



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Photo included

SMCHS Students Raise Funds for Refugees

St. Mary Catholic High School religion teacher Gail Hawley likes to come up with creative ways to develop awareness of world issues and Catholic social teachings. In recent weeks, Hawley and her students watched videos of refugees from various countries arriving on the shores of Greece and discussed this and other world crises in light of Pope Francis's and the Church's emphasis on living out the Corporal Works of Mercy, which include welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty and sheltering the homeless.

In the days leading up to Thanksgiving break, Hawley came up with a unique way for her students to help Syrian refugees by supporting the work of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Samaritan's Purse, two relief organizations who are well known for their success in serving the needs of people in crisis. She asked her students to bring in quarters and other change on Tuesday, November 24. Hawley promised to give the students free time during their class period for as long as it took her to count the money collected.

Hawley's students donated more than \$300 in change during her five religion classes, and donors pitched in to bring the total to \$500. The students also created a large banner with positive messages of hope that will be sent to CRS and Samaritan's Purse along with the money collected.

"I tell my students that this is about solidarity, and about realizing that there is no difference between refugee human beings and our own brothers and sisters," Hawley stated. "We are powerless over what is going on overseas and we have no influence over what our state leaders choose to do about allowing refugees to come here, but we are not helpless. We *can* help those who are hungry, thirsty and in need of medical care by giving to organizations like Catholic Relief Services and Samaritan's Purse, who

are already there making a difference. We are one family, and reaching out in this way embodies the very corporal works of mercy my classes are studying.”

St. Mary Catholic High School (SMCHS) a regional high school, is part of [St. Mary Catholic Schools \(SMCS\)](#). The system also includes St. Mary Elementary Schools (St. Margaret Mary and St. Gabriel in Neenah, and St. Mary in Menasha), as well as St. St. Mary Catholic Middle School in Neenah. SMCHS is dedicated to the individual development of each student by providing an education focused on faith, academics and service.



Miss Hawley's 4th hour religion class

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