



A Newsletter of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School

2022-23

"How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the great good He has done for me?"

This theme chosen for the Jubilee Year enabled us all to reflect each day on what we can be grateful for. It was a year of gratitude for our school and it helped us to be ready for the blessings which flow after a Year of Jubilee.

The blessings have already begun, and Mr. Joe Branco has arrived to begin his tenure as the new principal with Sister Immaculata as the Vice Principal. We are so grateful for the gifts Mr. Branco brings and look forward to what God will do as we begin the next 100 years at St. Mary Star of the Sea School.

Sister Mary Cecilia Goodrum, O.P.



A Jubilee Year in Review

The year 2023 marked the 100th Jubilee year since Saint Mary Star of the Sea School was founded and charged with the mission of providing a strong Catholic education to families in the community. This was certainly a historical year and it was celebrated with an array of special activities and events that brought together students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and friends of Saint Mary's.

The celebrations started in August 2023 when we welcomed Mayor Donnie Tuck to our campus. Mayor Tuck brought a proclamation from the City of Hampton acknowledging the contributions that Saint Mary Star of the Sea School has made to our community.

In September, Bishop Knestout offered a special Mass to our students. He then led our faculty, staff, and students on a Eucharistic procession followed by the blessing of the school buildings.

In February, our faculty, staff, and students celebrated the 100th day of school of this 100th year in 1920's style. On that day, many of our faculty, staff, and students wore their 1920's attire. We ended the day with a Charleston competition in which our 6th graders outperformed all grade levels. We thank Mrs. Marino and Mrs. Wolcott for choreographing the dance and preparing the students.

The celebrations culminated with a wonderful Jubilee weekend on May 12 & 13 when we invited family, friends, students, and alumni of Saint Mary's to a Family Fun Night, a Vigil Mass with Bishop Knestout, and a simplified May Procession for our Saturday guests. The weekend ended with a Jubilee dinner.



School Happenings

Marine Science is Back!

When spring arrived, all the natural beauty that surrounds our school came to life. Our marine science club re-started in April. The students learned about the importance of maintaining a balance in the blue crab populations, creating and maintaining oyster bars, and being a part of the solution, not part of the problem when it comes to protecting the bay. Our students learned to be "Stewards of the Sea" through hands-on activities while participating in this extra-curricular class.



Teachers Encourage Love for Reading

In Kindergarten, our students celebrated Read Across America Day by devouring Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs & Ham prepared by Mrs. Ross! Read Across America was launched in 1998 and is the nation's largest celebration of reading to encourage children to read, read, read!

Guest Speakers Return to the Classrooms!

After a two-year hiatus due to Covid, 2023 was the year when we welcomed our parent volunteers and guest speakers back to our classrooms. While some of our guests came to read to their children's classrooms, others came to share their expertise with our students.



Way to Go Sentinels!



In this 100th Jubilee year, our sports teams excelled!

Our girls' volleyball team moved up from last place in 2021 to 3rd place in 2022. Our soccer team was very popular; they had a lot of fun and our coaches were very dedicated. We were very proud of our cross-country team who finished first place for the season. A special congratulations to our 8th grader, Aiden Rhodes, who placed first in every race.

During our Basketball season, the boys' team worked very hard. They won some games and lost others, but they never gave up. The girls' team placed 2nd in 2023. They competed in a very exciting playoff game with Ware Academy. Special congratulations to our star players, Autumn Baker and Abigail Pincus.

School Happenings

We Celebrated Students' Heritage!

Saint Mary's celebrated the diversity of our student body by hosting Heritage Day and inviting parents to share their cultural heritage and traditions with our students throughout the school year.



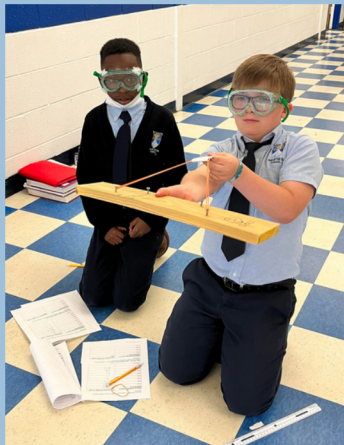
Saint Mary's Form Leaders

At Saint Mary's, our middle school students are given leadership roles throughout the school year. This includes highlighting them as role models at a special Leadership Mass and giving them opportunities to work with the younger children.



Hands-on Science

The 5th grade students who were studying kinetic and potential energy collected data using a device meant to show 'elastic potential energy.'



First Graders Become Business Entrepreneurs



First-grade students learned about what goods and services meant by hosting a mini-economy activity. They became producers and made products to sell to their peers. They learned their product was a want and not a need. Buyers (other SMSS students) visited their storefront to purchase their products using the currency they designed. The students had the privilege to work with 7th and 8th-grade students to design their products and create their storefront advertisements.

Learning Through Field Trips



Instructional field trips provide students with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of a topic. This year, field trips were plentiful. The 7th graders visited the Mariner's Museum where our students learned how watercraft and related devices are designed and operated after taking into consideration scientific concepts. Third and first graders attended a full STEM Day held at Langley Air Force Base. Throughout the school year students have visited the library, ate at a Spanish restaurant, visited museums, and attended performances, all with the goal of expanding their experiential knowledge.

Families Come Together for Prayer

On the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, the school hosted its first Luminarias evening. During the day, the students made their own luminarias bags highlighting what they are grateful for. Later in the day, parents and students came together for an evening of prayer.



Special Blessings & Activities for Catholic Schools Week



Catholic Schools Week was a special time to grow closer to Jesus through prayer, music, fun activities, a special adoration, a Faith Rally, and a blessing of the school by Father Tom Lawrence. The theme for the week was Gratitude. Each day we found ways to show our gratefulness for our parents, our students, our priests, our faculty, and our staff.

Students Present Living Stations of the Cross

Easter is a special time to strengthen our relationship with Jesus who gave his life to save us. This Easter, our 8th-grade students presented the Living Stations of the Cross to our school parents and younger students. For one of our students, Jabari Thomas, it was a most special moment, as this year he was preparing to enter the Catholic faith. In the presentation of the Living Stations of the Cross, Jabari reenacted Jesus' last hours as he took the part of Jesus carrying the cross.



School Tradition Continues with our 100th May Crowning

At our annual May Crowning Ceremony, our students gathered to show their love and devotion to our Blessed Mother by surrounding Mary with flowers.



SMSS Families Enter the Catholic Faith



This 100th Jubilee year has brought us many blessings, with seven students baptized, four initiated into the Catholic faith, and fourteen additional students receiving sacraments for the first time.

Student Success

Students Inducted into National Jr. Honor Society

Showing our school's commitment to the values of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship, fourteen students were inducted to St. Catherina of Siena Chapter of the National Jr. Honor Society (NJHS). The values promoted by the NJHS help students become well-rounded leaders in their schools, in their communities, and wherever life takes them.



Student Wins DAR's History Essay Contest



Congratulations to Itzy Sanchez for winning the Daughters of the American Revolution American History Essay Contest. A total of 42 schools participated, and Itzy's creative fictional essay won the 8th-grade area division. The award letter reads, "Your imaginative rendition of the experiences and thoughts of a delegate from South Carolina to the Second Continental Congress in the period 1775-76 was found to be particularly thoughtful and creative."

Reflections Promote Success

Report cards is a time to see the results of our students' efforts on paper. It is also a time when Sister Mary Cecilia met individually with each student to get to know the students and give them some insights into their grades and ways to improve. Although grades demonstrate academic achievement, it is also important to focus on the school's 'unwritten curriculum' which is to teach our students how to live as Christians. At the end of the school year, we held an academic awards ceremony to highlight our students who excelled academically and spiritually.



Military News

Throughout this year, we were able to welcome our military families and recognize them for their service and sacrifices for our country during our Veteran's Day Ceremony. After the ceremony and throughout the year, our military parents have also been invited to read and speak in their children's classrooms. In April, we also celebrated our military-connected students by hosting a Purple-Up Day!



SMSS Re-designated as Purple Star School

In October, 2022 Saint Mary's was once again recognized by the Virginia Department of Education as a 2022-2023 Purple Star Award Recipient. This recognition is given to schools across the country that show an outstanding commitment to serving the needs of military students and their families.



We thank our Parent-Teacher Organization

This was the year when we re-activated our Parent Teacher Organization. Throughout the year, PTO Co-Chairs Amber Butler and Judy Brooks were instrumental in planning many of our events and fundraisers, such as the Annual Trunk or Treat, our wreath fundraising, the School Store program, teacher appreciation luncheons and most recently our Roaring Twenties Auction & Casino Night and our Jubilee Weekend Family Fun Day. We thank Ms. Butler, Ms. Brooks, and all of our parent volunteers who in one way or another supported our school through our Parent-Teacher Organization. The PTO also launched a monthly newsletter that was sent to parents with important information.



Christmas Caroling in Phoebus Returns

Bringing back the tradition, in December, our students were invited to the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Event to show off their voices by Christmas Caroling in the streets of Phoebus. At Saint Mary's, we instill community service value.



Development & Alumni News

Auction & Casino Night Most Successful in SMSS History

Thank you for your support of the St. Mary's Roaring 20's Auction & Casino Night. We surpassed our goal and grossed over \$65,000. The proceeds will help us add new LED gym lighting, purchase over 40 additional student Chromebooks, carts, and additional faculty/staff computers, replace the gym stage curtain and LCD projector, and relocate the stage screen and recoat the gym floor. It was a grand evening, and the success of this night, and the education of our students couldn't take place without your support and God's blessing.



Thank you to our Sponsors!

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Hampton Roads Educators' Association
Signal Engineering

STEM Scholarship Awarded to Vivian Loeffert, Class of 2019

We congratulate Vivian Loeffert, Class of 2019, who was the recipient of the STEM Scholarship. This fall, Vivian will be attending Princeton University to pursue a degree in Chemical and Biological Engineering. Vivian's ultimate goal is to become a Trauma Surgeon in the U.S. Army.



Saint Mary's Launches Facebook Alumni Page



Calling all Saint Mary's Alumni to join our Alumni Facebook page to find out about the latest happenings at Saint Mary's. We have also featured success stories from some of our alumni.

<https://www.facebook.com/SMSSAlumni/>

IGiveCatholic Raises Funds To Complete Fence Installation

This year's IGive Catholic campaign focused on keeping our students safe by raising funds to finish the installation of a fence separating the school property from the adjacent public parking property and pier. With your generosity, we raised over \$12,500.

In addition, the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion contributed \$447 after 3rd grade student, Caleb Burgess wrote to them requesting their support. We always thank our parents and grandparents for instilling the spirit of giving back!

The installation of the new fence will be completed this summer. Thank you so much for your support of our Giving Tuesday, iGiveCatholic Campaign!

Thank you Volunteers!



We thank a group of alumni and former faculty members who worked diligently during the winter months to help us organize the photo albums that were on display at our Jubilee Weekend. Our students were also given a lesson on the history of Saint Mary's. They were elated to find their parents, uncles, and aunts in the photos!

Interested in Volunteering?

We need your help to archive photographs, newspaper articles, and historical materials and to help us write short stories about our alumni.

Please contact Maritza Davila at development@saintmarystarofthesea.com



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STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

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EISTC Tax Credit Program Supports Students!

The EISTC Tax Credit Program is a great way of supporting Saint Mary Star of the Sea School through the McMahon Parater Scholarship Foundation. This foundation provides scholarships to schools within the Diocese of Richmond and you can designate the school of your choosing. Donations made through this program receive a Virginia Tax Credit equal to 65% of your contribution. In addition to the state tax credit, you may also receive a deduction for a charitable contribution.

The EISTC Tax Credit Program is our biggest source of funds for our families and students most in need. At Saint Mary's, over 30 percent of our students receive tuition assistance through this program. For more information, email Maritza Davila at development@saintmarystarofthesea.com or visit: <https://www.saintmarystarofthesea.com/support/virginia-education.cfm>

Commemorative Coins for Sale!



The 100th Jubilee committee is proud to offer 100th Jubilee commemorative coins as a keepsake for the love, the life, and the opportunity Saint Mary Star of the Sea School has offered since 1923. We pray for another 100 successful years for future families. Coins are available for purchase at \$10 each. Call the office at 757-723-6358 to purchase your coin.

Taking Applications for the 2023-24 Academic Year PreK-3- 8th Grade

[Click to Schedule your In-Person
or Online Tour Today!](#)

Call us at 757-723-6358 or
www.saintmarystarofthesea.com



Mark your Calendar!

Friday, September 29
Annual Golf Tournament in
Memory of Pat G. Minetti
1 p.m., The Woodlands Golf Course

Scan to Register



https://auctria.events/SMSS_2023GolfTournament

Saturday, October 14, 5:30 p.m.
Low Country Boil & BBQ

Saturday, April 20, 2024
Auction & Casino Night

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