

Big Steps...Little Feet

St. John's School Good News Newsletter

Thanksgiving Edition November, 2010



Who says school is all work and no play? Not these prayer partners! Treats are encouraged at most PP activities !



Mrs. Talone's third graders and Mrs. Baker's Pre K 3 class on All Saints Day

Prayer Partners

At Saint John's School each class is paired with another class to share various activities. Individual students are then assigned a "prayer partner." Prayer is sometimes very personal - a conversation with our God which is meant for God's ears alone. We also pray in community. Prayer partners sit together at monthly first Friday Masses and during Advent and Lenten liturgies. The older student's role is to show a good example to the their younger partner and to assist them with the prayers and hymns at Mass and liturgies. Prayer partners also encourage those who may be preparing for the sacraments. The fourth graders support the second graders as they prepare for First Penance and First Holy Communion and the first graders will send cards to the sixth graders to let them know they will be praying for them when they are confirmed in May. The prayer partner program is a long standing tradition at St. John's and has done much to bridge the gap between the older and younger children and has fostered many friendships which may never have arisen outside of the program. Most importantly, the program focuses on shared prayer which builds up the entire school community as we together grow closer in relationship with Jesus.

PEOPLE POLL

Big Steps asked "What are you grateful for this time of year?"



(Left to right)

Erika Leonard, Grade 6 : Friends and family because they support me and care for me

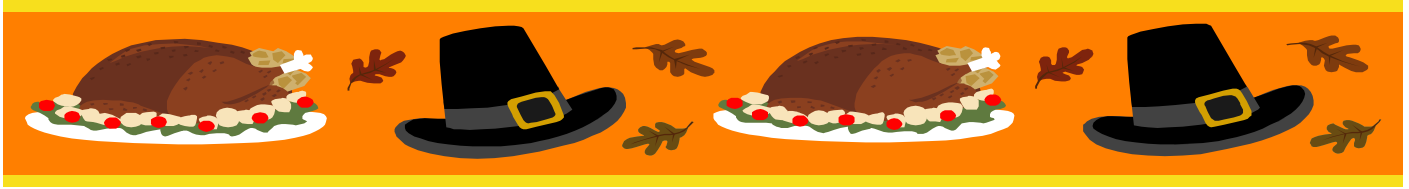
Christian Selverian, Grade 1: My parents because they love me

Zachary Politarhos, Grade 5: Family and food, especially turkey

Kayla Abt, Grade 5: God because He gives us all we can eat and the colors of Fall

Eddie Dulberg, Kindergarden: Family because they cook

Principal's Corner



Dear Parents and friends of St. John's School,

Our children here at St. John's School always provide joy and laughter.

Upon a very rare occasion, the principal might have to bring the "troops" to order by raising her voice ever so slightly. Recently, one observant kindergarten student noticed that Ms. K. Kelly wasn't too happy with the behavior in the lunchroom. On his way out the door, he backed up and said, "You look very pretty today." Could there be a future politician here?

The teachers recently took part in a meaningful in service opportunity on "Brain-based Learning." The emphasis was on "how" boys and girls learn, process information and develop. Various teaching strategies were suggested to enhance children's ability to learn. The factors of heredity, temperament, exposure and emotional experience were also discussed. The importance of "ritual" in a child's life was mentioned as being very critical to their development....time for bed, time to wake-up, mealtime, bedtime ritual of talking about the child's day...these are considered "anchor points" which influence and prepare the child for learning.

As Thanksgiving approaches, we all have grateful hearts for God's goodness to us and for our families and friends. Within St. John's School, we have much to be grateful for....our teachers, many helping parents and wonderful children. We wish you a very HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Ms. Kay Kelly, Principal

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT ON

Amber Duncan



A sixth grader at SJCS, Amber has an impressive theatrical arts resume. She has been very active in the Children's Theatre productions at the Media Theatre. These last three years she has performed as part of the ensemble in *Beauty and the Beast*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Ebenezer Scrooge*. She also understudied for the role of *Susan* in *Narnia* and had the opportunity to perform that lead role in 2009. Amber has performed solo voice recitals at the Media Theatre as well. Amber has appeared on stage at St. John's since 2007 and is looking forward to rocking the house in SJCS's spring musical *Schoolhouse Rock*! Keep a look out for this rising star!

Archdiocesan Choral Festival

Mrs. Elissa Purpura, our music teacher for students in grades 1 through 8, is pleased to announce that three students from St. John's have been chosen to participate in the annual Archdiocesan Choral Festival. They are sixth graders **Amber Duncan** and **Christie Shaughnessy**, and fifth grader, **Quinn Guilday**. The Festival which takes place in February brings together more than 100 students in grades four through six from 34 schools throughout the Archdiocese. Mrs. Purpura will spend several weeks teaching the girls the music to prepare them for this festive evening of song and movement at Bishop Shanahan High School. In March the chorus will perform again at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia as part of the Celebration of the Arts. This event is a tribute to the Catholic schools and the outstanding musical and artistic instruction available at both the elementary and high school levels. The elementary school chorus will join hundreds of other performers including jazz bands, a symphony orchestra, concert pianists, Irish step dancers, and vocalists. We congratulate Amber, Christie and Quinn for their talents which have brought them this honor and we thank Mrs. Purpura for her time and her dedication in nurturing the musical talents of our students.

It's official! ... SJCS Spring musical for 2011 is...

SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK

More details to follow on the Drama Club web page

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Letter from our Pastor

On Thursday, November 11, Rabbi Jeremy Gerber of Ohev Shalom came to visit me at St. John's. As part of our "tour" of the church and parish grounds I brought him into the Primary Unit so that he could meet some of our school students. Of course, the children were most friendly, attentive and interested in meeting a Rabbi and learning a little about the Jewish faith. I think that a visitor cannot learn the full story of St. John's without a visit to our school!

It is always a joy for me to be with our children during their recess time (so much energy!), during their lunch (they are good sharers!) in visits to their classrooms (especially when preparing for the sacraments) and of course, most of all, when we meet in church for First Friday Mass. As one of the children in kindergarten said to me the other day:

"I JUST LOVE THIS SCHOOL!" I feel the same way.

In this season of giving thanks, I am most grateful for Miss Kelly and our dedicated Faculty and Staff for so often going beyond the call of duty; for our school parents who so generously give of their time, talent and treasure to enhance our school experience; and, of course, for our wonderful students, the reason we do all that we do.

God bless!

Fr. Jim Bajorek



There is no substitute for books
in the life of a child.
~ Mary Ellen Chase ~

Third graders Lauren, Ricky and Grace are reading super achievers. (left)

Claire, Vincent and Olivia, future readers from Pre K 4, have fun with letter puppets Ms. A-Choo, Mr. Buttons and Ms. Funny Feet. (right)



Reading is fundamental...the building block to learning just about everything else. This year at SJCS our principal and faculty are focusing on ways to accelerate students' reading performance. Strides have already been made through increased staff development, exposing students to good literature, and providing opportunities for taking part in book clubs and other activities surrounding reading achievement. **Mrs. Fisher's Pre K4 students** are being introduced to the alphabet through the fun loving "Letter People." The Letter People are puppets who come with their very own letter song and their very own rhyming poem. Last week Ms. F and her Funny Feet visited the classroom. The kids really enjoy meeting each new character and playing with the puppets.

Mrs. Talone, our new **third grade** teacher, has some pretty fun incentives to have her students become reading super achievers. Students read for twenty minutes every day in the classroom and are encouraged to read for at least twenty minutes at home very evening. Each student has a reading log that is signed by Mrs. Talone or a parent acknowledging every 20 minutes of reading time. To track their progress each student has their own umbrella on the classroom bulletin board. Once they have logged 10 steps of reading (200 minutes of reading), they earn a raindrop to place on their umbrella. Once each student has earned 10 raindrops, they get to dry off with a Disney movie party. Once each student has earned twenty raindrops (that's a monsoon of reading - 66.6 hours/student), it's time to put away the books and reach for the pizza. **Mrs. Dorsey's sixth grade** is reading a seasonal classic, Charles Dickens', *A Christmas Carol*. The culminating activity will be a field trip to see a performance at the Hedgerow or Media Theater.



Passport to History

The Delaware County Historical Society created its Passport to History Program to bring history to life for children and their families across Delaware County. The Historical Society distributes passports to students and each time a student visits a historical site they receive a stamp on their visa pages. Saint John's fourth graders have been participating in this program for a number of years and the students do

love going back in time as they visit these historical landmarks. **Ms. Dishaw** organizes a visit to the Brandywine Battlefield for the fourth grade class every spring which guarantees them at least one stamp in their passports. Children who receive five stamps in their passport book within twelve months receive an award as fifth graders. Popular locations which the students may visit throughout the past year are our own Thomas Leiper House, the Brandywine Battlefield, Brandywine River Museum, Linvilla Orchards, Hedgerow Theater, Minshall House, Our Lady of Angels Convent and Old St. Thomas Church. Recently, the Historical Society visited St. John's to present the now fifth graders certificates of achievement for their participation in the passport program.

Update from our Super 7 Seventh graders

Miss Salvati's seventh grade has been keeping busy these last few months of school. As leadership members of the newly established SRC (Student Representative Committee) they have organized fun events, such as the Haunting at Halloween and served the school community as academic aides to the fourth grade and journalists for the school newspaper. The SRC is also planning a canned tuna fish drive to benefit the St. Francis DeSales Outreach Center in Southwest Philadelphia. The seventh grade recently visited the center and assisted in food distribution to the community learning much about the challenges facing the urban poor and homeless.

Our seventh graders enjoy their prayer partnership with Kindergarten and their Book Club with principal, Miss Kelly. This coming Wednesday they will be performing in a Thanksgiving Play for the entire school community. We thank them for all they have done and for giving the younger students a model for Christian discipleship.

What's Cooking after School?

The After School Cooking Club

Moderators: Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Perry & Mrs. O'Kane



lasagna



death by chocolate



pot luck ?

The SJCS Cooking Club is held every Wednesday afternoon from 3 - 4:15. K - 3 meets one week and 4-7 meets the following week. The older children have learned how to make lasagna, homemade Italian gravy and traditional Thanksgiving side dishes. The younger children have decorated cupcakes, made homemade hot chocolate, a dessert called death by chocolate, macaroni and cheese, and pigs in a blanket. Look out Rachel Ray!

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Wednesdays with Madame and Thursdays with Senora

According to St. John's foreign language instructors, the day that each of them spend at St. John's School is their favorite day of the week. Both **Mrs. Rosemary Eustace**, our French teacher, and **Mrs. Donna Welch**, our Spanish teacher, remarked that the atmosphere at SJCS makes it a joy to teach because the staff and students are so cooperative.

Madame Eustace, often called "Mrs. Madame" by her Kindergarten students, has taught French at St. John's for 18 years. She graduated from Chestnut Hill College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in French Literature and went on to teach French, Spanish and Latin at St. Maria Goretti High School for nearly two decades and a few years at Conwell-Egan as well. Children in grades K through 4 receive 45 minutes of French instruction weekly. Students learn the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary as Kindergarteners, first graders master their colors and numbers and by fourth grade students are writing French compositions and studying the geography of France. The children especially enjoy celebrating holy days and holidays with Madame Eustace where they get a glimpse of how French children's customs are different from their own traditions.

Senora Welch, la profesora de Espanol, earned her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Dickinson College in 1972 and went on to teach Spanish for four years at Ridley Jr. High School. During this same time period she earned a Masters Degree in Education from West Chester State College. After leaving Ridley, Senora stayed at home with her sons for 16 years and she feels very fortunate to have had that time with them. The teaching bug bit again (it is in her blood - Senora Welch is from a family of teachers) and it was St. John's good fortune that Senora joined the faculty as St. John's first Spanish teacher in 1992. She has been with us ever since! Senora stresses that the key to keeping her students engaged is to make her Spanish classes fun. Senora strongly believes that her students will be well served to pursue foreign language in high school and college and wants to set a positive and fun tone at this introductory level. Students in grades 5 thru 7 are taught vocabulary, conversation, and grammar but Senora also intersperses lessons about culture including art, fashion, cuisine, education and religious customs. Senora assigns many culture research projects and encourages the students to present something creative. Our youngest students are also receiving Spanish language instruction. Our Pre kindergarten students are taught the alphabet, numbers and their very own Spanish names. Saint John's is blessed to have these veteran, talented, fun loving teachers on faculty. Merci, Madame Eustace! Gracias, Senora Welch!

Rosetta Stone, the world's leading language-learning software, is being used at SJCS to enhance our students' knowledge of the Spanish language. Children use it both in the technology class and the designated Spanish class.



Senora Welch reviews Patrick O's homework assignment...A++



Fourth Graders Grow in Grace As They Study the Lives of the Saints

On October 29th Ms. Dishaw's fourth graders gathered in church to celebrate and honor the lives of the saints. Each fourth grader chose a saint to research keeping in mind a possible Confirmation name for sixth grade. The children wrote their own speaking parts and created their own costume. They then presented before the school community with family & friends in attendance! They did a marvelous job!



Congratulations, Alums!

How proud we are to recognize the exceptional academic accomplishments of our SJCS graduates. Now juniors and seniors at Strath Haven High School and Cardinal O'Hara High School, the following students have been inducted into their school's chapter of the National Honor Society:

Chris Bachman, Sara Chominski, Michele Culbert, Emily Farrell and Jen Glace from O'Hara and Katie Balmer, Cate Cronin, Annalese DiPasquale, Catherine Doyle, Shannon Dunn, Kara Naccarelli, Jim Reese and Ryder Scott from Strath Haven. Special kudos to Kara and Jimmy for being named commended students by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. We wish you all continued success in all of your high school endeavors.

Father Bajorek congratulates National Honor Society members

Front row (left to right) Katie Balmer, Jen Glace, Annalese DiPasquale. (Second row, left to right) Cate Cronin, Shannon Dunn, Ryder Scott, Chris Bachman, Jim Reese, and Rev. James Bajorek. Sara Chominski, Michelle Culbert, Catherine Doyle, Emily Farrell, and Kara Naccarelli are not pictured.

First Grade Saints

November 4th was the day the saints came marching into the primary unit. Our aspiring first grade saints gave presentations to their proud families and friends by dressing up as their patrons and sharing interesting facts about their lives. The students learned about St. Agatha Lin who was a teacher in China and St. Sampson the Hospitable who became a doctor so that he could care for the physical as well as the spiritual well being of his people. We learned that St. Mark was St. Paul's best friend and wrote his Gospel in Greek so that the Gentiles would know the Word of God. We even had a visit from St. Nicholas, whose feast day is fast upon us.



Front row: Mark Z. -St. Mark, Leah M. - St. Lea, Caroline G. - St. Agatha Lin, Kevin B.- St. Kevin, Emily A.- St. Emily, Juliette L. - St. Julia, Cara O. - St. Suzanna. Back row: Andrea W. - St. Ann, Maeve M. - St. Catherine of Siena, Michael V. - St. Michael the Archangel, Nicholas K. - St. Nick, Prima B. - St. Rose of Lima, Tiawo A - St. Sampson the Hospitable, Christian S. -St. Christopher, Kenny A. - St. Jeremy, Brian F.- St. John the Baptist, Katie O.- St. Katherine Drexel, Emily M.- St. Emily, Caroline W.- St. Elizabeth



Congratulations to **Erin O'Brien** for her recent installation as an altar server....our parish family is grateful for your service to our Church. Congrats also to second grader, **Maggie Forbes**, the Archdiocesan Cross Country Champion for her age division. A special thank you to the Home & School for sponsoring the visit from the Zoo on Wheels this coming Tuesday. In keeping with our FIRST DO NO HARM theme Pre K 3 & Pre K 4 will enjoy a **Rainforest Safari** and learn about the endangered animals in this special ecosystem.