



SAINT MARY

STAR OF THE SEA SCHOOL

Spring 2020

Dear Friends of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School,

Greetings from Saint Mary Star of the Sea School! Our prayer motto for this school year is "Hope in God, praise His Holy Name!" At a time in history with many fears and anxieties attempting to choke the joy out of life, Saint Mary's is encouraging hope, fostering a love for learning the truths of God's creation and His world, and nurturing faith in the hearts and minds of the young people in our midst. In this newsletter you will see the creative ways that our excellent faculty and staff engage students in a variety of educational experiences for learning, service, faith, athletics, clubs and cultural experiences. Your support continues to sustain us in our efforts to fulfill our mission to provide a solid foundation in academic and moral excellence, preparing our students for success in high school and beyond.

This year, Saint Mary Star of the Sea School is educating 175 students with 30% of the families serving in the military. To acknowledge our commitment to military families, the Virginia Department of Education awarded Saint Mary's the Purple Star for our extra efforts to help military families who move to this area. With many branches of the military within

close distance to Saint Mary's, we are privileged to assist our military with the educational care of their children.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and continued financial support. Each donation assists us in providing for the financial needs of the school. This summer we are planning to convert the outdated floor heating system to heating and air conditioning units in the 1955 elementary building. This will enable us to cease using boiler heating and reduce these costs during the cold winter months. We are so grateful that the lighting and bathroom renovation projects were completed. With continued renovation over the past five years, including window replacements, new lighting, updated bathrooms and a new heating system, the 1955 building will continue to be a special setting for the education of our younger students, building memories of school for a lifetime to come.

May God bless you abundantly!

In Our Lady, Star of the Sea,

Sister Mary John, O.P., Principal

SAINT MARY'S PURCHASES WATERFRONT PROPERTY ADJACENT TO SCHOOL

With the support of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, we have been able to purchase the 1.36 acres of waterfront property next to the school on Water Street (the former Sam's Seafood Restaurant parking lot and adjacent grass area). This new property will both benefit Saint Mary Star of the Sea School for the safety and protection of the students, and secure this property for the use of the school for years to come. Praise God for this long awaited opportunity! Information on the further development of this property will come in future newsletters. Stay tuned!



MEET OUR NEW DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR



Hello, my name is Robbin Ciraulo and I am so thrilled to be the newest staff member at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School. I look forward to meeting all of you and welcome any questions, comments or suggestions you may have regarding Development and the special events and programs in existence at SMSS. This is both an exciting and challenging time. The EISTC Tax Credit program is currently being challenged in the Virginia legislature, Saint Mary Star of the Sea is in the beginning stages of a new capital campaign to develop our recently acquired waterfront property adjacent to the school,

and The Annual Auction and Casino Event has been postponed as we respond to the potential effects of COVID-19 in our community.

Our Annual Auction is our school's largest fundraiser and Saint Mary's relies on these proceeds to meet the needs of our students. As tuition only covers a portion of our operating costs, this loss will adversely affect our budget. Please consider how you might be able to help as we adapt and adjust to these events.

I look forward to hearing from you!

rciraulo@saintmarystarofthesea.com

Robbin Ciraulo, Development Coordinator

ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT HELPS UPDATE GYM SCOREBOARD



We kicked off the 2019-2020 school year at the Woodlands Golf Course with our annual Golf Tournament. We had 22 teams and over 85 players take part on a beautiful September Saturday morning. Over \$6700 was raised for athletics and communications programs. A special thank you goes out to our tournament chairperson, Scott Glenn, for all of his time and energy in helping put on this great event - gathering up many participants, sponsorships, and raffle prizes for the event. Trophies went out to all of our winners, but it was Saint Mary Star of the Sea School who was the big winner. Our funds have already been put to good use, getting a new scoreboard and controller for our gym.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SPONSORS:

Bull Island Realty • Benton Knight Ltd. • Buddy's Hide Away • Heavens Pizza • Home Helpers Huffman & Huffman • K of C Council #11264 • M Price Distributing Co. • Paint Supply/Disposable Garments • Pincus Construction • Signal Engineering Corp • Steven Mallon • Vancostas.

YOUR EISTC TAX CREDIT DONATIONS SUPPORT 30% OF SMSS STUDENTS

Have you ever considered donating to Saint Mary Star of the Sea School? Direct financial support given through the Education Improvement Scholarships Tax Credits (EISTC) program provides school choice opportunities to both families of low-income students and students with disabilities. Currently over 4,000 students in the Commonwealth of Virginia are served by this successful and necessary school program.

With your donation you are eligible to receive a Virginia Tax Credit equal to 65% of your contribution. In addition to your 65% state tax credit, deductions against taxable income as a charitable donation on both federal and state income taxes can be taken as well.

Over 30% percent of students currently attending Saint Mary Star of the Sea School receive benefits through this program. It is likely someone you know in our school community depends on EISTC to provide a loving, quality education for their child or children.

RECENT NEWS ABOUT EISTC PROGRAM:

Recently legislation was introduced (House Bill 521) to dismantle this scholarship program in its entirety. On January 29, 2020 this bill went before the House Finance Committee. During this session they voted to continue until 2021. What does this mean? Over the next year proponents will be lobbying to get this bill passed in the Virginia legislature. Because of this it is so important that you let your voice be heard. The Virginia Catholic Conference is a great resource to help you take action and express your personal views on how important the EISTC program is to the viability and future of Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, and all schools and families in the state of Virginia who are served by this invaluable program. If you visit their website at <https://vacatholic.org/action-center/> you can join their email network, find updates on legislation and find your own legislator. The website helps you compose your message and sends it on your behalf.

From all of us at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, thank you for your support. In unity we can support each other and the families who rely on this most valuable program.

LOW COUNTRY BOIL AND BBQ

Our Low Country Boil and BBQ was a great success. The weather was a little warm along the Mill Creek Shoreline on the Convent Lawn, but it did not stop all of our 125 attendees from having a good time. Thank you for coming out to this worthwhile and important event. You helped raise over \$4,400 for student scholarships. With great food provided by the Bronx Gourmet, music from Phil Poteat, our beverage sponsor, Sly Clyde Ciderworks, our hors d'oeuvres sponsor Pincus Construction, our tent sponsor Old Point National Bank, and our tables and chairs sponsor POMOCO Auto Group, it was truly a special evening. Congratulations to our award recipients.

This year we were pleased and honored to recognize:



Saint Therese of Lisieux Alumni Award
Monsignor Joseph Patrick Lehman III
Class of 1968



Lifetime Achievement Award
Mrs. Barbara Urick
Class of 1948



Service to Saint Mary's Award
Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Terri Finn



Thank you to all who donated to our Low Country Boil:

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Adams
Mrs. Phyllis Anderson
Rev. Msgr. Walter Barrett
Mr. Frank Blake
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Caruso
Mr. John Cory
Honorable and Mrs. Robert Curran
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gallagher
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Gibbs
Ms. Jennifer Gorman and
Mr. John Staudt
LCDR (Ret) and Mrs. Ronald Gorman
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Hall
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Mr. and Mrs. Dean Seitz
Mr. and Mrs. Howard Shiver
Mr. and Mrs. Graham Spady
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Stearns
Rev. Mr. & Mrs. Michael Swisher
The Old Point National Bank
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Mrs. Cecil Turner
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Vessell
Mrs. L.E. Zacharias
Mr. William Meidenbauer

Military Parents Visit Classrooms to Share their Experiences!



For Veteran's Day, our active and retired military parents visited our classrooms to talk to our students about their life in the military and the capacity in

which they served. Our students heard from a nurse, a firefighter, an intelligence officer, a cryptologic Russian linguist, a meteorologist, and more. May God bless and protect all members of the military service and their families!

Father Dan Shares the Colors of our Faith



Students in first grade learned from Fr. Dan Molockho that the four liturgical colors worn by a Catholic priest; green, white, violet, and red have a symbolic meaning and indicate that certain liturgical celebrations are

at hand. Father Molockho was ordained in June 2019 and he became our school Chaplain this school year.

8th Grade Students Become School Leaders

In early September at a Leadership Commissioning Mass, our 8th grade students accepted their responsibility to bring the school together as a Christian community and set a proper example for the younger students. They also promised to spread God's Word to others, and do the right thing, as true witnesses of Christ.



BISHOP KNESTOUT HONORS SMSS WITH HIS VISIT

In October, we were honored to welcome the Bishop of Richmond, Barry C. Knestout to Saint Mary's. Our students shared with him their learning adventures, especially their Science Fair projects.



Before his departure, he imparted his blessings to our students.

SAINT MARY'S PARTNERS WITH PC TO OFFER LATIN I CLASS

Latin I has become part of our school curriculum, thanks to a partnership with Peninsula Catholic High School. The program is offered to 8th grade students through distance learning. Latin teacher Dr. Helena Jeny also meets periodically in person with the students to bring them special activities of ancient civilizations where Latin was spoken. Sr. Mary Augustine monitors the class while the students work with their Chromebooks, headphones, and online communication.





Virtue Club Members Welcome New Families with Special Message

Members of our Virtue Club colored and decorated cards for new families and wrapped rosemary twigs thanking them for joining Saint Mary's. We are grateful for all our new families and for entrusting their children's education to Saint Mary's.

Fifth Grade Friendship Bracelets Initiative Benefits Saint Mary's!

An initiative from Sr. Mary Augustine's 5th-grade students, Sophia Hoang, Scarlett Savage, Michelle Tran, Autumn Baker and Antonette Paxton to make friendship bracelets and sell them during lunch raised \$155 to support our school!



A Celebration of Cultures Enriches the Life of our Students!



Through music, dance, and some delicious desserts, students learned about different Spanish-speaking countries as we celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month. Ms. Ana Barranco performed two traditional Panamanian dances that brought our students to the dance floor.

Basketball, Volleyball Instill Catholic Values

Middle school students faced other school teams in a series of volleyball, basketball and soccer games in which they learned multiple qualities of physical discipline, team building, winning with humility, losing with dignity, learning from mistakes, courage, and pride of accomplishments.



LET'S GO SENTINELS!

7TH & 8TH GRADE STUDENTS ARE SCIENCE STARS

Twenty-two 7th and 8th grade students submitted their projects to the school's annual Science Fair. Topics for this year's projects included environmental science, engineering, chemistry, biology/medical, physics, and math theory. Seven students qualified for the Tidewater Science and Engineering Fair which took place online in March.



Students Use Math, Reading, and Science to Create Unique Turkey Glyphs

Using reading and math skills, along with science vocabulary, Mrs. Covert's 4th-grade students made turkey glyphs. The students matched the answers to Math problems to a key which told them how to color their turkey. The end result was their very unique version of what Tom the Turkey looked like and how his story ended.



VIMS STAFF GIVE MARINE SCIENCE LESSON TO STUDENTS



Virginia Institute of Marine Science guest speakers, Samantha Askin and Sarah Nuss brought engaging marine science lessons for our students. By observing different

types of fish, our younger students learned how fish adapt to their habitat. In middle school students performed a descriptive investigation on the water quality of Mill Creek to find out how suitable the water is for marine life.

STUDENTS TRAIN FOR ENGINEERING COMPETITION

In preparation for the Annual Fluor Engineering Competition this winter, members of the Engineering Club are sharpening their skills by working on several engineering projects with Science teacher, Mrs. Sofianek. Students have built a paper roller coaster so that a marble travels from start to finish using only gravity!



MS. GILLIAM'S 3RD GRADE STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THANKSGIVING WITH STEM ACTIVITIES



To learn more about the history of Thanksgiving, the third graders watched a video that taught them about the Mayflower. Students then designed a boat that would float, stay upright when presented with wind, and hold as

many Pilgrims as possible (pennies). After testing their models, students re-grouped to talk and re-design their boats. This activity enforced teamwork and communication while teaching engineering and science skills.

The Floating Dock has been Installed

Thanks to your support, the floating dock on Mill Creek was installed this past summer and is already being used by our students who are learning much about marine life and the quality of water on Mill Creek.



Marine Science Club Students Collect Data for Two Major Coastal Clean Up Projects



Students in the Marine Science Club are playing an important role in collecting data for two projects dedicated to cleaning the world's waterways: the Clean Virginia Waterways project and the

International Coastal Cleanup. Using equipment from the Hampton City Clean Water Commission, the students gathered along Mill Creek to clean up litter and debris. While some collected the discarded items, others tallied the types of litter found. The data will be sent to Longwood University and the International Coastal Cleanup project.

STEM Scholarship Awarded to Nathan Pincus, Class of 2015

We congratulate Nathan Pincus, from the Class of 2015, who was the recipient of the STEM Scholarship. Nathan plans to serve the United States Air Force after he graduates from James Madison University with



a degree in Computer Science. The STEM Scholarship was established by the Class of 2013. Since then, each graduating class has contributed annually to award this \$500 scholarship to a Saint Mary's graduate pursuing a degree in a STEM-related field. Nathan's father, Joe, is a 1980 SMSS graduate.

SAINT MARY'S RECEIVES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PURPLE STAR DESIGNATION



Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, along with three other Catholic schools on the Peninsula - Peninsula Catholic High School, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and St. Pius X - were awarded the Virginia Purple Star designation by the Virginia Department of Education.

This designation is selectively awarded to schools that have demonstrated a major commitment to students and families connected to our nation's military.

"It is with great joy that we receive this special recognition as a Purple Star school," said Principal, Sister Mary John Slonkosky. "This award acknowledges the 96-year tradition of our school serving the vast numbers of families from the many military bases on the Peninsula. We have been

honored to be a part of their lives through our ministry of Catholic education."

Kelly Lazzara, superintendent of schools for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond said, "It is an honor for our schools to be awarded the Purple Star designation. As an active duty military spouse, I know firsthand the value and importance of schools being committed to and supportive of our students and families who are in the military. Every day I see our schools going above and beyond and I am proud to have our schools serve those who serve our country."

The Purple Star emblem was selected because the color purple symbolizes all branches of the military. The Hampton Roads area is home to one of the nation's largest populations of military personnel, and to the largest naval base in the world located in Norfolk.

SCIENCE TEACHER SUBMITS PROJECTS TO ONLINE SCIENCE FAIR



Science teacher Mrs. Vicky Sofianek went above and beyond her teaching responsibilities to ensure that the science fair projects of seven students at Saint Mary's were successfully submitted online to the Tidewater Regional Science

Fair at Old Dominion University. The Science Fair changed its format, from in-person due to the impending threat of the Coronavirus. Mrs. Sofianek and her students stayed until after 7 p.m. on the last day the schools were open to record the presentations, take pictures of the boards, compile all research plans and abstracts and submit everything digitally through a newly created YouTube Channel. The experience brought the best of everyone involved. While Mrs. Sofianek recorded the students' presentations, some of her tech-savvy students ensured the projects were uploaded successfully to the YouTube channel. Saint Mary's was the first school to upload the projects online. What a great example of a teacher's commitment to her students and the school.

TEACHERS TRANSITION TO REMOTE LEARNING TO CONTINUE TEACHING IN DIFFICULT TIMES

As we received the news of the schools' closures due to the threat of the Coronavirus, our teachers quickly learned that there are creative and effective



ways to teach and learn remotely. While our younger students are receiving weekly packets to work at home, our older students are using Google Classroom to work on their assignments. The teachers are using other digital tools to communicate with their students, such as Zoom, Facetime, and video-conferencing to explain and clarify concepts. The buildings at Saint Mary's may be closed for the rest of the school year, but with the work of our teachers, the learning continues!

We Say Thank You for Your Generosity! **#iGiveCatholic**

Giving Tuesday is a day that follows one of the biggest weekends in America; Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and then Cyber Monday. This is a day we recognize all our non-profit organizations and it's called #GivingTuesday. On December 3rd, many of you joined #iGiveCatholic, and generously gave of your blessings, and showed that little is much when God is in it. You supported Saint Mary Star of the Sea School and its commitment to providing a Christ-centered Catholic education. By the end of the day, we raised \$1,900! This ranked us 16th among the 79 organizations in the Richmond Diocese that took part in #iGiveCatholic Giving Tuesday. Thank you for your generosity.



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LIVE LINK:

[Visit Saint Mary Star of the Sea School Virtual Tour](#)

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757-723-6358

Mission Statement

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.

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- **Saint Mary Alumni!** We want to hear from you. Please go to our website saintmarystarofthesea.com. Click on the Alumni tab and fill out the **Alumni Information Section**.
- To receive our newsletter regularly please email us at development@saintmarystarofthesea.com

ONLINE AUCTION TO BE HELD THIS SPRING

Due to the directive of the Office of Catholic Schools, and to ensure the safety of all our friends and supporters, the SMSS live Auction Event has been postponed. An online auction is planned for this Spring and we will continue to keep you updated.

50/50 RAFFLE TICKETS ON SALE!

We continue to sell the 50/50 Raffle tickets. Purchase a \$100 raffle ticket to enter into a drawing. One winner receives \$5,000. Five additional winners receive \$1,000.

We continue to accept donations and sponsorships. To purchase 50/50 raffle tickets, and to find out about donor opportunities and our new format go to www.saintmarystarofthesea.com, under Support or contact Development Director, Robbin Ciraulo at **757-723-6358** or rciraulo@saintmarystarofthesea.com.