



SAINT MARY

STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

Spring 2017

Dear Friends of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, *Saint Mary, Star of the Sea, light of hope for me!*

The theme of hope lighted our way this past academic year. With Mary as our guiding star, we followed her Son Jesus Christ throughout the year in song, Scripture study, art and the lives of the saints. At this time in history, we are called to strengthen our hope in the power and wisdom of God. More than ever, we can believe in the truth of God's Word, "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

I am so happy to share this spring newsletter with you and encourage you to read and reflect on the pictures and the stories. The students, faculty, staff and parents give us reason to have hope for the future. They have strived this past year to excel in learning new things, to love God in word and action, and to share their resources of time, money and possessions with the poor and those in need of help. They have learned about the world around them through the living shoreline and marine life in the bay in our school's backyard. They have studied the different cultures in our country and countries around the world within the context of the liturgical celebration of Christmas. They have participated in service projects, clubs, athletic events and expanded their knowledge of music and art. In short, they have experienced the mission of our school:

Saint Mary Star of the Sea School provides a Christ-centered Catholic education to PK3 through 8th grade students of all faiths under the leadership of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia. The spiritual, intellectual and social development of all students is provided in a safe and disciplined environment. With a solid foundation in academic and moral excellence, the students are prepared for success in high school and beyond. (Revised 2017)

From this newsletter, it is my personal hope that you experience God's love and goodness in a special way as you witness the positive influence you have made in the lives of the many young people who attend Saint Mary Star of the Sea School. I thank God for you, the friends and benefactors of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, for your prayers, friendship and financial support.

May God bless you and your families with a grace-filled summer!

**Sincerely in Our Lady, Star of the Sea,
Sister Mary John, O.P.
Principal**

Guest Speakers bring Unique Experiences to Saint Mary's!



Guest speakers play an important role in enhancing our students' learning experience. They bring to the classroom their

expertise in a subject area and can convey current, realistic information, as well as a perspective that cannot be found in a textbook. This year, our students have enjoyed speakers from NASA, the College of William and Mary, News Channel 3, Hampton University, the Phoebus Fire Department, the City of Hampton, Saint Joseph Catholic Church, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Haitian Ministry, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Program, The Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS); and many more. Some of these speakers also have close ties to our own students, such as Mrs. Renata Platt, great grandmother of Haleigh Binder, who came to tell us her story of living in World War II Germany; Officer Hughes, father of Patrick Hughes, from the Virginia State Police, who spoke with our students about the dangers of substance abuse and Dr. Martin Cruz and Mrs. Sara Pickett who gave a lesson on health to our students. These experiences are ones that our students will remember for years to come!



An Owl Dissection Activity

Although our 2nd grade students were very excited to participate in an owl pellet dissection activity, they still couldn't hide their funny faces as they opened those pellets! The dissection activity was part of the Nancy Larson Science unit on birds where they studied all about birds - including the different kinds, how they build nests, what their young are called, including a focus on owls. The Nancy Larson Science program provides hands-on laboratory experiences to introduce the students to different parts of science at a very early age, including dissection!

**STEM Days Ignite Interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

Ms. Gilliam coordinated several STEM Days this year to engage our 2nd – 4th grade students in activities involving science, technology, engineering and math. To further connect these days to our students' daily lives, the themes centered around Christmas, Easter, and Valentine's Day. Students rotated between stations to design, build and construct various projects. The activities also taught them to work creatively together and to communicate with each other in order to develop plans for solving a challenge. At Saint Mary's, we think it is never too early to spark our students' interest in science, technology, engineering and math—or to help them think about pursuing a STEM career in college!

MUSICAL STUDENTS AT SAINT MARY'S!

Our students underwent a musical experience with Mr. Jamie Auberg, from Auberg Instructional Innovations. Mr. Auberg brought two unique musical activities to Saint Mary's. The Instrument Petting Zoo lesson gave our students the opportunity to try musical instruments from the four different instrument families: percussion, woodwinds, strings, and brass. In the Paper Magic lesson, the students combined art, science, physics, and technology to create working musical instruments out of paper. They applied their full creativity to construct paper drums, paper flutes and paper maracas!





STUDENTS PLANT FLOWERS TO REPRESENT THE GROWTH OF VIRTUES WITHIN THEMSELVES

During the school year, Virtue Club students discuss how virtues help each of them blossom and grow to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. To exemplify the beautiful results of living the virtues, this spring, the students planted flowers in the beds around the cafeteria. Earlier in the year, they also planted *Forget Me Not* flowers in the raised flower beds located near the statue of Mary by the primary building. The students have been taking care of these flowers and are now seeing the beautiful star blue flowers blossom. They are looking forward to continuing to live the virtues they have learned and seeing the fruit of their hard work in the coming months.



A Unique Hands-on Lesson on Fish Adaptations

Our 2nd and 4th grade students participated in a close and personal experience with different kinds of fish through a presentation by guest speakers from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. The students learned about animal adaptations and the various ways that fish can protect themselves in their natural habitats. After viewing a presentation about the adaptations, the students touched and observed a variety of preserved fish. Finally, the students were instructed to state the specific adaptations their fish uses to find food or avoid being eaten. This was another fun Marine Science activity which aligned with the science curriculum.

Crowning Blessed Mary with one of God's most Beautiful Creations

Saint Mary's continues its tradition of crowning our Blessed Mother Mary at our Annual May Procession ceremony. On this special day, our 2nd grade students who have celebrated the sacrament of First Eucharist are honor guards for our 8th grade students during the procession. This is a special ceremony when our school family gathers near a statue of Mary to honor her as our heavenly Mother. Before the statue of Mary is crowned with a beautiful wreath of flowers by two of our eighth grade students, the children present flowers to Mary. The ceremony ends with singing and praising God for the gift of Mary and for the love she has for all of us.



**MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
SUPPORT HAITIAN MINISTRY**

Middle school students supported the Haitian Ministry at Saint Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic Church by raising funds to help four students in Haiti attend school for a full year. To raise funds, students pledged to live in ways similar to the ways people live in Haiti. For a full week, students gave up technology, did the dishes by hand, helped prepare dinner, and cleaned the house and other such tasks. Father Michenet DuPortal, from Saint Michel's parish in Boucan-Carré in Haiti, visited Saint Mary's to thank the students for their support.

**There's No Place like Saint Mary's to
perform the Wizard of Oz!**

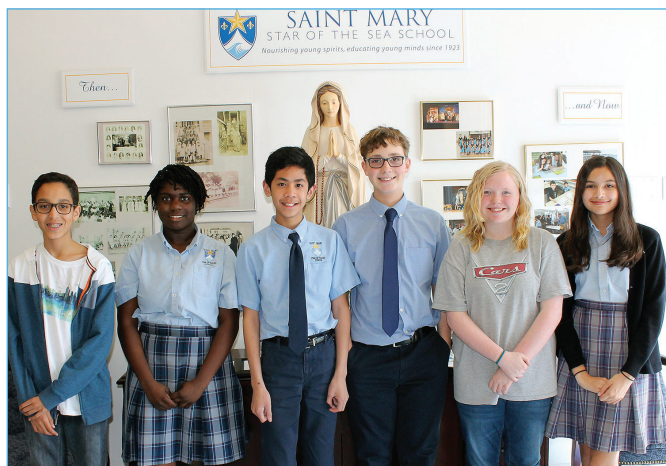
Our 8th grade students had the most enjoyable experience as they performed the Wizard of Oz at the American Theatre under the direction of Saint Mary's Alum, Angela Stellute Ballard. Student actors gained valuable public speaking skills, but also many life skills; among them were cooperation, problem solving, communication, and empathy. As they developed their characters, they also learned to express themselves through voice, facial expressions and body language. The talent, time and creativity of the students working behind the scenes with props, costumes and scenery were also key components to the success of the play.





In Life Science, Students Experience Hands-on Dissections!

The 6th grade science curriculum focuses on life science. This year began with a study of the various animal phyla progressing from the simplest organisms to the most complex. Dissecting earthworms started this process of investigation and research. Next, the students dissected and studied clams, oysters, crayfish, frogs, and perch. They studied marine animals ranging from single-celled organisms and plankton to the more complex organisms such as frogs and perch. Needless to say, these students have experienced an eye-opening experience!



FORENSICS CLUB STUDENTS EXCEL AT COMPETITIONS

Public speaking is a skill that can help students with their current studies, civic participation, job searches, career development, and even personal relationships. Under the direction of parent volunteers Mrs. Karen Cruz and Ms. Andrea Mayo-Santos, a group of students in the Saint Mary's Forensics team combined public speaking and forensics to garner awards at both the Forensics League of Tidewater Catholic Middle Schools Competition and at the Walsingham Academy Middle School Invitational Forensics Tournament. Congratulations to winners Julian Hayes, Jasmine Brown, Parker Cruz, Bryant Green, Haleigh Binder, and Saira Yusuf, for their commitment and dedication!

Students Build Buoys to Simulate Real Navigation Safety Devices

As a culminating lesson in physical science for 7th grade and oceanography for 8th grade, students had the opportunity of building water buoys with VIMS staff members. With the inclusion of Marine Science, this STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) project was a perfect challenge for inquisitive minds of these eager students. The construction of buoys using PVC pipes proved the importance and the effect of surface area on buoyancy; this will help them to construct a permanent buoy to carry equipment and probes to test the water quality of Mill Creek in the future. The data will be compared with research data from VIMS at various locations. The learning goal for the students was to compare and contrast data to determine the causes of various observations. Way to go, future scientists, mathematicians, engineers and technology experts!



DONATE THROUGH TAX CREDIT PROGRAM AND DEDUCT 65%

This past school year, 46 students received over \$35,000.00 in scholarships from the Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit Program, which reduced their tuition to levels their families could afford. Next year, we hope to extend scholarship assistance to even more students. Not only does it provide an exceptional educational opportunity for local children who would not be able to come to Saint Mary's, it offers donors 65% of their donation returned to them in Virginia tax credits. For more information about donating scholarships through Virginia's Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit Program, please contact Noelle Pincus at 757-723-6358.



● ● ● ABOUT VIRGINIA'S EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT SCHOLARSHIPS TAX CREDITS ● ● ●

- Program offers donors 65% of their donation returned to them in Virginia tax credits.
- Donors who itemize ALSO receive federal and Virginia tax deductions for charitable contributions.
- Donations appreciated stock ALSO eliminates capital gains taxes.

What's Great About Virginia's Tax Credit Program?

A tax credit allows you to subtract the amount of the credit – dollar for dollar- from the total you owe the state in taxes, not from taxable income. It is not necessary to itemize in order to use tax credits. Use it like a coupon when you prepare your taxes. Tax Credits directly reduce tax bills.

What's different about this program?

Donations for tax credits cannot be directly donated to the school, but instead must go to an approved scholarship foundation, such as the Diocese of Richmond's McMahon Parater Foundation for Education.

Saint Mary's Unveils New Fundraisers for 2017

Saint Mary Star of the Sea is excited to be looking at new fundraisers for the 2017-18 academic year. We have recently surveyed our parents and with confidence are moving forward to our new fall fundraiser: **The All Star Raffle!** We will be selling raffle tickets starting September 1, 2017 – October 31, 2017. The tickets will be \$10 each and we will sell as many as we can! The raffle itself will take place every day in the month of November. We will be giving away \$100.00 each day to a lucky winner. On the last day of the month we will draw a \$1,000.00 WINNER!

This summer, check our website to find out how you can support our **ALL STAR RAFFLE**.

Saint Mary's Receives Grant to Upgrade Access and Security System

We recently applied for and received a Diocesan Matching Grant to update the school's video access and security system. The matching grant was in the amount of \$10,000. The other half of the money was raised through the generous support of our annual 50/50 Raffle. We are so thankful for our generous supporters!



A SUCCESSFUL CASINO NIGHT NETS \$25,000 FOR SAINT MARY'S!

Our annual Casino Night and Auction took place on March 25, 2017. Thank you to all who attended this night of fun and fellowship! Over \$25,000 was raised this year! We are thankful to the generous contributions of sponsors, donors, attendees, parents and teachers; these funds will contribute to the school scholarship fund and the resource tutoring program. A special thank you to this year's sponsors, Pomoco Auto Group, Towne Bank and Pincus Construction. With your kind and generous donations we were able to offset the cost of the beer, wine and food! Save the Date: March 3rd is the date for next year's Auction Night... we hope to see you there!



Thank you to all who supported this event!



OUR GRADUATES SPEAK FOR SUCCESS STORIES THEMSELVES!

Celia Pincus, Class of 2008

"Saint Mary Star of the Sea School prepared me for high school and college very well. Not only did the school provide us with an advanced education in core subjects,

but it gave students a variety of extracurricular activities that allowed us to become well rounded and responsible individuals in more than one area of our lives."

"As an adult I see the importance of building a great foundation and a set of values from a young age. I now use those that I learned from Saint Mary's in my job as a nurse every day by carrying the sense of responsibility and respect for all people into my work."

"The most important things I learned at Saint Mary's were respect, responsibility, and the importance of faith in God. My strong faith in the Lord was instilled from the beginning of my time at Saint Mary's through the example of my teachers, the Sisters and the school environment."

- Saint Mary Star of the Sea School Child of God Award.
- Peninsula Catholic High School: National Jr. Honor Society, Student Council Association Officer, Mu Alpha Theta Mathematics Honor Society,
- Retreat Team Leader, Cross Country Team Captain.
- Riverside College of Health Careers, Diploma in Professional Nursing
- Currently Attending Old Dominion University: Bachelor degree in Nursing (Dean's List)
- Employed by Riverside Regional Medical Center as a Registered Nurse, General Surgery floor.

★ We want to hear about your success story: e-mail us at development.smss@gmail.com or ★
go to www.saintmarystarofthesea.com, under Alumni tab, "Tell us about yourself."

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE FOLLOWING DATES!

OCTOBER 7th
Golf Tournament

OCTOBER 14th
Low Country Boil

NOVEMBER
All Star Raffle Drawings



SAINT MARY
STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

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We are grateful for all the ways
our friends partner with our
school to support our mission.

Your Gifts Make
a Difference at
Saint Mary's

Thank You!

MISSION STATEMENT

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- Find us on Twitter  : @SaintMaryStar
- Connect with us on LinkedIn  : Saint Mary Star of the Sea School
- **Saint Mary Alumni!** We want to hear from you. Please go to our website saintmarystarofthesea.com. Click on the Alumni tab and fill out two surveys: *"Tell us about yourself."* and *"How did we do?"*
- To receive our newsletter regularly please email us at development@saintmarystarofthesea.com

