of Greensburg eighth-grade students demonstrated projected proficiency rates that exceed their

public-school peers by 18% in reading and 17% in math, based on STAR State Proficiency Rate estimates. These outcomes reflect the dedication of our teachers and the strong academic foundation provided in our classrooms.

As we form students to become leaders of tomorrow, we are proud of our partnership with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg to develop a leadership camp for student leaders from all 12 schools. Last year, these students gathered for a day of collaboration and activities designed to strengthen leadership skills and reinforce values that will guide them beyond our schools. We have also established strong partnerships with local colleges and universities, including Seton Hill University and Saint Vincent College, to provide additional programming and support for our students.

We recognize that choosing a Catholic education often requires financial sacrifice. We do not believe any family should be prevented from accessing Catholic education due to financial circumstances. Therefore, we are deeply grateful to our generous donors, especially the anonymous benefactor of the Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership (TOPS). This year, more than 600 students received tuition assistance through the TOPS scholarship program.

We are equally thankful to those who redirect their Pennsylvania state taxes to support Catholic education through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. This past year,

more than \$3 million was donated through EITC, providing scholarships to over 1,200 students. Looking ahead, the future is even more promising. In 2027, new federal tax credit programs will begin, creating additional opportunities to support Catholic education.

Ensuring the financial vitality of our schools remains a top priority. Last year, we successfully accessed funding through the Economically Disadvantaged Schools (EDS) Program and continue to receive safety grants through the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). We remain committed to identifying and pursuing new funding streams to sustain and strengthen our schools. Those interested in supporting Catholic education through the EITC or TOPS programs are encouraged to contact:

William Barnes

wbarnes@DioceseofGreensburg.org
724-552-2589

To the parents, grandparents and guardians who choose Catholic education for the students in your lives — please know you have my heartfelt gratitude. Our administrators, faculty and staff bring exceptional dedication and unique gifts to their work each day, and I am immensely proud of their service. Most of all, thank you to our families for your steadfast support of Catholic education in the Diocese of Greensburg. Your commitment ensures a future rooted in faith, excellence and leadership.

Mission: Faith is a gift. Our mission is to share it.

Vision: Create a more connected, accessible Catholic Church, inspire a deep spiritual connection, mobilize clergy as change agents and strengthen faith formation and evangelization.

Follow us on X: @CatholicAccent

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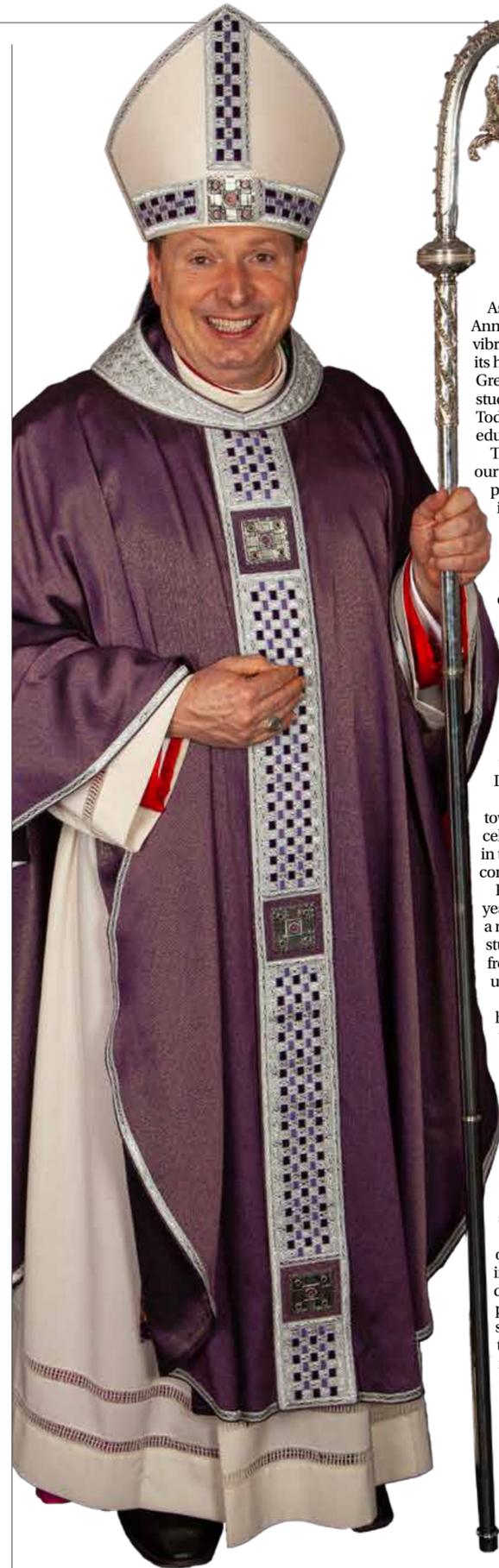
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Message from Bishop Kulick

As we celebrate the Diocese of Greensburg's 75th Diamond Anniversary this year, one of the pillars of success has been our vibrancy of our Catholic Schools. Looking back on our history, its hard to imagine that in the early years of the Diocese of Greensburg, our Catholic Schools served more than 16,000 students across 58 Diocesan elementary and secondary schools. Today, we have 10 elementary and two secondary schools educating over 2400 students.

Things were different then. When our diocese was formed, our Catholic schools were connected to a parish. Many of those parishes were formed as a rich ethnic hub that served an immigrant community. Students were the children of those who worked hard in our steel mills, coal mines, glass plants and metal factories to name a few. In most cases, classes were taught by sisters who represented a variety of religious orders. Along with spiritual and moral formation, Catholic education taught students social justice and formed the next generation of Christ's disciples, while also academically preparing them for their careers.

As we all know, time moved forward. Factories closed or relocated to other parts of the country and with them, the many families who called our four counties home. The sisters who sacrificed and taught our students were older and were fewer to take their place. Schools were reconfigured in light of demographic changes to enable us to continue our tradition of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Greensburg.

But as we have concluded our year of Hope and now move towards a year of celebration of our 75th Anniversary, I want to celebrate the resiliency and the temerity of our Catholic Schools in the Diocese. They have stood the test of time and are ready to continue to embrace the future.

First and foremost, our mission has remained the same for 75 years. We are forming disciples of Christ. We do that through a robust faith formation in and outside the classroom. Our students know and understand that Christ is leading from the front of the classroom in all of the things that they learn or undertake. That has not and will never change.

We are forming the leaders of tomorrow. They are learning how to be active in their communities, and to set goals for their careers. That has not and will never change.

We are also providing an environment where students, from Pre-k to 12th grade, learn to be a role model, particularly when it comes to imitating the mercy and compassion of Christ.

That has not and will never change.

Who would have thought 75 years ago, our Catholic schools would be providing students with curriculum and tools that includes eSports, promethean boards, iPads and hydroponic gardening? That's how far we have come in staying on the forefront of technology and opportunities.

I am very proud of our Catholic Schools and their 75 years of growing a future of faith, excellence and leadership. I am incredibly proud of each of our schools and the hard work and dedication that our administrators, teachers, faculty and staff provide to students. I am also respectful and grateful for the sacrifices made by families, parishes and Clergy who make this journey of a Catholic education possible. Your support is making a difference in our homes, our communities and in our world.

Yes, as the Church has done throughout time we adapt to changing needs and circumstances, but our mission remains the same. Thank you for being a part of that mission at this time and moment in our history.

May God Bless you,

The Most Reverend Larry J. Kulick, J.C.L.
Bishop of Greensburg

Robert Baum Headed to Catholic Schools



GREENSBURG - The Office of Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Greensburg has announced the appointment of Mr. Robert Baum as Director of Student Services for the 12 schools in the Diocese.

Mr. Baum, who served as Director of Counseling Services at Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Greensburg since 2023, brings over 23 years of experience in Catholic higher education, with a strong background in student development, mental health, education, and restorative practices-expertise that translates seamlessly into the K-12 Catholic school setting.

"Robert launched a comprehensive School Counseling Program that now serves the entire Diocesan community during his time with Catholic Charities," said Dr. Nancy Rottler, Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

"His leadership also helped establish the inaugural Diocese of Greensburg Leadership Camp in 2025, a groundbreaking initiative that brought together 40 students from all 12 Catholic schools of the

Diocese of Greensburg to explore leadership through the lens of faith, personal values, communication, conflict resolution, and character development," she added.

As a licensed professional, Mr. Baum's graduate work in social work and public administration and his tenure as the Dean of Students at Saint Vincent College, combined with his strategic leadership, deep understanding of Catholic values and commitment to student well-being, position him to effectively lead initiatives to support our Catholic schools.

"Robert's dedication to Catholic education and his extensive experience in strategic policy development, behavioral health, and student support services make him exceptionally well-suited to advance the mission of the Diocese of Greensburg's Catholic schools.

We are confident that his leadership will continue to enrich our schools and strengthen our commitment to holistic student development," Dr. Rottler added.



Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Greensburg

It's different here...

Verna Montessori School

School Open House



Sunday, March 1st
From 2pm - 4pm

Monday, March 2nd
From 9am - 12pm

268 Prittstown Rd.
Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
724-887-8810

Private Tours Available!

Guided Tours

Informational Presentations

Q & A Sessions

- ✓ Pre-K thru 8th Grade
- ✓ AMI Certified
- ✓ Individualized Instruction
- ✓ Small Class Size
- ✓ Multi-Age Classrooms

Now Registering for the 26/27 School Year!

Opening Doors to Catholic Education: The Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership

In 2020, a scholarship program was established with a mission as profound as its namesake: to ensure that financial barriers would never stand between a child and a quality Catholic education. The Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership — known as TOPS — has since transformed the lives of thousands of students, with more than 600 students receiving assistance for the 2025-26 school year alone. We are deeply grateful to our generous donors, especially the anonymous benefactor of the Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership (TOPS).

A Legacy of Faith and Service

The program draws its name and inspiration from one of the most influential spiritual leaders of the 20th century. Saint Pope John Paul II firmly believed that Catholic schools play a vital role in forming young people intellectually, morally and spiritually. He understood that a faith-centered education provides students with a strong moral foundation, equipping them to become compassionate, independent citizens who live Christ's call to love and serve God and neighbor.

More Than Financial Aid

TOPS reflects this philosophy of shared responsibility and mutual commitment. More than a tuition assistance program, it is a partnership — a covenant among families, schools and faith communities grounded in service, accountability and faith.

Families who participate in TOPS demonstrate financial need and a willingness to contribute, to the extent they are able, toward their child's education. Importantly, families do not need to qualify for low-income assistance to be eligible. TOPS works in coordination with other funding sources, including EITC support, through completion of the FACTS Grant & Aid application.

The partnership extends well beyond financial considerations. Students are expected to show academic commitment, enthusiasm for learning and a willingness to participate in at least one activity within their local parish or faith community. Families, in turn, commit to supporting their school and parish through gifts of time, talent or treasure as they are able, and are recognized as valued servant leaders within the Catholic school community.

Registration with a parish or local church community is required, though families who are willing to become members are warmly encouraged to apply.

Taking the First Step

Parents or guardians interested in the Saint Pope John Paul II Tuition Opportunity Partnership may begin the application process by calling 724-552-2565 or visiting CatholicSchoolsGuide.org to arrange an in-person interview with the designated outreach and admissions coordinator.

This initial conversation helps families better understand the partnership and marks the beginning of a relationship that extends far beyond financial assistance — it is the start of a journey rooted in faith, service and academic excellence.

Join Us in Building the Future of Our Church

Those inspired to support this mission are invited to contribute to the TOPS program, helping ensure that Catholic education remains accessible to families committed

to faith formation and academic achievement. Donors share a vision that these students will strengthen the foundation of our Catholic Church — today and for generations to come — by carrying forward the values that sustain our faith communities.

To learn more about supporting TOPS, please contact:

William Barnes

wbarnes@DioceseofGreensburg.org
724-552-2589

In the spirit of Saint Pope John Paul II, the TOPS program reminds us that education is not a privilege for the few, but a calling to serve the many — one student, one family, one community at a time.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Seventh-grader Caroline Muzy is the daughter of Daryl and Jenny Muzy. They are parishioners of Saint Agnes Parish, North Huntingdon.

Caroline is a bright light in the Queen of Angels Catholic School community. She has emerged as a leader within our middle school family and is actively involved in the student leadership program, Drama Club, county chorus, varsity cheer, varsity volleyball, altar serving, and the Future City and Invention Convention projects.

Caroline is an active parishioner of Saint Agnes Parish, where she sings in the Joyful Noise Choir, serves as an altar server, and generously volunteers her time for Vacation Bible School and other parish events alongside her family. She is also involved in Girl Scouts.

Caroline consistently stands out as a role model for our younger students. She is kind, approachable and always willing to lend a helping hand as she guides others in their Catholic education. She strives to live out the promises of our Guardian Pledge, which is evident in her vibrant enthusiasm, strong desire for academic excellence, and her cheerful compassion toward classmates, teachers and administrators alike.



Caroline Muzy



Guardians Give Back

By Susanna Croft and Joseph Giacobbi, Grade 7

Middle school students from Queen of Angels Catholic School, North Huntingdon, were recently given the privilege of volunteering at Hope Ministries, a food bank and soup kitchen in McKeesport. Students learned about the impact they make by volunteering. They helped God's people by preparing and serving food and helping to distribute other items, such as warm clothing, that are crucial for people in need. Items are donated by honorable people who know about the struggles some people face, and by companies that had extra food they didn't sell, so they gave back to the community.

While volunteering, many students realized that not only were people living in poverty benefiting from their help, but were also being rewarded spiritually. Students gained a sense of the harsh living conditions and challenges people face every day. The students felt that this trip strengthened their empathy and appreciation for what they are blessed with.

After volunteering, students were able to talk to people who came in to

Hope Ministries. A remarkable veteran named Omar told the students about his life. He has traveled to 12 countries and shook hands with many famous kings and presidents. He lived in Africa for three years with a tribe, and he even knew how to speak their language, which many students found incredible. Omar said he would not have been able to complete his journey through life if he didn't have faith in God. He reminded the students how unique each human is and how everyone has a purpose. He said, "If God wasn't thinking of you, you wouldn't be walking on his Earth. You are made of 30 trillion cells, and God took time to carefully curate each cell so you could be who you are." It was incredibly inspiring that someone who was living in rough conditions was able to have such a deep connection to his faith.

In addition, Mrs. Kunes of Hope Ministries educated the students about the history of McKeesport, once a vibrant town full of life. When the steel mills closed, there wasn't much money left for comfortable living. Many people couldn't afford to move, leaving them stuck in a place with few job opportunities.

Once the day came to an end, many students reflected on how they enjoyed getting a glimpse into someone else's life and realized the experience had broadened their perspectives and their understanding of others.

Catholic Schools Office announces NEW staff

Jill Hathaway Hauck has been named the new part-time Director of Academic Growth and Support.

In this vital role, Mrs. Hauck will be responsible for leading the statewide, Diocesan efforts to support academic, behavioral and student needs for children enrolled in Diocesan Catholic schools.

Mrs. Hauck brings nearly two decades of educational experience that perfectly aligns with this position. During her tenure with the Penn-Trafford School District, she served as a learning support teacher developing Individualized Education Plans and Positive Behavior Support Plans, managed crisis intervention as an SAP case manager, and led curriculum development as kindergarten grade level chair.

"Her comprehensive background in special education, student advocacy and collaborative leadership,



Jill Hathaway Hauck

combined with graduate degrees from the University of Pittsburgh and Seton Hill University, positions her well to serve our Catholic school communities," said Dr. Nancy Rottler, Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

Mary Gazal has been hired as the new part-time Director of Financial Aid for the Office of Catholic Schools. Mrs. Gazal is a graduate of Seton Hill University with a bachelor's degree in information technology and brings more than 30 years of experience

in higher education financial aid to the Diocese of Greensburg. Most recently, she served as assistant vice president for financial aid at Saint Vincent College, where she dedicated 11 years before her retirement. She also served at the University of Pittsburgh, California University of Pennsylvania and Westmoreland County Community College. Throughout her distinguished



Mrs. Mary Gazal

career, Mrs. Gazal has demonstrated outstanding leadership, deep expertise in financial aid administration and a steadfast commitment to helping students access affordable education.

"We are grateful that someone of Mrs. Gazal's caliber and experience has chosen to continue her vocation in financial aid," Dr. Rottler said. "Her knowledge and guidance will be invaluable as we continue supporting our students and families through the financial aid process."

Michele Duboy joins the Office of Catholic Schools as Coordinator. Mrs. Duboy brings a unique combination of classroom expertise and administrative acumen that positions her exceptionally well for this multifaceted role.

With 13 years of experience as a mathematics educator, Mrs. Duboy has developed a deep understanding of the day-to-day operations of schools



Mrs. Michele Duboy

from the ground level," Dr. Rottler said. "Her classroom experience has given her invaluable insight into the needs of school leaders, teachers, students and families — perspective that is essential for providing effective administrative support to the superintendent and schools across the Diocese."

Mrs. Duboy holds a master's degree in instructional design and technology, which complements her bachelor's degree in mathematics (with minors in secondary education 7-12 and psychology), earned magna cum laude.

This advanced training prepares Mrs. Duboy to support the initiatives of the Office of Catholic Schools and the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Greensburg.

Her transition from classroom educator to administrative coordinator reflects an opportunity for her to leverage her teaching experience to support the broader mission of promoting Catholic education throughout the Diocese of Greensburg.

Growing a FUTURE of FAITH, EXCELLENCE and LEADERSHIP

5-6PM THURSDAY, JAN 29 OPEN HOUSE

One Main St, N. Huntingdon, PA 15642

PRE-K to 8th grade QueenofAngelsSch.org

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Eliza Szakos

Sixth-grader Eliza Szakos is the daughter of Bates and Nicole Szakos. They belong to Charter Oak Church, Greensburg.

Eliza is a veteran Aquinas Academy student. She began in preK, and now she is in her eighth year as a Crusader! Eliza is a conscientious student and a classroom leader. She participates in Drama Club, Reading Team, and CYO basketball and volleyball. Outside of school, Eliza participates in 4H and swim team. Eliza has a long familial connection to Aquinas Academy: her younger brother, Bates, is in first grade; her sister Juliette, now at Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School, is an Aquinas Academy graduate; her father is a graduate of the former Blessed Sacrament Cathedral School; and her grandmother, Martha Szakos, taught for many years at Aquinas Academy.



The Journey

By Lily Jackson, Grade 5



At Aquinas Academy in Greensburg, my journey as a disciple of Christ is very special to me. My education helps prepare me to become a successful, Christ-driven adult who can lead others to Jesus and follow His teachings. Every day at school, I learn how to be a good leader of Christ by being kind, respectful and caring to everyone around me.

At Aquinas Academy, I am taught how to live like Jesus by helping others and volunteering in my community. Our school participates in food drives, coat and hat drives, and many other fundraisers throughout the year. These activities help people in need, including the poor, the sick and the homeless. Volunteering makes me feel proud because I know I am helping my community and doing what Jesus wants us to do. We are also encouraged to help others believe in God and to show love and support to everyone we meet.

In religion class, we spend time reading and learning about the Gospels. One Gospel story we learn

about is the Good Samaritan. This story teaches me how important it is to help others, even when it is hard or when they are different from us. By learning about the Good Samaritan, God has helped guide me to care more about people in need. I have also volunteered at my church to help raise money for charity, which helps me practice what I learn in school.

My school is great because almost everything we do is Christ-driven. All of the teachers make students feel welcome, safe and supported. They also give us special opportunities to participate in weekly Mass by letting us read, cantor and altar serve. These experiences help me grow stronger in my faith and feel closer to God.

Aquinas Academy helps students follow the path that Jesus wants us to take. I am very thankful for all the hard work and effort our school and teachers puts into our education so we can grow in faith, help others and become strong leaders of Christ.



Rowen Mahoney Father John Torres Jack Mahoney

Aquinas Academy Forms Leaders in Christ

By Rowen Mahoney, Grade 6

Leadership can be defined in several ways. Some may say leaders are born with an ability to change the world. Others may say leaders develop traits to inspire, while others may say true leaders become leaders through small acts of kindness and habitual virtue. Aquinas Academy in Greensburg prepares us to be leaders because of our faithful foundation and the constant striving to be Christlike.

Our faith comes first. If we keep Christ in our hearts, He will be present in our actions. Christ is the ultimate leader. Through His teachings, His example and His unbreakable love, we can seek His guidance and His light. With His light, we can lead others to His light and be the people He wants us to be — to love one another as He has loved us.

Students attend Mass on most Tuesdays. This is the time to reflect on our sins and learn how to act more like Christ. It is through the Eucharist that Jesus is renewed in us and reminds us how much we need him in our daily lives. To feel God within us ignites the passion to do good and to avoid sin. It also encourages us to think of our brothers and sisters in Christ. How can we be of service to the Lord? How can we help our communities and others in need? Going to weekly Mass helps to keep our relationship with God present and strong.

I have been an altar server since second grade. It is through this ministry that I feel a sense of worth and closeness to my faith. To serve the Lord is to love the Lord. If we are serving the Lord, we are leading by his example. My school values this ministry and actively promotes others to join. I hope through my example, others will feel a desire to take the next step in their faith.

Aquinas Academy has several extracurricular activities that bond people with their faith, including leading prayer services, writing letters to people in the community (veterans, nursing home residents, the sick and parishioners), contributing to toy, food and clothing drives, and serving as prayer partners. These activities strengthen the bond we feel with our school community, as well as the community that we seek to support around us. No matter what the activity may be, whether it is sports, drama club, reading team, chess club (just to name a few), our faith is the center of everything that we do. Therefore, Christ is constantly with us and motivating us to be virtuous and faithful people.

The beauty of God's love is that everyday acts of kindness can be the seeds to help spread the word of God and to keep people grounded in Christ. If we continue to spread kindness, others will do the same. An act of kindness can be small, such as helping to pick up something that someone else dropped, to being a patient kid waiting in line, to holding a door for someone coming your way, or noticing someone upset and reaching out to cheer him/her up. These acts of kindness are things I witness every day at Aquinas Academy.

To love thy neighbor as thyself is one of the most humbling phrases a child can ever learn. Our relationship with God expands beyond the personal relationship. Our relationship with God is also based upon how we treat one another. Aquinas Academy is building leaders because it focuses on how our faith is a part of everything that we do.

AQUINAS ACADEMY

340 N Main St, Greensburg, PA 15601



Growing a FUTURE of FAITH, EXCELLENCE and LEADERSHIP

OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY, FEB 22, 1-3PM

AquinasAcademy.org



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Seventh-grader Riley Trainer is the daughter of Nicole and Jeremy Trainer. The family are parishioners of Saint Vincent Basilica Parish, Latrobe.

Riley beautifully embodies the spirit and values of the school community through her faith, academics and leadership. Her dedication to learning and commitment to excellence inspire her peers to reach their full potential. Always cheerful and compassionate, Riley is a true friend — someone classmates can count on for encouragement and support. Her deep faith is evident in her respectful demeanor and insightful reflections during religion class.

Beyond the classroom, Riley shines as an athlete, excelling in cross country with determination, perseverance and school pride. Her positivity, character and faith-filled heart make her a shining example of what it means to live out the mission of Christ the Divine Teacher.



Riley Trainer



Music and Faith Opportunities at Christ the Divine Teacher School



Nico

Lily

Rose

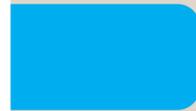
By Nico Baum, Grade 3

Last year, I went to my brother's Christmas concert at Christ the Divine Teacher School in Latrobe, and I loved listening to him sing. I begged my mom and dad to send me to CDT because I wanted to have a Christmas concert too. I wanted to sing, wear the uniform and learn about Jesus, including how He died on the cross for our sins.

My mom and dad took me on a tour of CDT to see if I liked the school. Now I am in third grade at CDT, and my brothers and I love it there. I go to Mass every Wednesday, and each class gets a chance to lead a Mass.

For my class's Mass, I was chosen to sing with Lily and Rose, and I was so excited. We practiced every day in the cafeteria, and I also practiced with my music teacher, Mrs. Thackrah. I loved practicing the songs.

When the day of the Mass finally arrived, I felt proud and happy. I still have two Masses left this school year, and I hope I can sing again with my friends.



Students in the kindergarten class at Christ the Divine Teacher School in Latrobe were asked to reflect on the following statement:

My School is Great Because...

- ... We have the lucky ducks to take turns to be the teacher's helper. — Trey Baum
- ... We learn about Jesus. — Amelia Breegle
- ... I play with my friends. — Brier Buskey
- ... Everyone I know is kind. — Anna Gilbert
- ... We go to church. — Quinlan Johnson
- ... We have gym class. — Leo Kolano
- ... We play with friends. — Hailey Kunkle
- ... We sit down and listen to you (teachers). — Martha Liske
- ... We have snacks. — Isabella Martin
- ... We go to church and sing songs. — Isaac Parades Mera
- ... We have homework and I like it! — Augustine Parrish
- ... We have nice friends that choose to make good choices. — James Parrish
- ... We have lots of toys. — Jackson Ray
- ... I like to learn about math. — Weston Reese
- ... We get to eat lunch and play with our friends. — Raelynn Rosensteel
- ... Our lunch is amazing, especially the buttered noodles and chicken nuggets. The teachers are also really nice! — Scarlett Shimko
- ... All the classes are great, especially art class! — Macy Skoloda

- ... We eat lunch with our friends in both classes. — Dominic Very
- ... My teacher keeps me safe. — Madelyn Brody
- ... I get to make new friends, and I get to play. — Iris Cesario
- ... We learn a lot. — Claire Curry
- ... We love God. — Aiden Daubert
- ... It's fun! - Jacob DePalma
- ... We have outside recess. — Legend Dolan
- ... We have great teachers. — Felicity Foss
- ... Jesus is here. — Ruth Haberstroh
- ... We have recess. — Jonah Healey
- ... There are lots of nice friends. — Lucas Hegeman
- ... The teachers are good. — Abigail Higgins
- ... The teachers are good. — Benjamin Makoski
- ... We learn about saints. — Atreus Miele
- ... The teachers help us to learn every day. — Avery Myers
- ... It's fun! — Jane Peer
- ... It's wonderful! — Lincoln Samide
- ... I get to color. — Siena Smith
- ... We have playtime. — Xander Velkey

OPEN HOUSE

WED, JAN 28, 10-11AM

Growing a FUTURE of FAITH, EXCELLENCE and LEADERSHIP

CDTschool.org

Christ the Divine Teacher School

323 Chestnut St, Latrobe, PA 15650

What's Great About my School?

By Hunter Roberts, Grade 6

There are many great things about my school, Conn-Area Catholic School in Connellsville. First, the teachers and staff are very nice and welcoming. They make everyone feel special. They are also really smart and good at teaching.

Secondly, my school is great because the students are kind and fun. We play games together and learn together. We support each other when we see someone needs help. We are good friends.

Third, my school has a lot of after-school programs that are great. We have esports, performing arts, basketball, flag football, chess, cheerleading and cross country. These activities help us to learn new things and to work together.

A fourth reason why I like Conn-Area Catholic School is the classes we have. We learn about math, science, English, language arts, spelling, social studies, health, drones, IXL math, IXL ELA, robotics, art and religion. Everyone at the school makes learning so much fun. Every teacher is willing to help us when we need it.

Fifth, and most importantly, my school teaches me about God and faith. We learn about God's Word through the Bible in our religion classes. We go to church and learn about the sacraments. We pray in every class and we gather in the morning with the whole school to pray together. We become leaders of the prayers because we take turns leading everyone.

Conn-Area Catholic School is a great school.



Leadership is Important at Conn-Area Catholic School

By Selma Al-Fakih, Grade 6

At Conn-Area Catholic School in Connellsville, leadership is very important. Every student has a leadership job. Some students feed the fish, science helpers help with the greenhouse, the hamster and other science-related chores, gym helpers set up the gym for class, and prayer leaders teach students how to lead others in prayer. All students also have classroom jobs that help keep the room organized and help everyone learn better. After school, some students stay to help teachers with different tasks when needed.

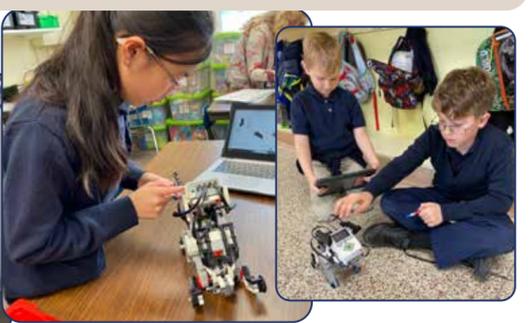
Sixth-grade students have extra leadership responsibilities. We help teachers and younger students every day. Sixth-graders help during recess, assist Mrs. Solan and help take care of younger students when they need help. We also do fun activities for younger students, such as reading Christmas stories to them and being

good role models. We help teachers by doing things like picking up papers from the printer, delivering items to other teachers and helping wherever we are needed.

Our leadership also includes helping the church. Students serve as altar servers, cantors and speakers during the Mass. We also donate to the poor and try to be good examples of our school and of our faith.

We help our community in many ways. Students donate clothes, food and baby items to people in need. We also make holiday cards for people who cannot leave their homes or who do not have family. These acts of kindness help us show care and respect for others.

Through all these activities, we learn that leadership means helping others, taking responsibility and showing kindness at school, church and in our community.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Sixth-grader Kit Witt Hess is the son of Kaitlin Hess. They are parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish, Connellsville.



Kit Witt Hess

Nominated by Principal Mrs. Cecilia Solan, Kit is described as a star student.

He is on the school's Leadership Team, a position he takes seriously. He is quick to identify when his services are needed. He is an A-student and does well in all aspects of academics. He is a member of the Chess Club and has taken the lead to expand on this program.

Kit has been an altar server since third grade, serving nearly every Saturday Mass, and is the school's cross-bearer for school Masses.

Kit was a Cub Scout for five years, participating in service projects. He also participates in soccer, basketball, flag football, swimming and cross-country and the Diocesan Reading Club.

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ConnAreaCatholic.org



GEIBEL CATHOLIC JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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GeibelCatholic.org



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Junior Mason Speeney is the son of Brian and Heather Speeney. They are parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish, Connellsville.

Mason is a very involved student who excels in every way. His drive as a student, athlete and ambassador of Geibel Catholic paves the way for younger students and peers alike. He has been a member of the honor roll in every quarter of high school. He is currently enrolled in seven college in high school classes and carries a 4.38 GPA.

Mason is a member of the soccer, basketball, golf, and track and field teams, plus the Math League, National Honor Society, French National Honor Society, Radio Club, Future Business Leaders of America, Campus Ministry, Student Council and the Penn State 4.0 Club. He volunteers for the festival at Saint Rita Parish, Connellsville, and as an altar server at Immaculate Conception Parish.



Mason Speeney

Educator Reflects on Lifelong Commitment of Service at Geibel Catholic

By Dr. Justin Stevenson

Marian (Gasbarro) Cadwallader, a member of the Geibel Catholic Junior-Senior High School, Connellsville, Class of 1972, spent her teaching career shaping minds and hearts through Catholic education.



After graduating from Geibel Catholic, Mrs. Cadwallader earned a bachelor's degree in French with a minor in Spanish from Seton Hill University, Greensburg, and completed additional coursework at the Sorbonne in France. She earned a master's degree in French from the University of Pittsburgh and later obtained a certificate in professional translating. During a sabbatical year, she worked as a French and Spanish translator at the U.S. Department of State in the Office of Language Services, an experience that broadened her global perspective and enriched her work as an educator. She was also selected as one of 12 U.S. teachers to attend a France-USA Language Teacher Workshop sponsored by Rotary International in central France. She lived and worked as a counselor for a student summer homestay program in Marseille. All these experiences deepened her love of the French language and culture, which she enjoyed sharing with her students.

Mrs. Cadwallader devoted 44 years to teaching French and, occasionally, Spanish, at Geibel Catholic. She organized service projects, including an annual winter coat drive, volunteered on school committees and moderated student clubs. She enjoyed seeing her students

experience French culture firsthand by leading 12 student trips to Europe.

Inspired by her own high school French teacher, Sister of Charity of Nazareth Jeanne Vucic, Mrs. Cadwallader was delighted to reconnect with her mentor, who recently relocated to Pittsburgh. She also credits her Seton Hill professors, Sisters of Charity Leah Wolf and Vivien Linkhauer, with preparing her for a lifelong career in education.

Reflecting on her career, Mrs. Cadwallader said, "Teaching was my calling. I was fortunate to share my gifts with so many students over the years. My career was deeply fulfilling and rewarding. One of the greatest blessings of teaching at Geibel Catholic was the ability to practice my Catholic faith every day and to model those values for my students. In later years, I enjoyed teaching children of former students. The connections with families and the enduring bonds with long-time coworkers made my time at Geibel Catholic feel like home."

Mrs. Cadwallader continues to remain closely connected to the Geibel Catholic community through friendships with classmates, monthly luncheons with retired teachers and occasional substitute teaching. She also serves on Geibel Catholic's advisory board. She enjoys following the successes of Geibel Catholic alumni through the media.

A dedicated parishioner of Saint Rita Parish in Connellsville, she resides in Connellsville with her husband, Dale, and their son, Sammy. She doesn't hesitate to tell whoever will listen that "there are great things happening at Geibel!"

Through her faith, service and lifelong commitment to education, Marian Cadwallader exemplifies the enduring influence of a Catholic school education and the close-knit community that supports it.

Geibel Catholic Junior setting Inspirational Example

By Lexus Novotny, Grade 11

Extensive service involvement, strong academic performance and commitment to making a positive impact on her school and community are just some ways Claire Schuerholz, a junior at Geibel Catholic Junior-Senior High School in Connellsville, exemplifies the qualities of a dedicated student leader. She successfully balances rigorous coursework, extracurricular activities, leadership roles and service projects while maintaining an impressive 4.5 GPA.

Academically, Claire consistently demonstrates excellence. She is a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society, participates in the Penn State 4.0 Club, and has earned honorable recognition. She is completing five college in high school courses during the academic year and further challenged herself by taking two college-level courses through PennWest University over the summer. Her academic achievements have also been recognized through honors such as Gator of the Month and a full Seton Hill University scholarship.

"Finding out that I received a full scholarship from Seton Hill for their (college in high school) courses was one of the greatest blessings I could ask for," Claire said. "I am so grateful for this opportunity and all who went into making this possible. My heart couldn't be fuller."

Claire's commitment to service is evident through her dedication both in and out of school, accumulating approximately 260 service hours. Within her school community, she serves as a student ambassador, participating in Diocesan Masses, open houses, Discover Geibel Days and Catholic Schools Week speaking engagements. Outside of school she volunteers extensively with organizations such as the Salvation Army, where she participates in bell ringing during the Christmas and Thanksgiving seasons, works at food pantries, and assists with back-to-school sales. She also volunteers for Vacation Bible School.

A significant part of Claire's service and leadership comes from her involvement with the Junior Ladies of Charity. After joining in 2025, she helped establish the Diocese of Greensburg division and actively participates in service projects including Christmas box making, Salvation Army bell ringing, and community trunk-or-treat



Claire Schuerholz

events. Claire aspires to continue her leadership journey within the organization and hopes to be elected president or vice president in the spring.

"I want to truly live my life in a way that others can look up to and to somehow improve the world and leave it a better place even if in the smallest way," Claire said. "I want to help others and achieve my goals."

Claire is also deeply involved in school organizations, including Spanish Club, Campus Ministry, Future Business Leaders of America, Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science, Shark Tank and Math league. Her leadership roles further reflect her initiative and responsibility, as she serves as Student Council president and Campus Ministry secretary and has attended a summer leadership conference to strengthen her skills.

Beyond academics and service, Claire is actively involved in extracurricular activities. She has been a varsity cheerleader for three years and has dedicated 13 years to dance. Additionally, she works at Chick-fil-A, where she hopes to advance to a trainer position, demonstrating her strong work ethic and desire to mentor others.

"When I was hired for my first job at Chick-fil-A in Uniontown this past summer, I quickly discovered my employment was an extension of how I could add to my community's development. It has been exciting to be a part of a brand-new restaurant and to meet new people while growing further as a person," she said.

At the core of Claire's achievements is her character. She is driven by a genuine desire to help people and organizations in any way she can and strives to positively impact everyone and everything she encounters. With aspirations of pursuing a future in STEM, potentially as an astronaut or through work with NASA, Claire continues to set a remarkable example of leadership service and academic ambition.



Marian (Gasbarro) Cadwallader

SENIOR NAMED **Commended Student in National Merit Scholarship Program**

Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School senior **Aiden Domiano** has been named a commended student name in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program. He will receive a letter of commendation from the school and National Merit Scholarship Corporation. About 34,000 commended students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Commended students placed among the top 50,000 students who entered the 2026 competition by taking the 2024 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.

"Those being named commended students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success," said a NMSC spokesperson. "These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments, as well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broaden their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success."



Annmarie George

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Senior Annmarie George is the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth George. They are parishioners of Saint Bruno Parish, South Greensburg.

Annmarie is a true leader at Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School. Her commitment to academic excellence is exemplary, as is her strong commitment to volunteerism and faith in action. She serves as a positive role model to others.

Annmarie plans and provides instrumental music for all GCC school Masses. She also lectures and has participated as a gift bearer. She participated in several events (baby drive, mission carnival) as an active Columbian Squire Rose member, and attended/assisted with several open house/back to school nights and alumni Masses.

At her parish, she is a cantor and plays violin with the choir every weekend. She helps out with Lenten fish fries and works at a game booth for the parish's summer festival. Additionally, she has assisted at Saint Anne Home in Greensburg for many years by supporting residents and providing entertainment.

Annmarie plans to study biomedical sciences/microbiology with a minor in business communications next year, possibly at the University of Pittsburgh. She hopes to one day become an emergency medicine doctor.

"Annmarie is a dynamic student who embodies the mission of Greensburg Central Catholic by living Gospel values through discipleship, service, kindness and compassion, inspiring others to integrate faith, learning and service within our community of faith."

Annmarie is a true leader at Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School. Her commitment to academic excellence is exemplary, as is her strong commitment to volunteerism and faith in action. She serves as a positive role model to others.

- MRS. THERESA SZMED, PRINCIPAL



Top GCC Students Recognized

The College Board has awarded seven Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School students its School Recognition Award, introduced in 2025. The award celebrates students who score among the top 10% of their school's test-takers on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10 and/or earned 3+ on two or more advanced placement (AP) exams by 10th grade.

Award winners are **Joseph Bonomo IV, Aiden Domiano, Wren Peters, Owen Ryan, Kaitlyn Saula, Julia Stilley and Cole Zubaty.**

The following GCC current students earned AP Scholar recognition: **Brett Anthony, Joseph Bonomo IV, Grant Brewer, Lukas Czegan, Aidan Domiano, Joseph Foss, Brandon Plunko, Kaitlyn Saula and Cole Zubaty.**



The following 2025 graduates earned AP Scholar recognition: **Joseph Ames, Russell Bogner, Sydney Calderone, Stephanie Ceh, Abigail Dei, Eva Denis, Brianna Evans, Zachary Farroux, Nathan Gaydos, Erin Grace, Alexandra Hoffman, Maxwell Hrbek, Emily Lori, Erika Mutchler, Maura Oslosky, Erica Rodriguez, Anneliese Slater, Evelyn Viehl, Sienna Voetsch, Sean Walker and Victoria Walters.**



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT Collaboration Key to LEGO Competition

Eighth-grader Natalia Mlinarcik is the daughter of Justin and Megan Mlinarcik. They are parishioners of Saint James Parish in Pittsburgh's West End.

Natalia is an exceptional student whose strong work ethic, academic excellence and positive attitude make her a natural leader. She embodies the mission of Mary Queen of Apostles School through her faith, scholarship and service. As a student council officer, Natalia organizes service projects and school-wide activities and manages student proposals. She participates in chorus and musicals, serves as a lector and cantor at school Masses, lends her voice as the school's public address announcer, and competes in Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science. She carols at Logan House each Christmas.

Beyond school, she is active in the Saint James Parish Choir, Catechism classes and pilgrimages. She takes Civic Light Opera dance classes.

Natalia radiates grace, respect, and positivity — qualities reflected in the warm smile she shares with everyone.



Natalia Mlinarcik



By Natalie Hulslander, Grade 7

First LEGO League (FLL) is a competition where teams design, build and code LEGO robots to do missions on a game board in 2½ minutes. Teams are judged in four categories, each worth 25% of their final score. The categories are running the board, a robot design presentation explaining the robot and code, an innovation project about a problem that occurs in the theme of the season, and how the team shows the core values – teamwork, discovery, inclusion, innovation, impact and fun. Running the board determines the points your robot earns by completing missions. The core values are shown through how a team interacts and collaborates. This year, my team at Mary Queen of Apostles School, New Kensington, the Knightbots, got an Engineering Excellence award in the district finals.

The theme of the season this year was archaeology. To research a problem or problems for our innovation project, we browsed through archaeological magazines, found websites online to cite and looked for real places where we could get hands-on with archaeology. We eventually decided to go to Lutherlyn's registered archaeological dig site for

experience. There, we talked to real archaeologists, who told us that while there are many obstacles on a dig, the main problem they had was kids stealing precious artifacts. They let us borrow a spearpoint that had been found in a river. We took it back to school, 3D-scanned it and printed a copy. We will be giving the 3D print back to Lutherlyn and offering to print other artifacts for them.

Even after all of that, we had to explain our robot and coding. This part took far less research than our innovation project, probably because our robot and coding were right in front of us whenever we met at robotics. We explained our robots, our attachments, our code and the idea that got us that trophy, a model of the robot base to test attachments without actually needing to use the robot. We did well on the board, scoring 360 points and coming in 10th out of 77 teams.

Our core value scores were a contribution of everyone but also exhibited by one of our youngest members, Rosalie, and her great nicknames for everyone. Fun is one of the things that makes this a great activity.



The Kindness Club: Be the Ripple in the World

By Lucia Cicconi, Grade 6

Last year, when I was in fifth grade, I started something at my school called the Kindness Club. I didn't know exactly what it would become, but I knew I wanted a place where students could lead, share ideas, and make our school and community a kinder place. The concept of our Kindness Club is: "Kindness is Contagious" and no matter who you are or where you are you can be a positive force and spread kindness and love.

Before anything else, I want to say how grateful we are to the amazing funders and leaders who believed in this club from the very beginning—the Grable Foundation and Mrs. Maureen Frew. They didn't just help with money, which we really appreciated; they thought of the idea, helped start it, and have supported many kindness clubs across our region. Because of them, students like us get a chance to lead and make a difference. We are truly thankful.

What makes our Kindness Club special is that even though parents sponsor and support us, the students lead the club. We share ideas and give each other feedback. At our very first meeting, I brought giant Post-it notes and lots of small Post-its, and Sharpies. I asked everyone one simple question: "What are your ideas for how we could spread and inspire kindness?" Soon the room was full of ideas, colorful Post-its, and excitement! We organized our ideas into different categories.

One category was spreading positivity and inspiring kindness. Some of our favorite projects came from this group. We are making positive affirmation magnets for students' lockers, so they can see encouraging messages every day. We are also creating a lesson plan for younger kids to teach them how they can have a positive impact in their school, their families, and their neighborhoods.

Another category focused on showing gratitude. We wanted to thank people who don't always get enough recognition but do so much for us. We made candy and flower bouquets for these unsung heroes like our awesome custodians, secretaries, lunch cooks, volunteers, and even local police officers. Seeing their smiles reminded us how powerful a simple "thank you" can be.

We also had a category for helping the community. This year for Thanksgiving, all students in grades four to eight made a card that included a beautiful illustration and a positive message that reflected thankfulness, positivity and God's love. On Thanksgiving Day my family and I passed them out at The Light of Life shelter to those who came to get a hot Thanksgiving meal and listen to upbeat Gospel music performed by a live band. Everyone greatly appreciated the cards, and their smiles warmed our hearts.

Another major project our Kindness Club organized was to collect hundreds of gently used toys, clean them, and donate them to "Pittsburgh Play it Forward," where families could "shop" for free Christmas gifts for their children at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. It was very special to bring truckloads of toys that would spread the love that Jesus wants us to share. In Matthew Chapter 19 Jesus says "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Jesus wants us to care for the world's children and this was an amazing opportunity to do that.

Finally, we thought about spreading kindness while raising funds so we could keep doing more. One idea was making positive affirmation clips and attaching them to snack bags with allergy friendly options that families could buy during a family movie night. It helped us raise money and spread positivity at the same time.

The Kindness Club has shown me that when students are trusted to lead, incredible things can happen. Our club is creative, hopeful, and driven by ideas from kids who truly want to help others. I'm proud of what we've done together, and I'm excited about what's next.

If you are a student reading this, I hope our story encourages you to start something similar at your school. You don't need to be an adult to make a difference. Wherever you may go, we hope you are inspired to spread kindness. Your kindness creates ripples that spread to the world. If you are interested in starting your own Kindness Club to feel these effects in your own school and community, contact our school office at 724.339.4411.



By K'mya Middlebrook, Grade 7

"How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

Note from Mrs. Cathy Collett, principal: Each year, seventh- and eighth-graders at Mary Queen of Apostles School, New Kensington, enter the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Patriot's Pen essay contest. The essays are shared at our "Salute to Veterans" assembly each November. Seventh-grader K'mya Middlebrook's essay, printed below, shows that greatness, courage and strength can come from adversity with the support of family and the dream that is America.

According to the dictionary, "Patriotism is the feeling of love, devotion, and loyalty to one's country." A person can express this love in many ways, like following our Constitution and serving our country. Patriotism is something that is deeply rooted in my family and me.

Two patriotic people in my family have had a profound effect on my patriotism. My Uncle Ronny fought in the Vietnam War in 1969 and 1970. I've heard from my family how difficult that time was, but he never seemed to regret serving his country. In this unpopular war he was willing to serve because it was his duty. Uncle Ronny's example has shown me real patriotism by standing strong, even when we don't feel strong.

Another person in my family who is brave and patriotic is my Pap Pap. He was also in the Army and was stationed in Korea, England, Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts. My Pap Pap left his family behind to fight for America so we could remain a free country, and I know it was not easy. Both my Pap Pap and Uncle Ronny knew there was a possibility that they may not return, but they decided the risk was worth the reward of securing our country.

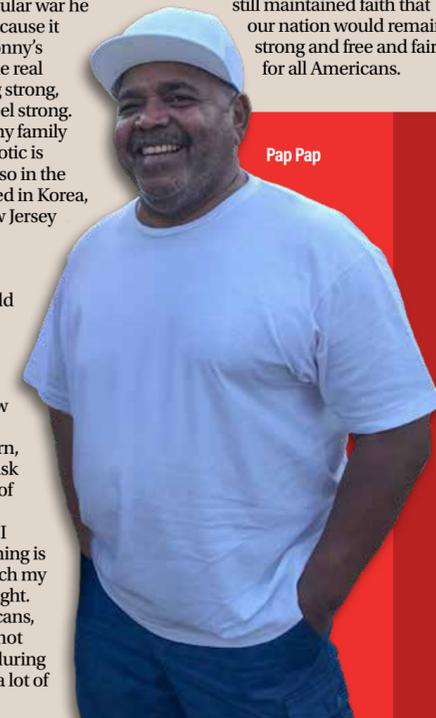
Something else that I think is worth mentioning is the time period in which my uncle and Pap Pap fought. As two African-Americans, living in America was not always easy, because during their time, there were a lot of

civil rights issues. To this day, they still show their love for our country, not because it is perfect, but because they believe that it can grow and change for the better. My uncle and Pap Pap's faith in America's future helps me have so much love for and trust in our country.

In conclusion, patriotism is not just limited to our soldiers; it lives in us all! The way I demonstrate my patriotism is by living up to my values, standing up for others, giving back to my community and working hard to keep America great. I know my freedom came with a cost to others, and I am grateful for their sacrifices. For me, being patriotic means choosing to have hope over bitterness and love over hate. My uncle and Pap Pap showed me this by sharing their experiences, both negative and positive, and still maintained faith that our nation would remain strong and free and fair for all Americans.



Uncle Ronny



Pap Pap

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Eighth-grader Jeremy Harman has been an inquisitive and faith-filled young man since his first days at the school, where he has been involved in Lab Rats, basketball and instrumental music. He is sensitive to the needs of others and has an ability to comfort friends and be inclusive. He is loved for his friendly nature, great sense of humor and cheery disposition.

Jeremy is a hard-working, successful student who prioritizes academic mastery. His genuine passion for science and mathematics is evident in class activities and lab work. He has shown tremendous growth in geometry and can construct logical arguments in proof writing. He raises the academic bar, especially in Spanish class. His creative thinking and problem-solving skills make him stand out among his peers. Jeremy is artistic and an enthusiastic contributor to classroom projects, always willing to help his classmates.

He volunteers as an usher at Mother of Sorrows Parish, Murrysville, and plays the snare drum in marching band for Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School.



Jeremy Harman

Lessons of Value Learned at Mother of Sorrows School

By Derya Kilburg, Grade 8

Mother of Sorrows School in Murrysville is a great school because it has shown me many valuable lessons, which, had I gone to a different school, I would never have known. For up until fifth grade, I was an oblivious little child with almost no connection to God and an undeveloped personality. I am and forever will be grateful I decided to come to MOSS instead of the abyss that would have been another school.

I now realize leadership, one of the countless values this school has weaved into me, is a necessary trait if one desires to be remembered for anything. I have seen leadership through many of my friends and acquaintances such as when they volunteer for a part in an upcoming event or raise their hand to be a Mass reader. But it is one thing to raise your hand in a timid, unsure manner and another to raise it with pride and confidence in what you are doing. Our school aims for us to be the latter. Yes, even if one despises the job they are offered to assist in, it is good to take part in being a leader and taking charge, so eventually it becomes second nature. And thankfully MOSS

believes fulfilling this trait is worth the time and effort. Although I am still working on being completely certain of my leadership skills myself.

Though I had been born and raised a Christian my entire life, and had spent two full years at MOSS, it wasn't until seventh grade that I took my religion seriously. I never cared for my faith until then possibly because the decision that I was Christian had always been made for me. I am unsure what inspired me to investigate my faith further. It could have been the teachers at MOSS, or the pure, unfiltered thought of death. But I know one thing, and that is the truly indescribable joy that I felt one night when I chose to begin to immerse myself in my faith. I have longed to find that feeling since. I can't imagine the mess of confusion I would have been drowning in if I never came here.

These are the reasons why MOSS is truly a fantastic school and that is why we hope and pray future students make the decision to come here. It represents the values of leadership, faith, friendship, and academics. MOSS helps us shape the person we will hopefully morph into one day.

Mother of Sorrows School is a Second Home

By Jacob Nguyen, Grade 8

Mother of Sorrows School in Murrysville has never felt like a school to me, but rather a second home. As soon as I walk through the front doors every morning, I feel welcomed and loved.

At MOSS, we do not just get an education; we get another perspective on our religion.

Mother of Sorrows has always had the best teachers, from preschool to eighth grade. They are always willing to help, have fun, and are hilarious and loving. The assignments they give us are not easy, but they make them so much better with the way they help us. When teachers here at MOSS give us assignments, learning is more enjoyable because of how interactive the lessons are. The teachers at MOSS are the best there are, and I would not have it any other way.

In the eight years I have been at MOSS, every day has been a religious day. Not one week has gone by without us praying several times during the day. Religion class especially helps us focus on God and the history of Jesus and humanity. On Thursdays, church helps me focus on my faith and deepens my connection to Catholicism. I am especially grateful to lead the altar servers in their duties

during our services. Sometimes Monsignor Begolly comes to the school to greet us and check in on our studies. It is always incredibly good to see him.

The specialists at MOSS are excellent, especially since I love science. Gym class is great when we play mat ball. My class is highly active and competitive, so the games can get heated. Painting in art class is so much fun, especially with the materials we have, and getting to sit with my friends and talk while doing something relaxing makes me feel good. I have always been musically enthusiastic, so Mrs. Shafer helps me a lot with music and makes it enjoyable by using interactive activities and making class funnier every time I go. Smart Lab is especially helpful with my STEM skills, and making 3D models is satisfying. Spanish class has really helped me over the past few years with language skills. I traveled around the world this summer, visiting Spain, Malta, Italy and Greece. It was much easier to speak Spanish in front of people in other countries with Mrs. Osche's help.

Core classes in a school are the most important because they develop your brain to remember and learn new things that will help you later in life.

In social studies, we have learned about history from the journey to America through World War II so far, and I am excited to learn even more. I love being in the accelerated math program with Mrs. Bentley because she is one of the easiest teachers to learn from, and she makes activities fun and interesting. Although ELA is not my strongest subject, we still have an exciting time reading novels and learning about apostrophes and commas. I enjoy religion class a lot, especially learning about Jesus' life on Earth and in heaven. Science, in my opinion, is one of the best classes because of how many labs we do. In science labs with Mrs. Bentley, we experiment with different chemicals and sometimes even foods to learn about reactions, chemical structures and much more.

Another thing I love about MOSS is athletics. The teams we have had over the past few years have been amazing. I have made many friends playing basketball for my school, and it has brought me closer to the sport while also improving my athletic performance, helping me become the athlete I am today. This past year, the school created a flag football team, and although there were only six

students on the team, we still did an outstanding job playing together and having fun.

Mother of Sorrows School truly is an amazing place. From science labs to flag football on the GCC field at 8:30 with all my friends, I have enjoyed my eight years here. I hope to make as many memories as possible before leaving for high school. I cannot express enough how much I have loved this school and how much I will miss walking through the front doors each morning, feeling warm and welcomed.



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MOSschool.org

My School is Great Because...

By Ellie Klunk, Annie Esposito, Viviana Yanni, Sullivan Rixinger and Samarah Scott, student council representatives, Mrs. Duchon, student council sponsor, and Mrs. Bucci, principal

Saint Bernard Regional Catholic School is a small school serving students in preschool through eighth grade. As students, we hold ourselves to high standards on faith, service and education. We strive to do our best in school and outside in the community. Even though we are a small school, we do big things. We take pride in our school, as students are involved in many school activities and community service events.

Our students participate in a number of extracurricular activities.

Esports is a video game team of middle school students that began three years ago. Esports gives students the opportunity to play as a team with other schools, improve hand-eye coordination and learn to overcome new challenges together.

This year, girls' basketball was introduced as we joined the CYO with our new team. Many girls were excited to become part of this new team and show their skills and talents. Our coach started "open gym days" for any girls who want to practice basketball skills after school.

Singers Ensemble is an advanced choir that students join by audition. They perform during the Christmas and spring concerts.

Third-grade students begin taking violin lessons in October to be able to play their violins in the spring Concert.

Our school provides many itinerant classes for students in preschool through eighth grade, including technology, Spanish, physical education, art and music. Middle school students learn to play instruments in band.

In addition to our weekly school Masses, we attend the annual Catholic Schools Mass with the Bishop at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Greensburg. This year, students in grades 4-8 visited Saint Mary's Byzantine Catholic Church in Northern Cambria and the Know Him events at Christ Our Shepherd Center in Greensburg.

Students participate in field trips such as a pumpkin patch, IUP Education Day, Yellow Creek State Park, Harrisburg and farm visits. In addition, the Learning Lamp grant program provides on-campus activities such as walking on interactive floor maps, learning about gems, building mosaics with Legos, building dinosaurs with foam pieces and experiencing stargazing inside a large dome.

Students are involved in many service projects, including volunteering at the annual fish fries, where they help set up tables, serve meals and clean up.

We help others in our community by participating in many charity drives, such as Socks for Seniors, Head Start Pajama Drive, Santa Shoeboxes, cancer awareness, Love Basket and Rice Bowl.

Our school is great in many ways, and we are proud to attend Saint Bernard School. Students have close relationships with the teachers. Teachers treat students as their own, with love and respect. Every student has individualized care from every teacher and are all treated equally. Students try their best to be good examples for the school and the community and strive to uphold a good reputation.



Leadership at Saint Bernard Regional Catholic School

By Clarice Colatch, Parker Russell, Samantha Ferguson and Mya McAdoo, student council representatives, Mrs. Duchon, student council sponsor, and Mrs. Bucci, principal

What does leadership mean at Saint Bernard Regional Catholic School? It means being respectful, helpful and, overall, a good role model.

Developing future leaders is important in our school. Students learn how to lead others and how to be better examples. Leadership activities, which are included in daily lessons, teach many important life skills, such as communication, problem-solving, empathy and social skills.

Students show leadership to others in many ways.

Students in grades 4-8 always help younger students, especially during Mass. They sit with them, sing and read with them, and teach them how to behave reverently during Mass.

Students also serve as cantors, lectors and altar servers during weekly school Masses.

Older students work with younger students during our Santa Workshop. Younger students look to their older classmates for help choosing and wrapping gifts for their family and friends.

The fifth- through eighth-graders volunteer to read scripts at the annual Christmas and spring concerts.

Older students are also responsible for leading daily prayer and pledge and they raise and lower the flag outside daily.

Some older students take leadership roles in the Living Saints Museum, where the students complete research,

wear costumes and talk to visitors about their chosen saints.

Middle school students help with the annual Lenten fish fries, taking orders, serving food and cleaning tables.

All students develop their leadership skills by helping with many service projects. They organize and participate in the Love Basket food collection where canned goods are donated to a local food bank. Students pack Santa Shoeboxes with gifts for children who may need them; collect pajamas for Head Start; and write thank-you cards to people who support our school.

Students take leadership roles in their school environment by cleaning up outside the school, planting

saplings and taking care of the memory garden in the summer.

Each grade level participates in the Chalice Program, where they take turns praying for vocations as they keep the chalice in their classrooms.

New this year is student council. Students had suggested starting a student council. They had to write paragraphs about why they wanted to be student council representatives, and teachers selected nine representatives who listen to other students' suggestions for school activities and help with special projects.

Our students become good leaders because we are willing to help our school and community in various meaningful ways.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Eighth-grader John Lingenfelter is the son of Ian and Rebecca Lingenfelter. They are parishioners of Church of the Resurrection Parish, Clymer.

John is involved in many activities at Saint Bernard Regional Catholic School. He leads the daily school-wide prayer and pledge. He plays percussion in the school band, and he performs in Singers Ensemble. John was chosen to attend county band and county chorus.

He also belongs to the esports team and volunteers for the annual fish fry. He participated in the Diocesan Youth Choir for the Christmas Night Market in Greensburg and the Living Saints Museum in Indiana. John also participates in the Indiana County Football Club and Academy Travel Soccer.

John is an altar server and cantor for weekly school Masses. He is a choir member, an altar server and a volunteer at his home parish. He served with the Pontifical Altar Server Corps for Masses at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral and Saint Joseph Chapel at Christ Our Shepherd Center, Greensburg. He also served several events with Bishop Larry J. Kulick, including Holy Thursday Chrism Masses, priest and deacon ordinations, Christmas Night Market Mass, Indiana region confirmation, All Souls Mass at Saint Patrick's Historic Catholic Church, and pastor installation at Church of the Resurrection Parish.

John has a heart for service and love. He is the oldest of four children and is determined to make sure his siblings are always happy and loved. He is considering several vocations for his future, including a call to religious life as well as a trade, such as a diesel mechanic.



John Lingenfelter



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Saint John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School is MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL

By Layla Georgi, Grade 8

At Saint John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown, we are more than just a school: We are a family. We are always there for each other and always help one another when needed. We are all so involved in the school—students, parents and teachers are always doing something to better the school.

All the teachers and staff set examples for us students. In all our classes, even when it is not religion, our faith is always incorporated into our lessons.

Our school is also very fun. We always have fun things planned, such as Santa Secret Shop, Olympic Day, Marathon Day and many more.

Our school has many extracurricular activities, such as basketball, flag football, cross country, volleyball, Leo Club, esports and cheerleading. We have a newspaper staff that gets together once a month to discuss what each of the students will be writing about for the next edition. This helps the students be more involved in our school.

We also have a student council that has meetings once a month to discuss ideas the students have for our school.

Eighth-grade students have kindergarten buddies. Each eighth-grader is paired with a kindergartener when we go to church on Thursday mornings.

Each month, a different grade reads at Mass, starting with eighth grade and going down to third grade. We have a school choir that sings at every Mass.

Each week there are two altar servers. We have multiple altar servers, so they are different from week to week. I think our school Masses are nice because the students are so involved.

We have amazing Spanish and STEM programs. Learning a language when you are in first grade at the age of 6 or 7 is much easier than starting when you are in ninth grade. This will help the students learn much easier and know more about Spanish going into high school.

Our STEM program helps us in many ways. We do many fun things. The program lets the students be creative in so many of the projects that we do. We have done coding, hydraulic mazes and so many more fun things.

Our religion teacher has done a fantastic job teaching all of the students. All the other teachers make sure we understand what we are learning and make sure that they are preparing us well. Teachers are always willing to help with anything we need, and the students know they are always there if we need them.

They also give great advice about life. Especially the seventh-grade teacher, Mr. Goletz. He has great life lessons.

Our principal, Mrs. Roskovensky, has done an amazing job making the school what it is today. She is always open to any ideas the students have. Our school would not be where we are today without her.

I really will miss it next year when I have to go to high school.



Layla Georgi

and maintaining order in the classroom. For two years, she has been elected sergeant-at-arms, maintaining this position because of her leadership skills. She maintains a straight A's.

Outside of school, Layla dances three nights a week and on weekends. She also babysits and works in her parents' coffee shop.

The faculty was unanimous in their decision that Layla represents all of the ideals set forth by the school.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Eighth-grader Layla Georgi is the daughter of Charlie and Beth Georgi. The family are parishioners at Saint Therese, Little Flower of Jesus Parish, Uniontown.

Nominated by Principal Mrs. Christine Roskovensky and the faculty, Layla is a true leader in the classroom as well as in the community. In school, faculty and staff look to Layla for her sound skills in communication

“ We are more than just a school: We are a family. ”



Students Grow in FAITH, ACADEMICS AND LEADERSHIP at Saint John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School

By Alice Li, Grade 8

It's the diversity, opportunities and the amazing students, teachers and staff that make Saint John the Evangelist Regional Catholic School in Uniontown.

I began attending Saint John's in fourth grade. Although I was nervous about transferring over to a new school, I quickly realized I had nothing to worry about. From the first day, the school's staff and students welcomed me with open arms. This is just one of many reasons why Saint John's School is so great; being so welcomed, I knew that this was the place for me.

Saint John's offers many great educational and exciting opportunities as well as contests. We participate in many programs such as sports, essay/poster contests and other programs like the Leo Club, the school newspaper, the mechanical design contest and the reading competition.

The supportive and fun environment is something that makes me look forward to coming to school every day. This school allows me and other students and even adults to grow academically, spiritually and emotionally. In addition to strong academics, the school organizes many enjoyable events, including field trips, assemblies, Olympic Day, and our annual Christmas and spring musicals.

The students in grades fourth through eighth are also encouraged to take on roles throughout our student council. Being able to take on these positions greatly forms your leadership skills. The council is greatly involved in the many fun events that the school holds.

We also attend school Mass together each week. Each month a grade out of eighth and third gets the chance to read at Mass. This is a great way to strengthen your public speaking skills.

Adding to that, the school also has seventh- and eighth-grade students participating in forensic speeches.

This school's support system is one of a kind. The wonderful staff, teachers and students create a loving, inspiring, and welcoming community for everyone. Mrs. Roskovensky, our principal, is an outstanding leader and role model for all of us. Her dedication, kindness and constant encouragement truly all make the biggest difference.



The efforts of each of our teachers also play a huge role in making our school great. Mrs. Emerson, our eighth-grade teacher, always goes above and beyond to make sure we understand what we're learning as well as being patient with us as we learn new things daily. Mrs. Bryan, our Spanish teacher, and Mrs. Kushnar, our religion teacher, are truly great guides along with help to me as well as to many others. All their teachings,

support and feedback have made an outstanding impact on me, and I will continue to carry them continuously.

Saint John's is not only a place of education but a place where students can grow personally. Our school is a place where we can be ourselves, make lifelong friends and be motivated to live up to our full potential. I'm so proud and honored to be a part of such a great school.

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FAITH FORMATION IS MOST IMPORTANT at Saint Sebastian Regional Catholic School

By Brielle Davanzo, Grade 6

Faith formation at Saint Sebastian Regional Catholic School, Belle Vernon, means a lot to me because I get to know about all the exciting stories from the Bible. I've learned basically everything I know about God from attending our school. This school has made me love religion so much that I look forward to religion class every day. It really does mean so much to me!

Saint Sebastian's education is preparing me for next year when I go to a bigger school. It is also helping me learn what it is going to be like in life. It doesn't only teach me about learning physically, but also mentally. At this school I've learned what family is supposed to be like, and my class basically is my family. The education here helps us be a family of God together.

I am being formed into a future leader in many ways, including getting the courage to go out and spread the Word of the Lord.

We are responsible for 20 hours of community service. We are also leaders and role models for the younger kids.

The community program that I participate in is making donations to the Early Act Club. I am collecting tabs from can lids for the Ronald McDonald House. Money from the tabs goes toward Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. This project means a lot because we can help people who are less fortunate than us.

My school is great because everyone here is very nice. I have literally grown up here, since I started preschool. There hasn't been a moment where I felt like I don't belong. Saint Sebastian School is great because we are all members of our school family. It truly is amazing!

“The education here helps us be a family of God together.”



Why Saint Sebastian Regional Catholic School is IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE

By Anthony Belluso, Grade 7

The faith formation program at Saint Sebastian Regional Catholic School, Belle Vernon, means a lot to me because it helps me be a better person and treat others with respect. I learn more about Jesus and how my faith can guide me. It helps me think about the kind of future I want and how to live the right way. It also helps me feel supported and make stronger friendships.

My education at my school prepares me for my future by helping me learn important skills for every subject. My teachers push me to do my best and to not give up on hard work. I learn how to stay organized and responsible, which will help me later in life.

This school gives me confidence and helps me believe that I can reach my goals. Because of my education, I feel ready to do bigger things in life.

I am being formed into a future leader by learning how to set a good example for others. Teachers show me how to act responsibly and make smarter choices. I try to help younger students in school when they need help. I am also learning how to work well with others and stay calm during challenges. All these things help me grow into a better person.

The community programs I take part in help me learn how to serve others in the way God wants us to. We help fundraise for people who need help. I also help set up church each Friday, which teaches me to be responsible. Sometimes we visit nursing homes. These are all amazing things that help me to learn to be a disciple of Christ.

My school is great because it teaches me about Jesus and how to live with faith. The teachers are very supportive and always want us to do our best. I have made a lot of great friends who make school fun every day. We do many activities that help us learn and grow as people. I always feel safe when I'm in school because of all the teachers.



Anthony Belluso

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Seventh-grader Anthony Belluso is the son of Robert and Lynn Ann Belluso. The family are parishioners of Saint Andrew the Apostle Parish, Monongahela.

Anthony is a student of outstanding character who makes a positive impact on our school community. He serves as a mentor to younger students, offering guidance, encouragement and support to help them feel confident and included. He willingly helps both students and faculty without being asked, showing responsibility and kindness in his everyday actions.

Anthony leads by example by demonstrating respect, maturity and a strong work ethic in and out of the classroom. His positive attitude and willingness to do the right thing make him an excellent role model for his peers. Anthony's actions reflect the values of our school and make our community a better place for everyone.

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The Divine Redeemer School Students Serve as **DISCIPLES OF CHRIST**

By Laney Beckwith, Grade 5

At The Divine Redeemer School in Ford City, we learn to be disciples of Christ. We go to church every Wednesday. At the beginning of the year, we go over to the church and Father Dinga teaches the new and returning students how to altar serve. We also get to do readings and petitions, bring up the gifts, be greeters and cross bear. We also get to do Stations of the Cross during Lent.

We learn how to be disciples of Christ by giving and doing things for people. We go caroling for Christmas at the hospital and make ornaments for the sick people. We also had a food drive for Thanksgiving. Our classes earned feathers on a turkey for each five items we brought in. Our school collected over 2,300 items!

We strengthen our relationship through the sacraments. We attend reconciliation at Christmas and Easter. Our second-graders have a special Mass for first Communion. We stay and pray during adoration after every Mass.



Laney Beckwith



Anthony Costa, Laney Beckwith, Lucas Cravenor, Penelope Eckenrode, Nora Smail, Piper Marks



COLLABORATION LEADS TO LEARNING at The Divine Redeemer School

By Sophia Buriak, Grade 4

The Divine Redeemer School in Ford City is great because I get to do collaborative day. It is fun because I get to be in groups with other people in other grades and make friends with them. The collaborative day unites the teachers pick are fun.

One of the units is "Christmas Around the World." You get to pick a country, make a PowerPoint about it and make a food from that country. You get to try food from the countries that other people picked.

Another unit is on the Iditarod where you and your partners get to make a sled with all the things the people would need. You get to pick a real person online and follow them every day to see who is winning.

I also liked the unit about invasive species because people came in to teach us about all types of invasive species and played games to help us know more. We also picked an invasive species to learn about and type out what we learned to make a "Wanted" poster to hang up.



Sophia Buriak

We did a unit about pollinators. We picked a pollinator to research, and we watched a video and answered questions on a paper. Then we went in the hallway to build a pollinator. After that we went in the fifth-grade room to see if the pollinator we built would actually work and pick up pollen to pollinate the flowers.

I love this school!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Ethan Buriak

Sixth-grader Ethan Buriak is the son of Alan and Jessica Buriak. They are parishioners of Christ, Prince of Peace Parish, Ford City.

Ethan excels in academics and has an internal drive for success. He leads by example and is a good role model for other students. He plays saxophone in the school band and participates in cross country, bowling, drama, STEM and robotics. Ethan is a server and lector for Masses at school and at his parish. Outside of school, he plays baseball and basketball. His teacher, Mrs. Mary Mazzotta, says with his competitive spirit and God-given talents, there is no doubt he will fulfill God's plan for him.

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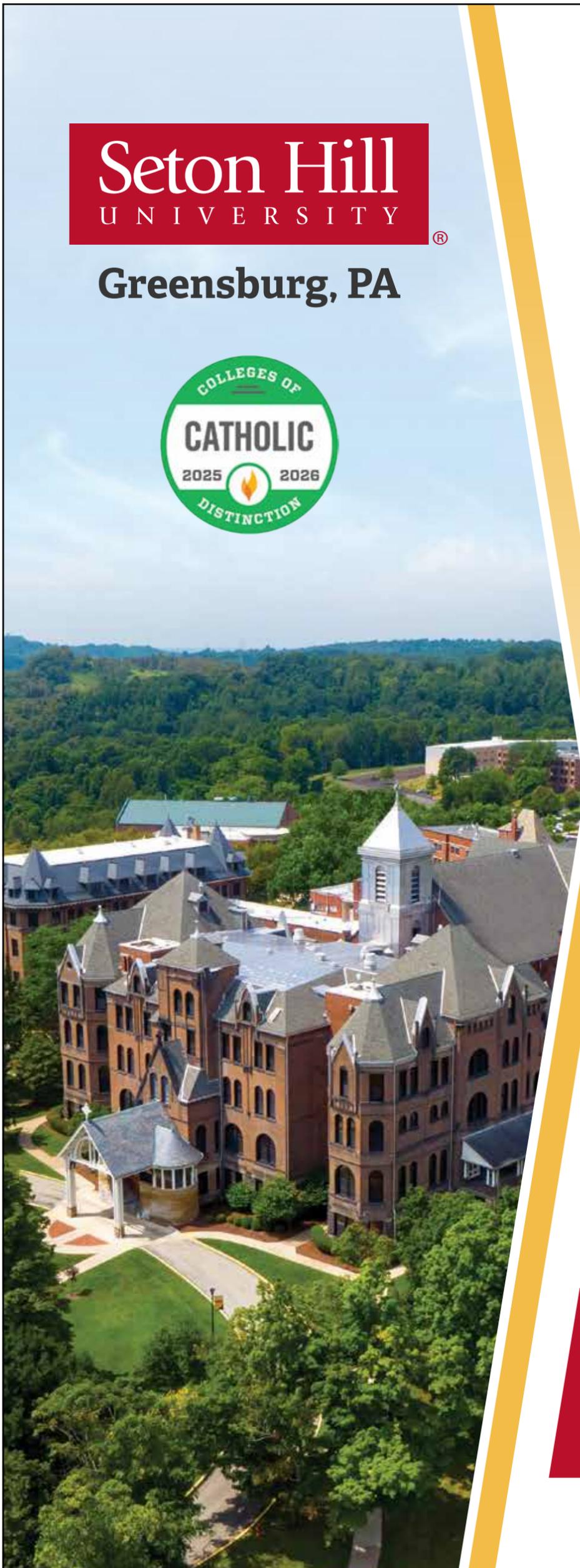
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