

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

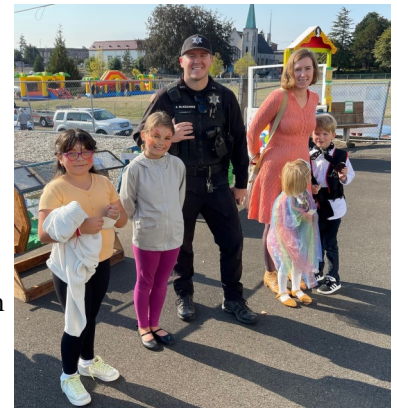
St. Mary School Community Rebuilds Connections

The things that make St. Mary School unique in Grays Harbor are many: a faith-based environment, small class sizes, and traditions that go back nearly 100 years. However, the thread that is interwoven among these things and holds them together is the strong sense of community, both within the school and extending out to alumni, parishioners, and others. A good portion of that community involvement was abruptly put on hold in the spring of 2020 with the arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic and only as it returns are people realizing how much it was missed.

A prime example of this was the return of the annual Oktoberfest carnival after a two-year hiatus. On a sunny October Saturday, nearly every school family turned out to participate, with a record number of parents volunteering to run games and serve food while their kids ran, laughed, ate, and did what kids do. Some of the Oktoberfest add-ons like the Bavarian dinner and vendor sales that attract other community members were still absent, but organizers decided to ramp up slowly and focus this year's event on the

school families who were in dire need of a chance to gather socially.

Another tradition that has returned for the 2022-23 school year is the SMS school family program. This program mixes students from kindergarten through eighth grade into "families" that attend weekly Mass and participate in other activities within their groups. This interaction gives older students the chance to model good behavior for younger students and builds friendships for students in different grades that might not otherwise get to know each other.



During Oktoberfest, students were able to interact with members of the local sheriff, police, and fire departments.

Students are reaching out to the larger community as well, with events such as hosting coffee hour at St. Mary Parish and visiting other parishes in the Grays Harbor region during Catholic Schools Week in January. Preparations are also beginning for the return of an in-person Spirit Auction in April.

"It has been an absolute blessing to be able to return to several of our community building programs and events," said Principal Carrie Marlow. "It is so heartwarming to see students, parents, parishioners, and community members come together and simply enjoy each others' company; rebuilding old connections and friendships and creating new, all under the light of Christ."



Students gathered in their school families to decorate Thanksgiving food boxes that were donated to families within the school community.

Carol Kegel: A Passion for Hands-On Teaching



Carol Kegel

Friends, family, and former students gathered at St. Mary School recently to say goodbye to Carol Kegel, who taught at SMS for almost one-third of the school's lifespan. Carol passed away in August of this year and her family decided that the most appropriate place for her memorial service was at the school where she spent so many years.

From 1974 to 2003, Carol taught middle school science and math, while allowing hundreds of SMS students to experience the excitement of the outdoors through numerous camps and field trips.

"She was very encouraging to students to try new things," said Carol's longtime friend and fellow teacher Jennalee Cook. "She would get right down with them and help students go beyond their expectations. She loved hands-on learning where students can really see what is happening."

Carol took students to a number of camps over the years but the one she is best remembered for is Cispus, located near White Pass.

Carol's daughter Jenny noted that Carol started taking SMS students to Cispus in the late 1970s and eventually honed her week's worth of lessons into a curriculum guide called *The Cispus Experience* that was used by schools around the state.

"Cispus was a family affair for us," said Jenny. "I grew up going to Cispus during the summers where my Mom worked on new lessons for her campers. My mother even went into labor with my sister at Cispus."

Some highlights of the yearly trips included presentations on search and rescue from the Lewis County Sheriff's Department, an expert on Indian lore, and visits to nearby caves and Mossyrock Dam.

Carol also made sure that the cost of attending camps wouldn't be a financial burden. Jennalee remembers that for many years Carol along with fellow teacher Mike Descher, managed the concession stand for the school's weekly Bingo fundraisers. Jennalee believes their extra work raised enough funds to cover the cost of all the camps.

In addition to the outdoor environment camp, Carol managed a leadership camp for 8th graders, and a marine biology camp at Fort Worden as well as numerous field trips with students.

"The marine Biology camp in particular inspired my sister, Kathryn, to become a Marine Biologist," said Jenny. "Now she is an associate curator at the Seattle Aquarium."

Both Jenny and Jennalee mentioned Carol's long hours planning lessons that would engage her students as well as her focus on each student's learning.

"She often created separate lesson plans tailored especially for kids who needed extra help or an extra challenge," said Jenny.

"She gave her students her undivided attention," Jennalee concluded. "She loved to teach."

Carol Kegel as a veteran teacher in 1996 (right) and with one of her early classes in 1976 (below).



Coast Guard Crews Provide Special Veteran's Day Event

St. Mary School observed Veteran's Day 2022 in a style befitting its close proximity to the Pacific Ocean. On November 10, students were treated to a color guard presentation, interaction with nine members of the U.S. Coast Guard, and the chance to tour a "Jayhawk" rescue helicopter.

Thanks to months of coordination by middle school teacher and Coast Guard veteran Richard Villar, SMS was able to host a four-person crew from USCG Station Grays Harbor in Westport and a five-person crew from Air Station Astoria for several hours at the school. Preparations included working through the Coast Guard approval process, obtaining permission from the Aberdeen School District to land on their athletic field, and asking the Aberdeen Police Department to monitor activities. And even with everything in place, Mr. Villar knew that the event could be canceled at the last minute due to inclement weather, mechanical issues with the helicopter, or the crew responding to a call for help.

"The students were praying for weeks beforehand that the weather would be good and everything would work out," said Mr. Villar.

Prayers were answered as the day of the event brought clear skies and lots of excitement when the students gathered on the playground for the color guard ceremony. Four members of the Coast Guard station at Westport presented the flag as the Star Spangled Banner played, followed by a short speech from Mr. Villar. Then, as if on cue, the steady thump-thump-thump of an approaching helicopter could be heard and students watched the red and white Jayhawk do a "low and



Top to bottom: Color guard members from Coast Guard Station Grays Harbor in Westport; The Jayhawk rescue helicopter landed across the street from SMS; Groups of students took turns touring the helicopter and asking the crew questions; some examples of the artwork students created to thank the Coast Guard crew members for their visit.

slow" flyover of the playground followed by a touchdown on the field across the street.

Students were then able to climb inside the helicopter, sit in the "rescue basket," and ask the crew members questions about the missions they carry out along the coast and at sea. The visit was especially relevant to a number of SMS students whose parents operate boats in the fishing and crabbing industries.

"Grays Harbor is a seafaring community so it's nice to have the Coast Guard come and visit," said Mr. Villar. He noted that it was also an opportunity for students to see the variety of jobs that crew members perform and to consider whether they might be interested in becoming a "Coastie" someday.

Once all the SMS students had completed their tours, members of the senior class at Aberdeen High School took a turn as well. The Coast Guard crews then were treated to a spaghetti lunch in the St. Mary School lunchroom and presented with drawings of Coast Guard helicopters and rescue boats that students had made.

In addition to Mr. Villar, SMS has two other Coast Guard veterans on staff, first-grade teacher Susan Batcheller and substitute teacher Therese Litzey Adams.

Mr. Villar summed up the experience by bringing the focus back to the Veterans Day observation.

"I'm really trying to get across to the kids how lucky we are to be Americans and all the opportunities we have," he said. "And that there are lots of people out there protecting us."

Teacher Feature

Susan Batcheller: Tapping Into Inquisitive and Curious Minds



First and second grade teacher Susan Batcheller has shared her talents in art and science with her students in a hands-on way. We asked Mrs.

Batcheller to share some of her teaching strategies with us.

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

I am fulfilling my life-long dream of being a teacher. After 30-plus years in the medical field, I went back to school and got my M.Ed in elementary education. I'm in my 14th year of teaching and have been a teacher at SMS for 7 years. I attend Immanuel Baptist church and enjoy the Christian friends we have. During Covid I missed attending Mass and am glad we are going again in our school "families." Go Blue Birds! (my school family)

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

I love that our staff is inclusive and shows Christianity to everyone inside and outside the school. My husband and I feel included in the SMS family. I love sharing cute stories about my students and how much they are growing and learning as the year progresses.

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

I am so glad that I teach at a Christian school. It's busy at times, but God is amazing and He carries us through the challenges.

I like the students' inquisitive and curious minds. It's fun and rewarding to see a concept "click" with a student. A light bulb goes on in their minds and I know that they are ready to learn something new.

I personally enjoy teaching art. Not coloring or crafts, but actually taking the time to focus on a particular artist. My past classes have learned about Picasso, Van Gogh, and Impressionism. We have made impressive modern art collages and painted our interpretations of famous artists.

The first and second grade classes have been "looping" for the past few years (spending two years with the same teacher). What benefits you have seen from this strategy?

When I looped with my first class I learned so much, not just about them, but about myself. Looping challenged me to learn more so that I could become a much better teacher. I learned that, at the end of the school year students experience some anxiety around what their next year will be like. When we looped they were excited to have the same teacher, but they thought they should be changing classrooms at the very least.

What is a favorite memory of your time at St. Mary School?

My students earn the right to become a "teacher for the day." Last year this was my second grader's favorite reward. It was an eye opening experience because they would set high expectations for their friends. There are some pretty amazing future teachers at our school.

What are your plans and goals for this coming year and beyond?

My plans are to continue teaching with students' learning styles in mind. I am training new teachers so they can become more involved in learning. We will continue reading the Bible and keep updating our prayer journal. When I retire in a few years, I am going to greatly miss the St. Mary School culture and students!



First grade teacher Susan Batcheller helps her students imagine they are inflating like a balloon .



A Message From Mrs. Marlow

Greetings St. Mary School Community, Friends, and Supporters,

“Prayer is an inspiration of the heart. It is a simple glance directed at Heaven. It is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy.” St. Therese of Lisieux

As we have journeyed our way through the Fall of 2022, we have had much to talk to God about. Through prayer and in community, we have celebrated joys and accomplishments, shared in sorrows and challenges, and given much thankfulness for the many blessings that have been bestowed upon us. At St. Mary School, prayer and praying together continues to be the cornerstone and guiding light of our mission. Fostering our relationship with Jesus through prayer each day keeps our eyes and hearts looking forward with trust, no matter the task.

While we have a lower enrollment (125 students) and smaller full-time teaching staff this year, we have also welcomed 19 new families to St. Mary School and two new support staff members, Kendal Wilson and Jingle Malloy, as well as welcoming back a few old friends, Teresa Mayr, Sherry Schmalz, and Jennalee Cook, as part-time instructors. In addition, parent involvement and volunteerism is at an energetic all-time high and we have been able to begin returning to many of our traditional events and activities and embark on a few new ones. As I prayerfully reflect on the past few months, I see so much goodness and much to be grateful for: our middle school students attending the Regional Mass of the Holy Spirit at St. Martin’s University; a sunny, fun-filled very successful Oktoberfest; the beautiful student voices that join together in our new after school Honors Choir; an honorable Veterans’ Day Assembly with local Coast Guard crews and their helicopter; and a positive and collaborative staff that puts forth their best efforts on a daily basis for our engaged student learners.

We will continue to be reflective and steadfast in our conversations with God as we tackle the next steps on our journey through the school year. January will bring our annual Catholic Schools Week celebration. In February, thanks to a grant from the Grays Harbor Community Foundation, we will welcome the Missoula Children’s Theater for a week-long theater residency. March will bring Lent and our first-ever Art Fair and the St. Mary School SPIRIT Auction is set for Saturday, April 22nd.

Thank you all for keeping us in YOUR prayers and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generous support! Please know that YOU are also in OUR prayers. May the Lord keep us safe and bless us all! The Lord has a wonderful plan in store! May we pray, listen and take heed in our hearts and honor God in all that we do!

Together in Christ,
Carrie Marlow
School Principal

SMS Class of '72 Celebrates 50-Year Reunion

If you asked current St. Mary School students what they will think about their school 50 years after they graduate you would likely get blank stares, but for many members of the SMS graduating class of 1972 reconnecting with their former classmates and school made them feel as though they had hardly been gone at all.

On October 1, 2022, twelve members of the St. Mary School graduating class of 1972 gathered in the school auditorium for a 50-year reunion. Classmates Pam (Drake) Baer and Beth (Killian) Watkins had organized a couple of informal reunions over the past few years and came up with the idea of holding their 50th year event at the school.

"We realized 2022 would be our 50th year since graduating from SMS so we wanted to make it a special event by holding it at our alma mater," said Pam.

The class of 1972 was part of the "baby boom" era of large classes that went through St. Mary School. Pam and Beth estimated that their class ranged from 30 to 35 students during their years at SMS, and Beth noted that their overall mailing list has 46 names on it. A number of classmates recalled the time when Our Lady of Good Help School in Hoquiam closed and many of those students started attending SMS, often carpooling on benches in the back of a hearse.

The reunion was held on a Saturday afternoon and included an informal school tour, a class photo, and lots of reminiscing about their student days at SMS.

"Each classroom brought back SO many memories," said Beth. "At every stop we would pause and talk and between all our senior citizen brains we conjured up a lot of stories and a lot of laughs."

Pam added, "There was lots of reminiscing about the different teachers (nuns vs. lay-teachers), their styles and discipline, and the classroom and desk size."

In the spirit of giving back to their alma mater, the organizers asked classmates to consider donating to either the SMS Teacher Fund or the Mary Drake Scholarship Fund



The St. Mary School class of 1972 at the time of their graduation (top) and in 2022 (bottom)

and the group responded with over \$1,300 in donations.

One sign of a good event is when people aren't ready for it to end, and Beth noted that this was the case with the reunion. "The time went fast, and we wanted to keep visiting, so most of us met at Duffy's afterward for food and drinks. I think everyone is looking forward to a 51st reunion!"

Pam summed up with a message that a classmate posted on their Facebook page: "Great time, great day, great friends..." "I couldn't have said it better," she added.

Reading Program Gives Students Skills, Confidence



Rachel White

As any teacher will tell you, a student's ability to read is vital to succeeding in nearly all subjects. For many years, St. Mary School has offered help to struggling readers through the federal Title I program run locally by the Aberdeen School District. However, for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, SMS was given funding to hire its own Title I teacher and was fortunate to find an experienced teacher with the right qualifications and attitude in Rachel White.

Mrs. White came to SMS after teaching second grade for 15 years at a private Christian school in the Seattle area. She and her husband moved to Ocean Shores in 2021, about the same time that SMS was seeking to hire a teacher for the Title I program.

"Second grade was good preparation for the Title program because of the wide variety of reading skills that we work on at that age," Mrs. White said.

Mrs. White works with students in kindergarten through 6th grade four to five days per week. Groups of three to five students

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Donations and memorial gifts, July 1 to November 30, 2022

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Reading Program continued from page 6

at a time spend 30-minute sessions in her classroom honing their reading skills. With the younger students, she works on things like letter identification, phonics skills, and sight words, and with older students the focus is on reading fluency and comprehension.

Classroom teacher observation along with assessment results are used to determine which students need extra support with their reading. There are currently 25 students in the program although Mrs. White explained that students can move in or out of the program during the year.

"For some kids, just a boost in confidence is what they need," she said. "They might be in the program for a few months or for a few years."

She also noted that St. Mary School has a large percentage of students who are "English Language Learners" (ELL) which means they didn't learn English as their primary language. These students may not have family members who can help them with reading so the extra support in school is even more important.

Mrs. White said that St. Mary School has been a good fit for her so far.

"I love the small class sizes. Also, the faith-based environment and staff commitment are very meaningful to me. I'm excited to be here at this season of my life."



Mrs. White works with a group of students in her Title I program.

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School Snapshots



St. Mary School fifth through eighth grade students attended the Mass of the Holy Spirit at St. Martin's University in September with Archbishop Etienne presiding.



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