



ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH SCHOOL'S

BRICK LOT *Bulletin*

February 2024

From the Principal's Office



As we enter the second half of the school year, I want to note that our parent involvement has been fantastic this year, including everything from mystery readers and

classroom party helpers, to Book Fair volunteers and the crews who helped pull off our Blue Ribbon School celebrations. It's the embodiment of this year's Catholic Schools Week theme, "United in Faith and Community." This theme was designed to encompass the belief that parents are the first teachers of their children and that the family is an integral part of the school community, where teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents work together to educate our students and fuel the light of faith. St. Sebastian Parish School is a great example of this theme in action, and I am grateful for everyone who is a member of this community!

Thank You!

During the second quarter, the school was full of activity, and many thanks are due to everyone who lent their expertise and support on behalf of our students, including HASA volunteers, parent mystery readers, Molly Karg, and Jennifer Smee (HASA Read-a-thon); Ashley Woodford-Lawson and her team of hard-working elves (HASA Santa Shop); HASA volunteers (monthly staff lunches, Park-Play-Pray, coffees after Mass, Baminelli Blessing); the Socials Committee (Five Days of Christmas, Ladies Luncheon, grade level socials, staff Christmas party); John Najeway and Thirsty Dog Brewery (staff Christmas party); Scott Mason and Jeff Beshore (band/choir performances, Christmas program); Allyn Rose and Jennifer Bradley (Geography Club); Maggi

Blischak, Mary Heffern, and Jennifer Smee (Power of the Pen); Scott Mason and parent volunteers (Book Fair); Debra Landis, Megan Sanford, parent volunteer judges, and high school teacher volunteer judges (junior high Science Fair); Robert Dedinsky, Debra Landis, and Megan Sanford (MathCounts); Booster Club and coaches (CYO sports, Terrier Madness); Knights of Columbus/Tim Sullivan (Keep Christ in Christmas contest), Keith Johnson (sacrament preparation); and The Taray Family/The Social Dept. (Blue Ribbon T-shirts).

Angel Scholarship Fund

Thank you to everyone who has chosen to support St. Sebastian Parish School through the Angel Scholarship Fund! This program allows Ohioans to receive a 100% Ohio tax credit of up to \$750 (\$1,500 if married filing jointly) for cash donations to the Angel Scholarship Fund, and St. Sebastian may be selected to receive your donation. **For the 2023-24 school year, the school has been able to distribute almost \$70,000 in Angel Fund monies to 86 students. We recently learned that 111 donors contributed over \$102,000 in 2023 to distribute for the 2024-25 school year** (this is a preliminary total: final numbers will be released in mid-Feb. after any corrections are made and credit card fees are subtracted). We are pleased that this will enable us to help even more families next year!

Please note this year there is an extended deadline for 2023 donations: Donations made by April 15, 2024, are eligible for the scholarship tax credit in the 2023 tax year (note: these funds will be included in our totals raised in 2024 to distribute for the 2025-26 school year). So, there is still time to make a contribution and factor it into your 2023 Ohio tax filing. Visit



Weller, our beloved school therapy dog, basks in the holiday spirit alongside our National Blue Ribbon School award Christmas tree,

bringing joy, comfort, and a "paw-sitive" presence to our school community.

www.catholiccommunity.org/angel to learn more or to make a donation. (*Always consult with your tax professional for information on the impact of any charitable donations.)

Enrichment Program

I am pleased to share that the school is in the process of establishing "Minds in Motion," an enrichment program for students in grades 4-6. This program will be offered to students who could benefit from extra academic challenge and who meet certain criteria. Details are being worked out, but the general plan includes the hiring of a gifted intervention specialist as well as expansion of the program to younger grades for next school year. We are working on finalizing funding of this program through special education funds available through Akron Public Schools. Stay tuned for more information!

Yours in Christ,

Anthony Rohr
Principal

From the STEM Coordinators

Grades K-3, by Susan Vernon

Welcome, parents! After a long hiatus due to COVID, the primary grades were happy to open their doors to excited and creative parents who managed the classroom Halloween parties. There were engineering contests with candy pumpkins and toothpicks. Another class played a memory game with fall items on the Smart Board. One classroom was even transformed into a Halloween lab with lots of spooky activities for each child:



decorating cookies, marshmallow-on-a-spoon races, and mummy dressing! The Christmas season was another opportunity for classes to use their STEM engineering and design skills for unique gifts for their families. Fingerprint snowmen, glitter glass bulbs, and reindeer ornaments were among the favorite annual projects! Classes also created beautiful Advent wreaths to place in their homes.

Finally, parents visited the school once again to serve as personal shoppers during the Santa Shop days. Students had a difficult time budgeting their money with SO many wonderful gift selections this year, and juggling all those purchases home provided a real engineering feat! Thank you to all parents for supporting our school and STEM education! It's good to have you back in our classrooms for special events!

Grades 4-6, by Jennifer Slegus

The 4th-grade students were busy with many STEM-based activities during the 2nd quarter. The students learned about the California Gold Rush in a cross-curricular, social studies and geometry STEM activity. While creating a map based upon John Sutter's Mill in Sacramento, Calif., during 1848, they explored types of lines, line segments, shapes, and the concepts of area and perimeter. For another project, the students read the book "Balloons Over Broadway," which details how inventor Tony Sarg was commissioned to create the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons. The students were given the conundrum that there was a shortage of helium, but the parade must still go on! They were tasked with creating not only a balloon, but also a device for holding the balloon "afloat" during the parade. After much planning, collaborating, and creating, the students paraded around the building, showing off their amazing creations! The 5th-graders are also completing an integrated Native American unit, learning about Ohio tribes in social studies class and then reading the book "The Sign of the Beaver." They are designing slide show presentations for the tribe they are researching and constructing a shadow box/diorama of their tribe's housing.

The 5th-grade class has been learning about the importance of decomposers in the process of recycling dead material to create rich nutrient soil. The students



designed an experiment to determine whether earthworms prefer wet or dry areas. After investigating decomposers with earthworms, the 5th-grade students were able to measure decomposition rates by measuring the change in the balloon inflation created from the release of CO₂ by yeast activity. The 6th-grade students spent some time learning about the Earth. They learned about ways to identify minerals, then put that knowledge to use by going to the lab and testing various minerals to identify them. Our 6th-graders also learned about the rock cycle and completed a rock density lab for which they calculated the density of rocks based on the rock's mass and volume that they measured.

Grades 7-8, by Megan Sanford

The junior high school science fair was held in Z-Hall Dec. 13. All students created projects to demonstrate their mastery of the scientific method and further research a topic that interests them. They presented their projects to parents and a panel of judges. Volunteer judges included science teachers from local Catholic high schools, as well as science experts in our school community. All of the students did an outstanding job with this event! Awards were presented to the top three projects in each grade. See the "Students in the News" page for a full list of the awardees. Good luck to all of our students who will compete at the local grade school fair at Walsh Jesuit High School on Feb. 10.



Before Christmas, our 7th-grade students learned about the Earth's atmosphere and human impact on our atmosphere. They learned about the layers of the atmosphere and how they are defined by differences in composition and physical properties, how energy moves through the Earth's system, and the different components of weather (temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, precipitation, visibility and air pressure) and how to measure them. The 7th grade has also been learning about predictions and how to connect evidence, explanations, and observations to conduct logical and knowledgeable analysis.

In 8th-grade science classes, students have been studying plate tectonics, seismic activity, and the Earth's geologic time scale. Students were tasked with building towers that could withstand an earthquake to demonstrate their understanding of earthquake-resistant engineering processes. Additionally, 8th-grade students made their own mold-and-cast fossils using plaster and clay, and they practiced carbon dating techniques with Skittles candy. In preparation for April 8's solar eclipse, 8th-grade students made videos demonstrating how and why solar eclipses happen. The best videos were entered into a solar eclipse contest being held by the Ohio Academy of Science. Before Christmas break, 8th-grade students learned about chemical reactions and crystals while making Borax snowflakes.

Students in the News

Power of the Pen

Our Power of the Pen teams competed at the district tournament Jan. 5 at the University of Mount Union. Kudos to our 8th-grade team, which earned a third-place award. Also, special recognition to Noelle Keso, who placed sixth overall, and Abigail Coleman, who placed 10th overall. The 8th-grade Power of the Pen team includes Sadie Borges, Abigail Coleman, Claire Jopperi, Noelle Keso, Frances Knauer, Henry Thomas, alternate Christine Sturm-Poth, and second alternates Hunter Jopperi and Adriana Wilkerson. The 7th-grade team includes Nathaniel Chuba, Gemma Griffin, Evan Rea, Ellen Rothkopf, Maddie Sellers, Adeline Trenor, and alternate Gabby Vesco.



All Saints Model United Nations

Congratulations to our students who competed as part of the **All-Saints Model United Nations team that took first place** at the Cleveland Middle School Winter MUN 2024 conference at John Carroll University! Participants included Sadie Borges (8th), Simon Borges (6th), Nathaniel Chuba (7th), Tyler Considine (8th), Joan Ereth (6th), Claire Jopperi (8th), Hunter Jopperi (8th), Owen Lawson (8th), Apollo Parke (6th), and Jonathan Schnurr (8th). Sadie, Claire, Owen, and Joan distinguished themselves by earning "superior delegate" awards. Way to go, Terrier scholars! This middle school team is coached by students from St. Vincent-St. Mary and Our Lady of the Elms high schools, including Owen Schlueter, a 2022 St. Sebastian graduate.

High School Placement Test Scholarships

Congratulations to the following students who received scholarships based on their high school placement test scores.

St. Vincent-St. Mary: Awardees are Ben Hagenbush, Joe Haller, Claire Jopperi, Hunter Jopperi, John Jopperi, Daphne Kindbom, Benjamin McDonald, Henry Thomas, Cecelia Walker, and Brady Whitney. **St. Sebastian had more award winners from STVM than any other school in Summit County.**

Archbishop Hoban: Awardees include Abigail Coleman, Tyler Considine, Benjamin Hagenbush, Claire Jopperi, Hunter Jopperi, John Jopperi, Daphne Kindbom, Frances Knauer, Owen Lawson, Benjamin McDonald, Nathan Paxton, James Stallings, Christian Trenor, Cecelia Walker, Samuel Walker, Brady Whitney, and Adriana Wilkerson. **Abigail, Hunter, John, and Frances earned four of the top eight scholarships awarded by Hoban!**

Walsh Jesuit: Awardees are Sadie Borges, Benjamin Hagenbush, Joe Haller, and Abigail Leffler. Great job, Terriers!

Geography Club

The Geography Club held its final competitions just before Christmas break. Congratulations to Hunter Jopperi for winning the junior high competition and thereby becoming the back-to-back champion for the grades 7-8 Geography Club! During the sessions leading up to the competition, students analyzed the five themes of geography: location, place, region, movement, and human-environment interaction. Members of the grades 5-6 Geography Club enjoyed playing Kahoot! and studying maps as they learned more about the world around them. After six rounds in the final competition, Sammy Malik, William Kinney, and Collin Enright were still standing. The three of them continued for several more rounds until Sammy finally earned the win. Congratulations to all who participated!



Keep Christ in Christmas

Gianna Wilgus, Nolan Taray, and Alex Frank are this year's winners of the Knights of Columbus "Keep Christ in Christmas" art contest. Congratulations to these students, who each received a certificate and a Barnes & Noble gift card.

Junior High Science Fair

At the Dec. 13 junior high science fair, students presented their science projects to parents and a panel of judges. Thank you to our volunteer judges, who included science teachers from local Catholic high schools as well as science experts from our school community. All of the students did an outstanding job! Listed below are the top projects in each grade.

8th Grade

- 1st: Abigail Coleman, "Lettuce Grow"
- 2nd: Christine Strum-Poth and Adriana Wilkerson, "First to Leave"
- 3rd: Christian Trenor, "Archisqueeze"

7th Grade

- 1st: Massimo Miklic, "Solar Water Heater"
- 2nd: Adeline Trenor and Ellen Rothkopf, "Acidic Agriculture"
- 3rd: Kevin Hanna, "Is Your Fishing Line as Strong as You Think?"



News & Notes



Blue Ribbon Flag Raising

The school took advantage of the unseasonably beautiful Ohio weather in the middle of December to celebrate the raising of our National Blue Ribbon School flag. The student body gathered outside of the main entrance, where three 8th-grade Boy Scout members, who were chosen based on their dedication, performed the flag-raising ceremony. Scott Mason and the advanced band members played music for the ceremony, the 2nd-grade cheer team enthusiastically performed their two favorite cheers, and the teachers added to the

excitement by launching blue confetti cannons!

Canned Food and Toy Drives

Thank you to everyone who sent in canned food donations in November! Your generosity will help support the Good Samaritan Hunger Center in its mission to alleviate food insecurity for individuals and families in the Akron area. Many thanks also for the support of the Student Council's toy drive in December. The toys were donated to the Akron Ronald McDonald House, which serves families who have a patient admitted or being treated by Akron Children's Hospital. These gifts helped spread joy to those experiencing difficulties during the Christmas season.



Five Days of Christmas

The Socials Committee spoiled the faculty and staff with daily gifts and goodies galore during "Five Days of Christmas" in December. Goodies included beautiful homemade cookies, a delicious lunch catered by D'Agneses, baskets of snacks galore, and coffee! Gifts included Target gift cards as well as small gifts delivered to each faculty and staff member as a token of appreciation. Thank you to the Socials Committee for organizing this special week to show our faculty and staff how special and appreciated they are!



Santa Shop

St. Sebastian students once again had the fantastic opportunity to shop for their loved ones at Santa Shop, sponsored by HASA, in early December. The library was bursting with holiday cheer and a huge selection of gifts from which students could choose. Thanks to all the parent volunteers who came in to help our students shop, and many special thanks to Ashley Woodford-Lawson and all of her fellow bargain shoppers and organizers who worked all year to help pull off another successful Santa Shop. We love our St. Sebastian Santa Shop elves!



E-Waste Recycling

Kudos to Anne Riede, St. Sebastian's computer teacher, as well as her recycling helpers and the community, for participating in the E-Waste recycling program this year. A total of 2,513 pounds of recycling materials were collected!

#weGiveCatholic

Thank you for everyone who supported this year's #weGiveCatholic effort. Ninety donors contributed over \$11,400, which will help purchase and install a new greenhouse in honor of the 25th anniversary of Fr. Valencheck's ordination. This beautifully constructed greenhouse will be a wonderful resource for cultivating the many flowers and bulbs that beautify our altar and our parish grounds! Please contact Kathy Holaday for more details (holadayk@stsebastian.org or 330-836-2233 x113). Thank you for your generosity!

Stage Star

Congratulations to 6th-grade student Jack Clymire, who performed in "Elf the Musical" at Weathervane Theatre in December. Teachers Sue Vernon and Jennifer Smee, along with her daughter, Emma, who are pictured here with Jack, and many other St. Sebastian families went to the performance. Jack played the part of Michael, Buddy the Elf's brother, and showcased his singing, dancing, and acting talents. Way to go, Jack!



HASA Highlights

HASA has been doing a great job helping spur more parent involvement this year in several ways. Three new committees have launched: Parent Engagement, Faith and Catholic Culture, and Fundraising. Each committee is working to find ways for parents to participate in the school community, such as the Park-Play-Pray days and parent coffees after holy day and Terrier Spotlight Masses. In addition to these committees, the HASA board and parent volunteers have hosted the Back to School Open House, Family Game Night, Monster Mash, Santa Shop, the Bambinelli Blessing, and monthly teacher lunches. And last but not least, HASA has coordinated volunteers and support for school activities, including the Blue Ribbon Celebration, Book Fair, and Read-a-thon.

Speaking of the Read-a-thon, the 2023 Read-a-thon was very successful! Thank you to everyone who supported HASA's biggest fundraiser of the year. HASA raised over \$11,000, and our students read over 130,000 minutes! This year HASA also launched a new fundraiser for school supply kits that helped simplify back-to-school shopping and raised over \$400. We also had one of our best years for Santa Shop, which is always a favorite event! A special thank you our volunteers and to Ashley



2023 Read-a-Thon Results

Total Raised – \$11,491; Minutes Read – 130,316
 Overall Top Reader – Charlotte Ryan (4th)
 Overall Top Earner – Charlee Ringler (2nd)
 Top Reading Class – Mrs. Smee – 17,629, Pizza Party Prize
 Top Earning Class – Mrs. Vernon – \$1,240, Movie Day Prize
 Grades K-2 Top Earner – George Knauer (2nd)
 Grades K-2 Top Reader – Jordan Bratton (1st)
 Grades 3-5 Top Earner – Coralei Schwartz (5th)
 Grades 3-5 Top Reader – Emilia Coleman (4th)
 Grades 7-8 Top Earner – Frances Knauer (8th)
 Grades 7-8 Top Reader – Adeline Trenor (7th)

Woodford-Lawson, who has run the program for the past few years. This was Ashley's last as coordinator, and we can't thank her enough for her time and commitment! So far this year, HASA has provided over \$10,000 in teacher classroom stipends, funded enrichment program registrations such as Power of the Pen and MathCounts, purchased classroom tools like student agendas, and paid for buses for fall field trips. Stay tuned for HASA news in the Bloomz app for information on upcoming opportunities to get involved. HASA loves to hear parent feedback and ideas and would love to see you at an upcoming volunteer opportunity or at the next general meeting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 29, in Z-Hall.

Join Us for "An Italian Evening Under the Stars" April 20

Join the St. Sebastian Parish School community for the 20th annual St. Sebastian Spectacular, "An Italian Evening Under the Stars," on April 20. This event is our school's largest and most important fundraiser, so we hope everyone will lend a hand and plan to attend! Keep a look out for your invitation, which all families will receive in the mail in early March.

Giftcardpalooza! The Giftcardpalooza drive to collect gift card donations kicks off in mid-February. This is a great way to support the Spectacular and also earn a special dress-down day for your kids! All you need to do is donate a gift card to the event – and re-gifting one you received for Christmas is perfectly acceptable! Details will be announced soon.

Italian Feast! The menu, which is being prepared by the fabulous Rafe Vaccaro of Trattoria Vaccaro, features an entree choice of 12-hour braised osso buco, chicken piccata, or roasted portobello caps (gluten and dairy free). Delicious appetizers, family-style sides, and a decadent dessert will accompany this fantastic Italian feast!

Paddle Raise! The paddle raise will focus on updating the Technology Learning Lab with new desktop computers powerful enough to be used for art, photography, movie-making, 3D creation, design applications such as Canva, and more. Funds will also be used to purchase additional 3D printers, acquire better green screen video equipment, and expand our STEM curriculum with the establishment of an esports platform for our students.

Silent and Live Auctions! Donations are being accepted now! Please contact this year's co-chairs, Missy Knauer and Zorie Brdarski, if you have an item to donate or an idea for a donation. The live auction has several one-of-a-kind packages you won't want to miss out on, so make sure to send in your RSVP and plan to attend so you have a chance to win one of these gems!

Sponsors and VIP Pre-Party! There are also exciting sponsorship opportunities, including a VIP pre-party for our sponsors. Details on sponsorships are available at www.stsebastian.org/school/st-sebastian-spectacular.

We Need You! You can support the Spectacular by attending the event, volunteering your time, becoming a sponsor, placing an ad in the program, or donating to the live and silent auctions. Visit www.stsebastian.org/school/st-sebastian-spectacular to learn more. If you have any questions, please contact Missy at mknauer@att.net or Zorie at zore_n_2000@yahoo.com.



Catholic Schools Week 2024

SAT.-SUN. JAN 27-28 CELEBRATING OUR PARISH

- **All Weekend Masses** will pray for students, families, & staff.
- **Jan. 28 9 a.m. Mass** will feature a Family Blessing by Fr. Valencheck, families may go from Mass right to Open House.
- **Jan. 28 Open House, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.**

MON., JAN. 29 CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

- **St. Sebastian Spirit Day** — St. Sebastian/Terrier tops with uniform bottoms and shoes.
- **The Homeless Charity and Village** donation collection begins, runs Jan. 29-Feb. 2.
- **Camp Damascus** morning worship sessions.
- **Living Rosary** in church, 1:45 p.m.

TUES., JAN. 30 CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

- **Crazy Sock and Hat Day** (wear with school uniform)
- **Pastries with Parents** — Come to Z-Hall for doughnuts, sponsored by the Foundation, beginning at 7:30 a.m.
- **Student Council Attends Mass** with Bishop Malesic at St. John's Cathedral at 10 a.m.
- **Grade-Level Buddy Activities**



WEDS., JAN. 31 CELEBRATING TEACHERS, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS

- **Blue Ribbon Spirit Wear** — wear your Blue Ribbon T-shirt, with uniform bottoms and shoes.
- **HASA Teacher Appreciation Extended Lunch and Parent Activity**

THURS., FEB. 1 CELEBRATING OUR FAITH AND FAMILIES

- **Dress Up for God Day** — wear your Sunday BEST! (No jeans or tennis shoes.)
- **School Mass**, 8:05 a.m.
- **Spelling Bee** in Z-Hall — Grades 1-3 @ 11:50 a.m.; Grades 4-6 @ 12:50 p.m.; Grades 7-8 @ 1:50. All families are welcome to attend.

FRI., FEB. 2 CELEBRATING OUR SCHOOL

- **Dress-Down Day** for everyone!
- **Principal Treat** for students.
- **Terrier Trivia** — Grade groupings of 1-3, 4-6, 7-8 in Z-Hall at 1 p.m. All families are welcome to attend.

SAT., FEB. 3 CELEBRATING OUR FAMILIES

- **Feb. 3: 51st International Festival**, Zwisler Hall, 5-9 p.m.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND IMPORTANT DATES

SAVE THE DATE

- No School, Solar Eclipse ~ April 8
- First Communion Retreat Day ~ April 13
- St. Sebastian Spectacular ~ April 20
- No School ~ April 26
- Father/Daughter Dance ~ April 26
- First Communion Practice ~ April 29
- 8th-Grade Trip ~ May 1-3
- First Communion ~ May 4
- Reserve Calmaity Day ~ May 6
- May Crowning Mass ~ May 9
- Pass It On Mass ~ May 23
- Last Day of Preschool ~ May 24
- No School, Memorial Day ~ May 27
- 8th-Grade Last Day/Clap Out ~ May 29
- Last All-School Mass ~ May 30
- Last Day of School/Graduation ~ May 30

FEBRUARY

Catholic Schools Week	January 28-February 3
International Festival	February 3 (Saturday), 5-9 p.m.
Confirmation Meeting	February 5 (Monday), 7-8 p.m.
Innovation Night	February 8 (Thursday), 5:30-7p.m.
Parent/Teacher Conferences	February 13, 15 (Tuesday, Thursday)
Ash Wednesday Mass	February 14 (Wednesday)
No School, Teacher Professional Day	February 16 (Friday)
No School, Presidents Day	February 19 (Monday)
HASA Meeting @Zwisler Hall	February 29 (Thursday), 7 p.m.

MARCH

Confirmation Practice	March 4 (Monday), 7-8 p.m.
Early Dismissal — Teacher Professional Development (no aftercare)	March 7 (Thursday), 1 p.m.
PRESCHOOL ONLY No School	March 8 (Friday)
8th-Grade Confirmation	March 8 (Friday), 7 p.m.
Foundation Scholarship Mass	March 14 (Thursday), 8:05 a.m.
Spring Music Program	March 14 (Thursday), 7 p.m.
Kindergarten Screening (No school for K only)	March 18-19 (Monday, Tuesday)
End of Third Quarter	March 21 (Thursday)
No School, Teacher Professional Day	March 22 (Friday)
First Communion Meeting (parents & students)	March 25 (Monday), 7-8 p.m.
No School, Easter Break	March 29-April 5