



St. Dominic SCHOOL NEWS

Vol. 3 Issue 1

September 2011



AND SO IT BEGINS...

The air was buzzing with excitement on August 24th, when St. Dominic School opened its doors and welcomed a new school year. The lobby overflowed with students, tanned and rested and alive with stories of their summer holidays. One by one, each class was called into its classroom, and the entire room erupted in applause as the children, a grade older -- and some a few inches taller -- made their way down the hall. All parents were invited to stay at school for coffee and pastries before heading over to Opening Day Mass with the entire student body.

The school building and grounds have never looked

better, thanks to the summer efforts of our maintenance team and some helpful parents. The school cafeteria was repainted, roof cupolas were repaired, copper gutters were refurbished and the junior high wing was repainted.

The school is pleased to welcome 44 new families and 55 new students to the school community this year. Enrollment for the year is at 175 -- up by 15% over last year. Interest in the school is enormous -- a testament to the efforts of our School Principal, Sue Biggs, along with a hugely invigorated marketing effort.

Days into the new year, school traditions are already in place and rolling out. Prayer partners have been selected, vegetable gardens have been planted, a fall fundraiser has kicked off, and the annual hayride is well in the planning. By all accounts, a great new chapter in the school's history has begun. ☩



A GREENHOUSE FOR SDS

Enhanced learning opportunities for students of all grades

Green is in the air, and never more so than on the southeast side of St. Dominic School, where a new greenhouse has been established. The whirlwind project began as the brainchild of Kindergarten Assistant Nancy Stovicek and school parents Chris and Amy Roark. With the help of fellow teacher, Julie Pastore and generous assistance from the St. Dominic landscaper, John Palumbo, they managed to secure deconstruction, delivery and reconstruction of the house on SDS property, all in a matter of about a week.



The greenhouse will allow teachers at every grade level to work biology into their lesson plans. The kindergartners will chart how long into winter the greenhouse plants can live. The second grade plans to extend the growing season of their tomato vines. The third and fourth grade will study sunlight as energy and the effects of temperature change, and the junior high science students will study photosynthesis and the atmosphere. It's a great addition to the school's garden

space, and one that will help keep hope alive on those cold winter days ahead. ☩

NEW THIS YEAR...

SDS proudly welcomes the following teachers:



EMILY MOUNT, KINDERGARTEN

This is Mrs. Mount's first teaching position, but anyone who has met her knows she's uniquely up to the task. Hailing from the Twin Cities, Mrs. Mount has a B.A. from the U. of Notre Dame, and a Master's in Elementary Education from U. of Pennsylvania. She competed against nearly 100 applicants for the position and won

over the committee with her warmth, exuberance, and natural dynamic with children. "I love the kindergartners' excitement about learning everything," she said. "My goal is to create a safe, happy environment, where students can feel free to move at their own pace and learn to interact, pray, love and share in addition to reading and writing." Mrs. Mount, who was just married in August, relocated to Cleveland with her husband who attends medical school at CWRU.



JUANA CUERVO, SPANISH, GRADES 3-8

Mrs. Cuervo began the school year as she means to continue: speaking Spanish. All class long. And while the students looked perplexed at first, her approach is already paying off. "I want the students to learn Spanish the way we learn a first language – through seeing an image

and associating the correct word -- not translating English into Spanish," she says. Originally from Bogota, Colombia, Mrs. Cuervo has been living in Cleveland for 17 years. She has a B.A. from the U. of Texas, a teaching certificate from U. of Akron and a Master's Degree from John Carroll, and has previously taught Spanish at Beaumont and Cleveland Central Catholic. This will be her first opportunity to teach children at the primary level- a challenge she welcomes wholeheartedly. "If children start at this elementary level, they have the opportunity to master Spanish to the level of native competency," she said. "I am thrilled to be here." ☪

GREAT STUDENT=GREAT TEACHER

Congratulations to our own Jackie Kennedy, Physical Education Teacher and Assistant Principal, who was named "Master's Student of the Year" at Kent State University last spring out of a pool of more than 70 students. The award was based on her GPA as well as the body of exceptional work she produced while completing her Masters Degree in Health Education and Promotion.



Now in her 12th year of teaching at St. Dominic, Miss Kennedy's upbeat energy, persuasive personality and enthusiasm for all things active are practically institutions. "As an educator, it's my responsibility to get all students interested in developing not just their minds, but also their physical abilities," she said. "I hope to instill in them the importance of lifelong physical fitness."

Equally important in Miss Kennedy's book is good sportsmanship, and she weaves lessons about it throughout her activities. Ensuring that the same Christian values we teach in Mass are present on the playing field is one of her main tenets. Her favorite part of teaching, however, is the kids. "Especially, the look on their faces when they master a new skill. It's a wonderful thing to witness, and one I'm lucky enough to see every day." ☪

THE SCOOP ON THE HOOPS

Recess and Aftercare at St. Dominic has become a lot more exciting thanks to a new addition to the scene... basketball hoops! A long time dream of Physical Education teacher Jackie Kennedy, the project became reality this summer with a generous donation from the FEA and some able-bodied parents to help install. The basketball hoops actually detach from their posts, meaning they can be taken down each evening, after the students go home. Now our Bulldog basketballers will get even more opportunities to polish their skills! ☪

A NEW FACE AT THE WINDOW

She's brand new to St. Dominic School, but you'd be forgiven for thinking that School Secretary/Administrative Assistant Elona Gortz has been here forever. Her personality – part mother, part business woman, and multi-tasker extraordinaire – makes her a natural for the work. A lifetime working in school environments makes her comfortable with her surroundings. And her people skills and creative talents qualify her to step in and manage a variety of situations, all while smiling and answering the ever-ringing phone.

A native of University Heights, Mrs. Gortz worked for 15 years for Gesu, first in the school, then the parish. More recently, Mrs. Gortz worked for eight years with Hathaway Brown School, where she served as Advancement Coordinator and Assistant Director of Alumnae Relations.

"I'm delighted to be here at St. Dominic," said Mrs. Gortz. "There's



Elona Gortz, Secretary

such a sense of inclusion here. The environment is collaborative and respectful, and the school is like a little jewel, just starting to reveal itself."

Mrs. Gortz serves as the 'face' of the school – greeting visitors as they arrive, answering phones, registering students and liaising with parents. She also serves as office and student relations manager, ensuring procedures run smoothly and students are happy. This 'jack-of-all-trades' position suits Mrs. Gortz to a tee. "I love to be involved in

so many different aspects of the school," she said. "People and relationships are my passion. My 'default' is for development, nurturing innovation and searching for ways to be a positive influence. There's so much happening here... it won't be hard!"

Her favorite part of the job? The children. "They symbolize hope walking on two feet," she says. "If I can validate them, encourage them and help them shine, I am fulfilled." ☪