

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

2020-21 School Year Off to a “Safe Start”

After completing the last three months of the previous school year online, teachers and staff at St. Mary School knew that because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the chances of starting school in-person this fall were slim. To be prepared for all scenarios, the SMS Leadership Team spent much of the summer working on both in-person and remote learning plans. In the end, they were able to use pieces of both plans to implement a hybrid approach that has been working well so far.

At the beginning of summer, school leaders were hopeful of starting school in-person this fall with limited class sizes and plenty of safety precautions in place. Then in July, Grays Harbor County’s rate of COVID-19 cases



went from below average in the state to well above the level deemed safe for full-time, in-person learning. With less than a month’s notice before the start of

Kindergarten teacher Marci Hollingsworth shows students how to sanitize their hands when entering the school.



Second grade teacher Tifanie Kelly “elbow bumps” a greeting to a student.

school, the SMS Leadership Team and faculty went to work on a hybrid approach that would allow students to come to school once a week and attend online classes on the other school days. This “Safe Start Plan” sought to balance the need to keep everyone as safe as possible with the benefits to students of being able to interact with their teachers and with each other in play.

“Our ultimate goal all along has been to put student and staff safety first while balancing the best practices for student learning and social emotional development within the parameters we have been given by the state,” explained Principal Carrie Marlow. “Because our current school population is small and because all of our staff members are willing and able to work onsite each day,

Continued on page 2.

Fall 2020 Safe Start (continued from page 1)

we have more in-person options open to us. We are so very blessed to be in the position of offering a hybrid approach, as many schools are not.”

To minimize the number of students that would be in contact with each other at one time, each class was divided into three “cohort” groups with each cohort coming to school either Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays from 8 am until noon. Schedules and traffic flow inside the school building were also coordinated to lessen the contact between the grade level cohorts. Modifications to the hybrid plan were made for the youngest students who have a greater need for in-person instruction. The kindergarten class was divided into two cohorts that each meet twice a week, and the pre-kindergarten class meets as a single group four days a week.

To maximize the benefit of the in-person school time, teachers focus on social and emotional development through group activities, as well as individualized help, one-on-one conferencing with students, and assessment.

“Cohorts are all about the teacher-student connection,” said 4th grade teacher Lisa Villar. “They allow us to build relationships with our students, which helps teachers adjust their best practices according to learning styles, specific needs, and home supports. And, we know a student’s academic and social/emotional development is directly impacted by this connection.”

Each cohort day begins with parents driving into one of several screening stations on the school playground. There, each student’s temperature is taken and parents are asked a number of questions about potential COVID symptoms and risk factors before students are allowed to enter the school. Once inside, students sanitize their hands and head to their classrooms to join the three to five other students in their cohort. Once the class is settled in, each teacher holds a daily Zoom meeting with both the in-person and at-home groups for their grade. This allows the entire class to see each other briefly, and allows teachers to make sure that students at home are



Photos (top to bottom): The daily arrival process involves family vehicles lining up on the playground, a group of school staff performing health screening for each vehicle, and then students entering the school building.

awake and ready to start the school day. Other features of the cohort days include the chance to check out library books, testing or other learning assessment as needed, recess, and a complimentary lunch.

During their at-home learning days, students watch pre-recorded video lessons from their teachers and complete assignments in their core learning areas. This “on-demand” aspect of the lessons allows each family to fit their student’s study time within their daily schedule, as well as to watch lessons multiple times if needed.

While the flexibility of the learning schedule has its benefits, it has required some extra work and learning of new technology for teachers.

“The learning curve has been high when it comes to the technology aspects of remote teaching, especially now that we have moved on from spring to start new learning and set higher expectations in fall,” commented Lisa Villar. “While these new endeavors have also been time-consuming, overwhelming, and frustrating at times, it serves as an example to our students that we ‘walk the talk’ of being lifelong learners.”

As of the beginning of November, the county’s COVID case rate had been steadily decreasing but then started moving up again along with most of Washington state. This trend paralleled the feeling inside St. Mary School of cautious optimism combined with the need to remain vigilant.

“Our success so far is really due to the dedication and hard work of our teachers and staff, as well as the diligence of our school families,” said Carrie Marlow. “Each day we are able to bring students into the building is a blessing and with each week that goes by safely, we feel God’s protection blanketing us and strengthening us. We are hopeful that soon our county’s COVID-19 case rates will decline enough for us to begin bringing students into the building more frequently, which will increase in-person student learning and put an even bigger smile on everyone’s faces.”

Fall Reopening Brings Trials and Blessings

You set a table before me in front of my foes; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Psalm 23

Even in the face of “foes” that include reduced enrollment, added expenses for health and safety precautions, increased scholarship needs, and higher stress levels for both staff and school families, St. Mary School has been blessed with an overflowing level of support from both within and beyond the school community.

When school leaders made the difficult decision to limit in-person learning to one day per week for grades 1-8 (see “Safe Start” story), they knew that some families would find it difficult to absorb the cost of added child care while still paying tuition. Between families that withdrew their students and the limits on class size due to social distancing requirements, the school enrollment is currently at 133 compared to 163 last year, resulting in a \$60,000 decline in tuition revenue. In addition, the school spent approximately \$16,000 on things like thermometers, face masks, and other COVID-related equipment, and remote learning technology.

No sooner had staff started making plans to deal with these challenges than the solutions started appearing from a multitude of sources:

- The Fulcrum Foundation, which supports Catholic schools throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle, gave \$60,000 to SMS as part of their COVID Emergency Relief Fund.
- The Frost and Margaret Snyder Foundation, based in Tacoma, gave a grant of \$10,000 to the school in April to help cover emergency scholarship funding needs for current and new students.
- The Knights of Columbus, Joseph S. Novak Council, gave \$5,000, which is being used to fund the free lunches provided to students on their Cohort Days.
- The Grays Harbor Community Foundation gave a grant of \$7,800 to purchase clear desk shields for both students and teachers.
- School supporters responded to the appeal in the spring/summer newsletter by making donations to fund student scholarships, the Teacher Fund, and re-opening costs.



Knights of Columbus members Joe Novak and Bob Delahanty present principal Carrie Marlow with a donation check.

In addition to these private donations, SMS has also received federal assistance in the form of a “PPP” forgivable loan to offset payroll costs last spring, as well as money from the “Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund” to purchase COVID-related supplies.

“Last spring, when initially faced with a multitude of COVID-related financial challenges, we were concerned about how St. Mary School would survive them all,” said Principal Carrie Marlow. “Keeping our doors safely open to all our students and continuing to pay our dedicated staff were our top priorities. The financial support we have received from near and far has been truly amazing. There are not enough words in the English language to express our gratitude to everyone who has stepped forward to help us. As we move forward, the challenge will be to successfully balance future needs with the resources available to us. We are most definitely being held in the palm of the Lord’s hand!”

School Snapshots



◀ Kindergarten student **Ellisabella Smith** shows off her pumpkin from the class harvest party.

▶ **Fr. Jaya** sprinkles holy water on members of the **Jimenez** family during the blessing of the pets.



◀ Kindergarten students display signs showing what they are thankful for.

▶ Parent volunteers **David and Jamie Quigg**, and **Aries Light** count Oktoberfest raffle money.



Brueher Family Appreciates SMS “Diamond”

“Good morning Maddie, ooh look at those shoes!” One more student walks into school with a smile on her face and Liz Brueher moves to greet the next family arriving for daily check-in with another welcoming comment ready to go. There may not be anyone at St. Mary School who can switch roles from teacher to parent to volunteer to cheerleader as seamlessly as Mrs. Brueher. And also, not many can express how much the school has to offer families as someone who has a deep appreciation for how it has impacted her own.

“I have seen so much growth in my own family academically and spiritually and also in the kids I help teach,” said Liz. “We have a real diamond here.”

The Brueher family first came to St. Mary School seven years ago, when their oldest daughter Paige was starting first grade.

“Paige was in public school for kindergarten and had 26 students in her class,” Liz remembered. “We needed something with small class sizes and we also wanted something with good moral values.” The decision wasn’t easy however, as Liz was a stay-at-home mom at the time and she and her husband Rob thought SMS “might be too much for our budget, but we received scholarships and made it work.”

What the school got in return was not only Paige, but also her younger sister Linnea who was starting preschool, and mom Liz who volunteered as a classroom helper for several years before joining the staff as a P.E. and Health teacher. As an added bonus, Liz’s mom, Kathy Brown, who was a retired paraeducator, also started helping at SMS with student testing, assisting in the classroom, and keeping teachers energized with her famous baked treats.

Fast forward to 2020 and Paige is in 8th grade, Linnea is in 5th grade and Liz has seen lots of positive development in both girls.

“Paige is shy and likes to stay under the radar but her teachers have helped her to find her voice. They push her to be better and acknowledge her hard work. Linnea really enjoys the friendships she has made here at St. Mary’s. She is steadily growing in her academics with much help from the amazing teachers here.”

As for her unique perspective as both a teacher and a parent, Liz said it has multiple benefits. “I get to know the kids so well. I also get to know many families from being a teacher as well as a parent who volunteers with other parents. I like being able to really know what is happening at SMS from both sides.”



The Brueher family (Left to right): Paige, Rob, Liz, Linnea and dog Bentley.

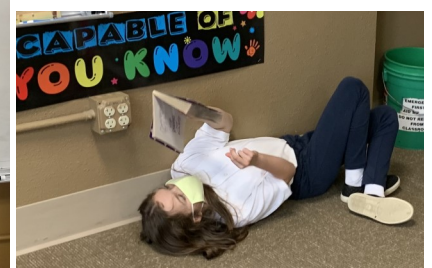
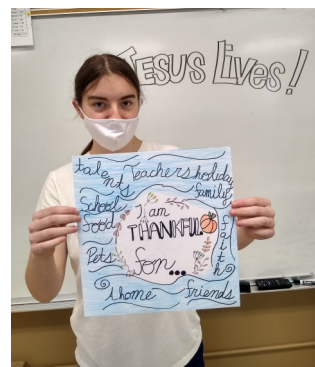
The benefit to students, parents, and other staff is that they know where to turn if they need a smile, words of encouragement, or a joke to brighten up their day.

“The Brueher family is a shining example of what it means to be an engaged member of a school community,” said Principal Carrie Marlow. “Liz is one of our most versatile and teamwork-oriented employees and parents and the girls are faith-filled, hard-working students. We are so very blessed that Liz and Rob chose to take that leap of faith to SMS all those years ago!”

Now as the Brueher family prepares for Paige’s graduation next spring, Liz expressed gratitude to school supporters and alumni.

“I will be so proud this June when my oldest daughter can move from student to alumnus. If it weren’t for your support I don’t know if we would be here at SMS. You help make such a difference in these kids’ lives and academics.”

(Left to right): Liz Brueher takes a student’s temperature at morning drop-off; Paige Brueher shares her thankfulness poster; Linnea Brueher reads during cohort time.





Teacher Feature

Kathy Gwinn: Starting Learners on Their Educational Careers

Preschool and pre-kindergarten teacher Kathy Gwinn is currently the only teacher at St. Mary School with all of her students at school full-

time. We asked Mrs. Gwinn to share about that experience as well as her many years at SMS.

Tell us about yourself both as a teacher and a person, including your time at SMS

I am going on my 17th year at St. Mary School and I feel so blessed for the wonderful experiences I have shared with my students and fellow teachers over the years. As a preschool and Pre-K teacher, early childhood education is a passion of mine. I love being able to start my learners' educational career off in a fun, Christ-filled environment. My goal is for them to truly love coming to school to learn with me. When I am not working in my classroom, I enjoy spending time with my family, making crafts and camping. My husband Todd and I recently purchased a travel trailer and we have thoroughly enjoyed traveling and camping with our family and friends. We have found camping to be our happy place - our home away from home!

How has your time at SMS influenced you and/or your family?

I am grateful to be a Catholic educator and I am passionate about being able to share my love for God and love of learning with my students every day. My daughter Katelyn taught kindergarten here for two years and it was great to enjoy with her our shared passion for teaching. She even met her husband through a continuing education class she took with his mother while she was teaching at SMS.

What aspect of teaching do you enjoy the most and why?

Through my years of teaching, I have found the greatest enjoyment has been the life-long relationships that I have fostered with my students. I love it when past students come back to visit. Also, it's great to watch the students'

excitement when they are learning a new concept and they just light up when they get it. Then it's really fun when the whole class catches on and starts chiming in.

How is this school year different from others, and how are you and the students adapting?

We spent a lot of time this summer planning and preparing to bring students back safely. And each school day there is a huge amount of cleaning, from disinfecting each toy to keeping items in separate containers to wiping down every surface. But I wouldn't trade it for anything. The kids are adapting great – for most it's their first year in school and they don't know anything is different. I think kids are much more resilient than adults.

Do you have a favorite memory or student story from your time at St. Mary School?

I had a little preschool boy who was the first child and grandchild in his family, so every day his family was excited to hear what had happened at school. One day in class we talked about the fact that God is all around us. When the little boy got home, he told his family "I can talk to God in the house, I can talk to God in the backyard, it doesn't matter where I am because God is everywhere!" It helped me realize that when you tell kids something they do listen, even if it's a hard concept to understand.



Preschool and pre-kindergarten teacher Kathy Gwinn leads her students in the pledge of allegiance.



A Message From Mrs. Marlow

Greetings St. Mary School Community and Supporters!

“Having faith does not mean having no difficulties, but having the strength to face them, knowing we are not alone.” - *Pope Francis*

The spring, summer, and fall of 2020 have been some of the most challenging times for the students, staff, and families of St. Mary School. However, they have also been times filled with God’s presence, comfort, and grace and a coming together of community in partnership, collaboration, and hope. The last eight months have forced all of us to seek out new ways to gather, teach, learn, and serve.

At St. Mary School we have worked proactively to make decisions based on student and staff safety and best practices in teaching and learning. Our Fall Safe Start Plan is the result of many weeks of training, planning, and collaborating amongst our Leadership Team and staff. As I write this letter, we are in the middle of our ninth week of hybrid schooling and I could not be more proud of the St. Mary School faculty for the professional and compassionate way they have tackled the daunting tasks of teaching remotely, our St. Mary School parents for the diligence and respect they have shown to all the new health and safety protocols, and our St. Mary School students for their efforts in figuring out how to be engaged learners both virtually and in-person.

In addition, the outpouring of support we have received from our St. Mary School alumni, Grays Harbor Catholic Parishes and parishioners has been phenomenal and above and beyond what we could have imagined. Furthermore, generous grants from the Fulcrum Foundation and the Grays Harbor Community Foundation have helped us to address the many health, safety, and technology expenses we have incurred as we worked to fulfill and practice our Fall Safe Start Plan.

Knowing and trusting in my heart that God has a specific and beautiful plan in mind for St. Mary School and each one of us has made navigating these troubled waters possible. Knowing that the faith, strength, and power of our St. Mary School community and our St. Mary Lion pride will see us through, has driven us to put one foot in front of the other and “move forward in faith” despite the obstacles ahead.

Thank you for your prayers, support, and encouragement. May your holidays be bright and may God bless us all abundantly.

Together in Christ,

Carrie Marlow
School Principal

SMS Announces Staff Additions and Change

St. Mary School is pleased to welcome two new staff members this school year and to congratulate one staff member on her new position.



Cristy Cuevas is the new kitchen assistant. She and head cook Alejandra Leon have been busy preparing daily meals for students

that they then bag and deliver to the classrooms. Cristy describes herself as a “happy and positive person who loves God, kids, my family, and flowers. I am blessed to be part of the St. Mary School staff.”



Marci Hollingsworth is the new kindergarten teacher. Marci previously served as the kindergarten teaching assistant for 3 years and is also a longtime SMS parent. "I am grateful

for the opportunity to step into the kindergarten teaching position," said Marci. "I have used the last 3 years to prepare, learn, and grow from the wonderful staff here at St. Mary School and I am ready for my new adventure!"



Deborah Weber is the new office manager at the school, replacing Theresa Brumley who retired last spring. Deborah is very familiar with

SMS from her daughter Anna's 11 years there, preschool through 8th grade. Deborah shared, "I feel truly blessed to be back at St. Mary School in my new role as office manager."

Donations and memorial gifts, June 29 to November 6, 2020

In Honor/Memory

In Memory of Kris Barnes
Anita Basich

In Memory of Catherine (Katie) Byrns
Linda Hulbert

John and Marjorie Celich
Celich Family

In Memory of Trudy and George Halverson
Halverson Family
Bruce and Teresa Sherman

In Memory of Gertrude (Trudy) Halverson
Jeffrey and Cheryl Armentrout
Michelle Audino
Celich Family
Gilda and Mike Cundari
George and Suzanne Donovan
Helen Donovan
Jim and Glenda Donovan
Diana Franich
Rena Gegen
Dr. Robert and Maryanne Harry
Charles Isaacson
Steven Isaacson
Thomas and Linda Isaacson
John and Jean Larson
Mark and Weedy McCauley
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Sally Hobi Palmer
Bill and Carol Quigg
Debra Rikalo Cotter
Ann Scroggs and Family
Pete and Kristin Scroggs
St. Aurillas Guild
Edward and Irene Stipic
Carole Vammen

In Memory of Elizabeth (Pidgy) Hulbert
Fred (Mick) and Linda Hulbert
Barbara deLateur

In Memory of Dorothy Logue
Edward Logue

In Memory of David Lupo
Anita Basich

In Memory of Catherine Mackey
Oliver and J'Neil Mackey

In Memory of Richard Scroggs
Jim and Janet Boora
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Lawrence P. and Mary Ellen Hughes
Ronald and Sherry Hulscher
Mark and Weedy McCauley
Sally Hobi Palmer
Kay and John Stimson
Timothy Moriarty Family
Molly M. Tuohy
David and Debra Windell

In Memory of Stan Sliva
David and Debra Windell

In Honor of Gail Quigg
Bill and Carol Quigg

In Honor of Bob Randich
Debra Rikalo Cotter

In Honor of Debra Windell
Mary Drake

Designated Donations

Student Scholarship Fund
Mary Drake
Charles L. Isaacson
Elizabeth G. Isaacson
Richard and Judy Isaacson
Steven F. Isaacson

St. Mary School Teacher Fund
Byron and Jane Russell

Fall 2020 Reopening Fund
Sharon Swift

Stepping Stones Project
Daniel and Pamela Baer

Unrestricted Donations

Angel Allas
Anita Basich
Ed and Lori Blomquist
George and Suzanne Donovan
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William M. Donovan
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St. Mary School 2020-21 Highlights To Date and Future Plans



133 Students enrolled and attending weekly in-person cohort days



2,000 Student health screenings done Sept. 1st-Nov. 13th



\$31,153 raised during the Oktoberfest raffle and furniture sale



Holiday wreath fundraiser going on now. Order at: tinyurl.com/yydwc6eq

SAVE THE DATE - APRIL 24, 2021



Please plan on joining other St. Mary School supporters for the **SPiRiT** Auction, Saturday, April 24, 2021

This will be a virtual event but with plenty of interaction, entertainment and SMS Spirit!

More details to come soon