

The theme for St. Mary Catholic Schools this year is **SERVANT LEADERSHIP**. The servant leadership attribute that we are emphasizing in the month of December is "**Kindness**". Always be kind to others, and especially at this time of year, take time to be kind to yourself!

Curriculum and Professional Development

Our December in-service day focused on literacy. Our facilitator from the CESA 6 Literacy Center taught and modeled several instructional strategies. The teachers had the opportunity to try out the strategies to see how they would work in their classrooms.

Erin Loritz from CESA 6 also spent time visiting observing elementary classrooms in two of our schools and will observe at our middle and high school and the third elementary school at a later time. The purpose is twofold; to offer suggestions and celebrate the great things happening, and to adapt her presentations for future in-service days.

A new elementary initiative, dubbed the Aquinas Gifted and Talented program, is being developed for grades 3-5 by our system administrators. Eleanor Healy and Jill Ahles are conducting site visits to schools with G & T programs to identify best practices. The program will require a teacher with a special certification and curriculum. We anticipate this program to be developed for the 2017-18 school year.

Admissions/Enrollment

Currently, we have 430 total students registered for 2017-18. Our transition grade incentive offering for next year closed on November 30th; the numbers are as follows:

- Kindergarten – 37 total among the 3 schools (50 current Pre K)
- Grade 6 – 47 (64 current 5th grade)
- Grade 9 – 52 (54 current 8th grade)

Fine Arts

Our Christmas Concert Series concluded this week to great success. This was our first opportunity to distribute our new Fine Arts Program across our entire community of families at all five schools. Each concert featured a 4-color program insert with concert information and additional student artwork (6 inserts in all).

The Rhex Arboleda created a fantastic elementary Christmas Pageant "3 Wise Men and a Baby." This is our second year using purchased scripts for the elementary show which has created a much smoother production, as Rhex can focus on the singing and the acting, rather than the creating the story and transitioning the students on and off stage.

Dave Sawall and Pamela Barnhill are also growing a strong band program with 62 students in middle school band and 47 students in high school band. This concert was also the premier performance of our new Chamber Orchestra. This is the first time string instruments have become a part of our curriculum.

The HS/MS Choir concert went well with a huge increase in the number of choir students this year especially at the high school with our new teacher Spencer Jones. Sixty-six middle school students participate in our choirs. At the high school, 13 students participate in St. Mary Singers and 19 students in Soul Tones Vocal Ensemble. At the middle school, Mike Bailey worked with the students to create video introductions to each song which was a nice educational opportunity for students to learn about video technology and presentation skills. Over the last two weeks, Mr. Bailey also had his middle school students carol across our community.

Hayden Kraus and Spencer Jones worked with the drama students on songs for Spotlight Night, a new opportunity for students to perform pieces of their choice in a more casual setting. The first Spotlight Night was themed "Musical Theater" and opened to a packed crowd in the black box.

We continue to feature each of our schools' artwork in the hallway next to the FAEC (which has been dubbed "Gallery Hall"). Under the direction of Becky Bartow, Margaret Koskinen, and Jess Ott, this month features wonderful self-portrait murals by each elementary school, paintings, photography, drawings, and pastels from our talented high school students, and wonderful illuminations, sculptures, and drawings from our middle school students.

Our first fine arts newsletter was created as a supplement to our fine arts program. This newsletter will be published several times a year and can be read on our SMCS website.

HR & Staffing

- There were no hires/transfers in the past month.

Business Services: Finance-Technology-Food Service

- Work continued on preparation of the 2017-18 budget with the Finance Committee.
- The first audit of 2016-17 was completed with the report sent to DPI in advance of the December 15th deadline.

Fund Development

The 2015-16 donor report was mailed out at the end of November. It can also be found on the website (smcatholicschools.org) under the ABOUT US tab on the main page.

Annual Fund:

- Annual Fund YTD = \$71,100
- Giving Tuesday garnered \$825 – many of those dollars were new donors or 'second gifts' from people who have already given to this year's Annual Fund campaign.
- Development Committee has been brainstorming ways to increase AF giving by tying it to another effort (perhaps a match to create an operating endowment fund, create 'buckets' for people to designate their AF gift to, or working with SMCHS students to help raise AF funds).
- February: Phone-a-thon to select group of alumni (who have given in the past, but not yet this year).
- BOT Members: Only two people have made a gift to this year's AF campaign. Planning for 100% support this year – all should participate at any dollar level to help this very important cause.

Major Gifts:

- Met with Matt Brehmer from Remley & Sensenbrenner regarding the formation of SMCS Foundation and details of the Raymond Miller gift.

Event Update:

- Jumbo Gumbo event will be transformed into a Zephyr themed party combining Zephyr alumni with current Zephyr families. Event will be held on November 12, 2017 at Waverly Beach. Looking for volunteers (parent and alumni) to work on event – info meeting in January. Please pass along any names to Michelle asap.
- Wines Around the World: February 11 at North Shore Country Club
- Winter Escape: March 4 at The Outer Edge