

SFXSF 2015

On March 1, the Saint Francis Xavier School Fund (SFXSF) annual giving campaign for year 2015 was formally begun. Since its establishment twenty-two years ago, the SFXSF has been of significant help in promoting the mission of Catholic Education: providing faith based, quality academic education to the children here at Saint Francis Xavier School. Since SFXSF was launched this year the record of donations has been encouraging. Between March 1 and April 15, more than \$ 18,000 was donated.

In accordance with our normal practice the annual campaign will run through September 30. We will thank all donors by name in our autumn newsletter. The names of donors of \$250 or more will appear on the SFXSF 2015 Roll of Honor which will be printed in that newsletter.

Every donation, regardless of amount, demonstrates to others a commitment to the ministry of Catholic Education.

Our thanks are extended to all for your faithful support!

* * * * * detach here * * * * *

SFXSF 2015 SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER SCHOOL FUND

Enclosed is my contribution to the 2015 SFXSF Annual Appeal.

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ (other) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Class Year _____

Please make checks payable to: SFXSF 2015

Saint Francis Xavier Parish House * 2319 Green Street * Philadelphia, PA 19130



St. Francis Xavier School Alumni & Friends Association News

Newsletter: Volume 23, Issue 3, Spring 2015



Walking the Way of the Cross

Every year, our 8th grade students enact the Living Stations. Since the entire school gets to watch, there is nothing new about it for the 8th graders who have seen it seven times already; yet everything is new. It all changes when you actually do it yourself.

As they rehearsed seeing, hearing and imagining what Jesus and Mary did 2000 years ago, students came under the spell of the story. Simon instinctively reached out to help Jesus carry the cross. John with all his heart tried to comfort Mary. Pontius Pilate did not want it to happen, but haplessly allowed it to.

The story told through the eyes of Mary resonated for Julia, who as Mary narrated each station. It is wrenching to see unbearable cruelty happening to your own son. As Jesus, Dylan hurt his leg when he fell, feeling a glimmer of Christ's pain. The youngest students gasped in sympathy at the sight.

For all the participants, whether the weeping women or the Roman guards, the event was searing. At first they enjoyed playing a part, but then something happened. Acting became a prayer, a sign of reverence, and the recognition of a great sacrifice.

Students wore creative, homemade costumes; they knew people wore simple garb in Jesus' time. They also went without shoes. Each Station inspired a meditation. Also at each Station, the choir directed by Mrs. Morgan sang a moving hymn with words and music that poignantly underscored the sorrow. The musical contribution assured the total involvement of all participants and observers.

The 8th graders feel they did a good job bringing the message of Holy Week and Easter to the student body. Ms. Butler and their teacher Mrs. Deviney were thrilled with the sincere re-living of this prayerful tradition, passed from class to class, from generation to generation.

The One Hundred Day Project

Ms. Heather Klenieski has been teaching kindergarten at SFX for thirteen years now, and every year at Christmas time, she challenges her young students to think of ideas for a project comprising 100 items. The project is due on the 100th day of school, of course. This usually falls in mid-February.

The creativity of the students is amazing. Ms. Heather has gotten a Leggo church made from 100 pieces, an iPad with 100 apps, a 100-piece puzzle, pictures of 100 houses in Fairmount, and a wooden box with 100 pennies. The projects are as varied as the students.

The purpose of the project is related to the kindergarten math goal: to learn to count to 100. The students have six weeks to assemble their work. They love it because it's hands-on. Even parents love working on the projects, as helpful assistants naturally.

The different ideas and materials are remarkable: Swedish fish, bubble gum, Fruit Loops, Popsicle sticks, pretzel sticks, rhinestones. And these objects make trees, treasure chests, princess crowns and more. Every time Ms. Heather thinks this one can't be topped--another one comes in.

With each project, students practice their counting in class. Each kindergartner eagerly stands in front of the class to share his or her work. And if Ms. Heather forgets, she is reminded, "We need to share!" This has been a very successful classroom activity. The kindergartners rate their happiness level at pretty near 100%.



THEY ALSO SERVE

Christian Marrero doesn't think of himself as a Yankees fan, but he firmly believes like the great Yogi Berra, you can learn a lot by watching. In fact, that is the key to being a successful altar server. The 7th grader decided this was something he wanted to do two years ago when he was in 5th grade.

Christian said no to a first opportunity to serve in fourth grade, but changed his mind over the following summer. He credits his grandfather who gave him the encouragement to do it. Father Philip provided the instruction, and Christian quickly learned his role.

Weddings and funerals are different from a daily or Sunday Mass, but Christian feels you catch on after three or four times through. Sometimes you make a mistake: he missed ringing the first bell once. Father Paul talked to him after Mass and gave him a cue to remember. No more missed bells.

Timing can sometimes be tricky, as with a funeral, for example, and whether or not there is a eulogy. Does the priest ever make a mistake? No. Well hardly ever. Sometimes there might be a difficulty finding the right page in the book.

Christian says he serves because he wants to do something good for his church. But he also feels the good has come back to him—showing him a straight path and inspiring him to do other good things. His older brother Nick was also an altar server.

After devoting almost three years to this service, Christian is a worthy and reliable server. "I make sure I do what I have to do," he says. Yogi Berra would love a guy who gave his all.

TAKE ME TO THE FAIR!

The best way to learn something is to read about it, think about it, look at it from different angles, write about it, and try to explain it to someone else: then you really know what you are talking about. That, in a nutshell, is what goes into the making of a project for the Science Fair.

Four students in Mrs. O'Brien's 7th grade class took projects beyond the school fair to the Carver Science Fair, a citywide event with some tough competition. But working on a project is more than a competition: it is a great opportunity to learn.

Christine decided to focus on mnemonics as a means of improving her own ability to study and memorize. Mnemonics, if you can pronounce it, is using a pattern or association to assist with remembering something; for example, the word HOMES helps us remember the Great Lakes: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior. After experimenting with some classmates, Christine found the method didn't work for some. Negative results also contribute to learning.

Wondering how pollution destroys water had Jordan measuring the surface tension of water. In her investigation of what happens in nature she made a surprise discovery: salt can separate water particles. This aids pollution cleanup, since it makes water tension thinner.

With the tough winter, Jaide was thinking about what makes ice melt quickly. As a sidebar, she unexpectedly learned that table salt and rock salt in the street have the same chemical make-up; the latter are simply bigger chunks.

Laylah was curious as to why, when you are sick with a cold, you can lose your sense of taste. She discovered in her research how keenly our sense of smell affects our sense of taste.

The 7th grade class worked on their science projects for weeks—creating pictures, graphs and charts, tallying data and writing conclusions. Christine, Jordan, Jaide and Laylah, meanwhile, went the extra step to enter the Carver Science Fair. They additionally wrote a paper and a 250 word abstract on their research. Whereas for school they needed three resources, for Carver they needed five.

What a learning experience! Besides employing research and the Scientific Method, the projects went across the curriculum, making use of logic, math, technology, writing and public speaking.

Mrs. O'Brien paid attention to the Carver judges' feedback: they felt SFX students were good communicators. Public speaking can be a its own challenge, and all the students did well in the interview portion.

Research was the area needing the most improvement, but Mrs. O'Brien is already thinking ahead. Her plan? Summer reading will focus on the research topics for next year. That means reading about the brain, the structure of the ear, chemicals, and skin sensitivity respectively for four 7th graders. And the other students?

Can't wait to see next year's projects.



A MATTER OF PRINCIPAL

Though she hardly looks old enough, our principal, Ms. Dolores Butler, has been at SFX for thirty-three years! It all began in 1982 when the Cathedral School closed, and Ms. Butler, who was teaching 3rd grade there at the time, came to St. Francis with another teacher and 90 students.

She began teaching at the Cathedral in 1970 in the Cadet Program. There was a strong need for teachers in those years, and applicants were accepted right out of high school. These very young teachers committed to taking six college credits per year, which Ms. Butler began immediately at St. Joseph's (then) College.

Even with twelve years of teaching experience under her belt, Ms. Butler was a bit nervous in the move to SFX. It was a much larger school than Cathedral with about 400 students in 1982. That meant a bigger faculty as well, but Ms. Butler felt welcome from the outset.

Over the years, the presence of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at SFX gradually diminished. As the sisters were transferred from the school they were not replaced, so that by 2003 there were none left in teaching positions. When the announcement came that the Sisters were leaving SFX it was shocking, yet by that point the withdrawal affected only the administration.

The parish was committed to keeping the school open, and the search began for a principal. In the intervening years, Ms. Butler had earned a Master of Arts degree in Elementary Education, and had completed the Principals Program of the Archdiocese. She was at a crossroad: she loved teaching 8th grade, but when the opportunity came, she applied for the principal's job—along with over 30 other applicants.

No other applicant knew the school and community as well, nor wished it to succeed more. After thoroughly reviewing the many qualified candidates, the School Advisory Board selected the best person in their view, and she happened to be the one closest to home. Ms. Butler freely admits that becoming principal was her proudest moment. When Father Paul announced the decision to the school over the loudspeaker, the cheers from the students rocked the building. This was only the beginning of the outpouring of support to come her way.

We all get by with a little help from our friends. The unstinting support and assistance of our faithful school secretary, Diane Paul, without a doubt eased the transition for Ms. Butler from teacher to principal. It also helps greatly to have a dedicated School Advisory Board, whose charge from Father Georges is to "keep Ms. Butler happy." Now in the 11th year of her administration, Ms. Butler has facilitated significant school accomplishments, including the addition of an Advanced Math program to the curriculum, participation in the Carver Science Fair and the Reading Olympics, and a partnership with the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which connects subjects across the curriculum to art and "extends the campus." The best part is that the students love these programs.

The ultimate measure of success is seeing the faculty work together for the good of the students. As a team, they follow the many small steps of students as they grow in confidence, faith and knowledge. Thanks so much to Ms. Butler for making SFX a great community of learning for these many years!



In Memoriam

We are sorry to report that on March 13, 2015, Mr. James (Jimmy) Golden, who graduated from Saint Francis Xavier in 1963, passed away. During his years here at Saint Franny's, Jimmy was an accomplished athlete in CYO sports; excelling in both basketball and football. After graduating in 1963, Jimmy enrolled at Bishop Neumann High School and continued to compete in both of those sports for that school's teams. In recognition of his performance and dedication, Jimmy was inducted to the Bishop Neumann High School Hall of Fame. Even after his sport playing years were concluded, he remained a faithful supporter of CYO Sports at Saint Francis Xavier. He regularly would come to Saint Francis from his home in New Jersey to attend our school's annual sports banquet and award ceremony. Our condolences are extended to his family.