

St. Mary School News

St. Mary School nurtures the development of the whole child: spiritually, academically, emotionally, and socially. St. Mary School provides a strong, accessible, and rigorous Catholic education to the students of greater Grays Harbor and their families.



A Publication for Alumni, Families, and Friends of St. Mary School

Generous Grants Fund Safety Initiatives

“Safety first” is an easy motto to state but much harder to live by. However, leaders at St. Mary School are taking a number of concrete actions to ensure that the school provides a safe and secure learning environment.

This year SMS received two generous grant awards to fund its “School Safety Initiative Project.” The Garneau-Nicon Family Foundation and the Seabrook Community Foundation gave a combined \$48,000 to fund five projects that will make the school safer. The projects include new door locks for all classrooms, centrally-controlled exterior door locks, additional exterior video cameras and a larger recorder, a school-wide intercom system, and new fencing and gates to secure the school perimeter. The interior and exterior door locks were installed during the school year and the remaining projects will be completed over the summer.



Office Manager Theresa Brumley demonstrates the remote access switch that allows her to see visitors before opening exterior doors.

“We were so blessed to receive such generous support from the Seabrook Foundation and the Garneau Nicon Foundation!” said St. Mary School Principal Carrie Marlow. “We started the Initiative with the goal of completing one or two projects a year. However, with both grants fully funded we will be able to complete all our projects within a six-month time frame. The safety of the St. Mary School community will be greatly enhanced with these upgrades and our school parents and staff are extremely grateful!”

In coordination with the capital projects, a Safety Committee was also formed to assess the building for possible threats and develop procedures to follow in case of a safety-related event. The committee is made up of school and parish staff members, parents, and representatives from the Catholic Parishes of Western Grays Harbor. The group has a broad level of expertise, including architecture, law-enforcement, and military administration. Once the Safety Committee has finalized the Emergency Action Plan, there will be meetings to inform school families and drills to familiarize students and staff with the new procedures.

Mrs. Marlow expressed appreciation for the committee’s work thus far: “It has been wonderful to work alongside a group of people so dedicated to the safety of our school community. I am extremely proud of the work we have done so far and feel confident that the final product will give us a clear road map to safety for all should an emergency occur.”

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SPiRiT Auction: Food, Festivities, and Fundraising

On April 27th, a broad cross-section of St. Mary School supporters gathered for the 11th biennial SPiRiT Auction to support scholarships and programs at the school. Current and former school parents, alumni, and community members enjoyed lively conversation and a gourmet meal from Cranberry Road Winery before bidding early and often on a wide variety of auction items.

A highlight of the evening, as it has been at each auction since 2001, was the paddle-raise for the Mary Drake Scholarship Fund. After a slide show featuring 90-plus years of St. Mary School history, and with Mary Drake herself in attendance, the SMS community showed its generosity once again. Including donations made before the auction and an anonymous \$20,000 opening pledge, the scholarship fund took in \$86,625 to help provide tuition assistance in the current and upcoming school years.

This year's auction also marked the passing of the torch from longtime auction organizers Debra Drake Windell, Austin Hanson, and Pam Ritter to a committee of school parents. The two groups worked together to ensure a smooth transition.



St. Mary School staff with Fr. Francis before the SPiRiT Auction.

"The first thing we immediately recognized was that this auction connects so many people: families, friends, alumni, businesses, teachers, and clergy," noted auction coordinator Maria Boling. "For the last 20 years and under the guidance of Debbie, Austin and Pam, the SPiRiT Auction has become an event that school supporters have come to anticipate. Not only do we gather offering Catholic education to children in Grays Harbor, we also come together and celebrate our legacy in the community. Debbie, Austin, and Pam reflect this, and have celebrated St. Mary School for so many years. We hope to carry on in the same tradition of love and stewardship."

Dozens of school family members volunteered before, during, and after the auction and were a huge part of the evening's success. One shining example was the "Dessert Dash" portion of the auction in which each table bids for the chance to select dessert items. SMS grandparent Roberta Matthews took this year's Dessert Dash to a new level with a custom-made backdrop and signage as well as prizes for the top dessert makers.

As the evening wrapped up, organizers and attendees alike expressed amazement at the positive energy and willingness to give that makes "SPiRiT" the perfect title for the St. Mary School auction.



The Dessert Dash display at the auction was a shimmering success.

School Snapshots



8th grade students with Fr. Steve and Fr. Francis after the Baccalaureate Mass.



Retiring ESS coordinator Penny Ford displays the card and orchid she received from students and staff.

SMS Memories Link Former Schoolmates

Many people have had the joy of reconnecting with past schoolmates, and sharing memories after ten, twenty, or even thirty years. Imagine, though, the amount of catching up required when you haven't seen the person in almost ninety years! That is the situation that St. Mary School alumnae Connie Johnson and Cecilia (Rovella) Short found themselves in when they had a chance meeting last year.

Connie had recently moved to Channel Point Village in Hoquiam and was seated for dinner next to Cecilia. They started talking and soon discovered that they had been one grade apart in school. Connie started at St. Mary School in the Fall of 1928 and Cecilia thinks she started in 1927, although the calculation is complicated by the fact that her parents held her back a year in second grade. "I wasn't ready for school," she remembers, "I wanted to play!"

Although St. Mary School had just opened in 1926, replacing the older St. Rose Academy, Connie and Cecilia shared memories not of a sparkling new building, but of the nuns who taught at the school and the day-to-day activities of school life. One area in which the two friends' memories diverge is in the attitudes of the nuns toward the students.

"They had rulers hidden under their robes," says Cecilia referring to the legendary discipline tool used by nuns to keep order. "And if you missed some activity the nuns would want you to bring them a cake or some other food."

Connie shares more pleasant memories of the sisters: "The nuns were so talented. They could dance and sing and they would put on plays for St. Patrick's Day or other holidays." Then she adds in a scandalous tone, "Sometimes when they danced, they would raise their habits and you could see their ankles."

Cecilia listens to this positive description with an disbelieving look and says, "You must have had different nuns than I did!"

One area the two friends agree firmly on was the students' fear of being disciplined by the pastor, Father

O'Donnell. Connie remembers that Fr. O'Donnell made the rounds at SMS every day and if the nuns were having any trouble with students they would warn 'Father O'Donnell is coming.' "He never raised his voice or lifted a hand," says Connie, "Just the thought of him coming in was enough."

Today's St. Mary School students would probably share Connie and Cecilia's lack of fondness for their school uniforms, although the style and construction has changed since their time as students. The uniforms themselves were navy blue wool serge with snap-on white collars and long stockings for the girls ("hot when they got wet from the rain"). Connie adds in a very

serious voice, "and the hem on your dress had better go below your knees."

Although the St. Mary School building is structurally much the same as it was originally, the friends shared that some of the rooms had different uses in their time. The basement, for instance, was divided into a boys' side and a girls' side, with the girls using one room for P.E. and recess (now the

Technology Lab) while the boys used a room on the other side (now the Preschool / Pre-K room). They explained that they brought their own lunch from home, but sometimes got an extra treat at school.

"On Fridays we went to Mass in the morning," recalls Connie, "and then we went to school and had cocoa and cinnamon rolls because we hadn't had any breakfast before Mass."

One thing that hasn't changed much in ninety-some years at SMS is the focus on the core subjects. "You learned to read, write, and do arithmetic – a good education," says Connie. "I was bored in high school because I had already learned most of it."

As possibly the two most senior St. Mary School alums, these two ladies are clearly not bored now. After an hour of talking nonstop about their time at SMS, they excused themselves and strolled off together to join friends for BINGO.



St. Mary School alumnae Cecilia Short and Connie Johnson.



Students Learn Numerous Skills at Marine Biology Camp

By Alonzo Raygoza, 7th grade

The St. Mary School 7th grade class' experience at Marine Biology Camp at YMCA Camp Seymour was one we won't soon forget. We learned and tried new things and met new people.

The naturalists /counselors at the camp were very nice people. They helped us with whatever we needed and they encouraged us to try new things. The naturalists taught us about estuaries, where fresh water and salt water meet; how different shore types contain different types of sea life; and we were able to interact with touch tanks that contained different types of sea anemones and crabs. We also got to dissect a squid!

My favorite part about camp was zip-lining. We encouraged our fellow classmates who were nervous and everyone ended up trying it. However, the most important thing I learned at camp was to listen to everyone's ideas. We were able to participate in some cooperative learning activities that prepared us for next year's Leadership Camp. Everyone had to get on a large balance board without having either side of the balance board hit the ground. It took two tries but we came up with a solution quickly.

In conclusion, I feel lucky to have been able to go to Marine Biology Camp. I feel we had God's blessings and that we grew as a class.



SMS 7th grade students at Marine Biology Camp.



Drama Club Performs *The Lion King Jr.*

By Savannah Stamon, 6th grade

This year's Drama Club production was *The Lion King Jr.*, directed by Tamara Helland, AHS Drama Director and St. Mary School parent.

The tryouts for *The Lion King Jr.* were different than the tryouts we had done in the past. Instead of getting a piece of paper with some lines that we had to say in front of everyone, we all sang and danced together. We then rehearsed after school for two months before the actual play performance, which was at

Aberdeen High School.

Besides having a professional director, we also had professionally made props this year. Each performer in the production had their own character prop that was made by artist Mike Lawson, who is also a St. Mary School parent. After the performance, Mr. Lawson donated the props to the school auction to help raise money for school programs and scholarships.

The Drama Club production was fun to take part in and anybody who saw it would hopefully say it was fun to watch. The Drama Club program is open to all St. Mary School students in 3rd grade through 8th grade. We can't wait until next year!



Drama Club cast and crew from this year's performance of *The Lion King Jr.*

School Snapshots



Students take part in Field Day games (left) and the Preschool / Pre-K / Kindergarten end of year celebration. (right).



Teacher Feature

Jennalee Cook Encourages Technology Detectives



Jennalee Cook has been teaching technology at St. Mary School since 1996 and has the longest tenure among the SMS teaching staff. We asked Mrs. Cook to

share some thoughts and memories about her time at the school so far.

Tell us about yourself both as a teacher and a person

I was born in North Dakota and we moved to Aberdeen when I was two. I went to Stevens Grade School then to Washington Elementary in South Aberdeen where Five Star is now. I continued on to Miller Jr. High, which was located across from St. Mary School where the field is. Then I continued on to Weatherwax High School, which was located where the parking lot is below the field. My favorite teacher was Mrs. Labrec at AHS. We even had a reunion with her every year for several years.

After I graduated from Aberdeen, I got married and we bought a house in Hoquiam where we raised our family (2 daughters and 1 son with 1 daughter and son being twins). The move was hard to handle at first because of the long-time rivalry between the two cities. It was a bit comical at times. I have this blanket, half crimson and grey and the other half blue and gold. I took it to many games. When my twins were starting middle school I decided to look for a job where I could be home more with them. I applied for the job at St. Mary School and started in the Fall of 1996. Sister Angela hired me and she was very willing to help me get started. Now I have four grandchildren and my husband and I will celebrate our 41st wedding anniversary in July.

How has technology changed during your time at SMS?

The technology has changed rapidly! You just think you are caught up with the trend and you are still behind. When I started at St. Mary School, we were working off of Macintosh SE's that were about 12" x 12" Then we moved up to the Macintosh LC 575 - these were so cool they came with a floppy drive and a CD ROM drive. I thought we were really moving up in the world of technology. Next came the colorful bubble style iMacs. We received a grant from the Gates Foundation and we were able to purchase 10 of these iMacs for the 5th grade classroom. Boy, we thought we were at the top. After that it just seems like a blur. We try to keep up with the

newest technology but the financial part is challenging.

What is your approach to teaching technology at SMS?

All in all, I feel we have done a great job keeping technology alive in the building and especially in the hands of our students. We currently have MacBook Air's for the middle school and MacBook's for the 4th & 5th grades. We use iPads for the primary grades and mini iPads for Kindergarten students. When working with students I don't just teach them the programs, I point out how to use any type of program. With word-processing there is always more than one way to do something between icons, pull-down menus and buttons. The path is there, whatever you are trying to do, you just have to look for it. So it is like teaching them to be a detective or explorer. We work with a variety of programs and the children grasp the learning so fast that sometimes they teach me.

What do you enjoy most about teaching at SMS and why?

I really enjoy the atmosphere of a family and getting to know all the students. The smaller classes allow you to work more with each child. When the students graduate from 8th grade, I kind of feel like they are my children. I have been teaching most of them for 8 to 10 years. I feel very proud of the students and their accomplishments. I really enjoy when they come back to visit and tell me what they are up to or when they come and thank me for teaching them how to do something.

Do you have any special memories from your time at St. Mary School?

I have many memories of St. Mary School. One that sticks with me each year and gives me great pride and joy, is to share the wonderful memories of the 8th graders' time at St. Mary School with a video and pictures that captures it all. When the graduating class receives the CD with this gift of memories and their faces light up with laughter that makes all my hard work worth it!

Any other thoughts you would like to share?

St. Mary School is a wonderful place to work and to send your children for a great education. We have the most caring staff that I have ever worked with. The teachers really do care about each and every student and try their best to help their students. We don't just teach education, we teach common courtesy and how to treat people fairly.



A Message From Mrs. Marlow

Greetings St. Mary School Friends!

“God's blessings go far beyond anything we could ever dream.” - Anonymous.

The school year we have had at St. Mary School has been full of the most wonderful blessings and people! As a teacher I always knew that St. Mary School was an extra special place where families and supporters could come together and where students could grow and learn, but I did not realize the depth of that “specialness” until I became your School Principal.

As I look back on this school year, I am filled with so much amazement and gratitude. Amazement for our staff who give so much of themselves to their students every day and who work tirelessly to make St. Mary School a place where every student has the opportunity to grow in faith, service, and academics. And amazement for our students who seek and are enriched by faith and knowledge and friendships that will last a lifetime.

The gratitude and thankfulness I feel for the multitude of blessings we continually receive overflows in my heart. Gratitude for the parents and guardians who give so generously of their time, talents, and treasures to help our school function and gratitude to our many supporters who give abundantly to our scholarship funds, our annual Friends of St. Mary Drive, our fundraisers, and “just because.” Your bountiful support allows St. Mary School to provide a faith-based education to all who seek it!

This year we welcomed 110 families and 165 students, Preschool to 8th grade, into our school and our hearts. Thanks to the hard work of many, we held a successful Oktoberfest celebration in the Fall and a phenomenal SPIRIT Auction this Spring. Our students spent the school year engaged in a variety of learning experiences, service projects, and extra-curricular activities. Each day we walked together brought small and large victories, challenges, and sometimes losses, but through it all, our belief in God and each other and our St. Mary Lion pride helped us stand tall as one.

I could not be prouder of the tradition and legacy of St. Mary School or more thankful for the blessings we receive every day. While looking back in awe, I am also looking forward with excitement. The future of St. Mary School is bright! Here's to another successful year in 2019-2020!

Together in Christ,

Carrie Marlow

St. Mary School Principal

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