

ALUMNI ARROW

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2023

ST. SEBASTIAN EARNS NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL AWARD

St. Sebastian Parish School is proudly celebrating its recent selection as a National Blue Ribbon School! This honor is given annually by the U.S. Department of Education to high-performing schools across the country for exemplary teaching and learning. St. Sebastian Principal Mr. Anthony Rohr, who guided the school through the lengthy and rigorous application process, says, "This prestigious award is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our students, teachers, staff, parents, and parishioners. It underscores our shared mission of being dedicated to Christ and committed to excellence in education." Pastor Fr. John Valencheck, adds, "I am particularly proud of our students, principal, faculty, staff, families and community for rising to the challenge of this honor during such challenging times in education."

On September 19, when the names of the winning schools were released, Mr. Rohr and Fr. Valencheck orchestrated a special surprise announcement to the students, teachers, and staff, who gathered in Zwisler Hall to hear the news. Then they celebrated with the school band playing the St. Sebastian fight song, doughnuts with blue icing, and a very spirited viewing of the official announcement video from the U.S. Department of Education, complete with raucous cheering once "St. Sebastian Parish School" finally appeared on the screen.

Parents joined the fun a few days after the announcement with a National Blue Ribbon School Celebration on the playground, including blue decorations, blue cotton candy, blue M&M's candies, blue fruit punch, and a DJ playing music. On October 2, Bishop Edward Malesic of the Diocese of Cleveland will celebrate Mass with the community, and Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan will offer the school a special proclamation.

For more details and to view pictures and videos, visit www.stsebastian.org/school/blueribbon.



ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH SCHOOL IS TOP RANKED!

Nationally: One of only 40 private schools nationwide and one of only 19 schools (private or public) in Ohio to be named a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School

Statewide: Won the Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education in 2023 for the 5th year in a row, with 19 teachers individually honored

Local: Our preschool, The St. Sebastian Beringer Center for Early Learning, won the *Akron Beacon Journal* "Best of the Best" 2022

ALUMNI UPDATES

CLASSES OF 1950S ERA – FROM THE FORGOTTEN CABINET

Over the past few years, Fr. Valencheck has been sharing items he has found in an old filing cabinet in the basement of the parish rectory. In previous issues of the newsletter, we have reprinted several “Forgotten Cabinet” items. Here are a few more of particular interest to our alumni from the 1950s. In a folder marked, “SCHOOL – ATHLETICS,” Fr. Valencheck discovered some interesting tidbits from the 1950-53 basketball seasons. In 1950-51, the boys’ team won eight games and lost six. Team scoring totals for the season were as follows: **Coyle** (110 points), **Iacomini** (86), **Ross** (42), **Conlin** (36), **Reish** (20), **LaMonica** (13), **Nist** (6), **Noble** (5), **Comeriato** (2), and **Klein** (0).

A 1953 roster of the girls basketball team, coached by **Frances Welch** with assistant coach **Elinor Amshey**, listed these players: **Margie Beringer [Dettling]**, **Barbara Bock**, **Carol Collins**, **Frances Flynn [Howard]**, **Judy Haley [Lowe]**, **Mary Jane Hudak [Roberts]**, **Mary Jean Iacomini**, **Joan Lindsay [Saunders]**, **Kathleen McDonald [Seikel]**, **Mary Louise Patsy [Frohnafel]**, **Mary Catherine Skeese [Dawson]**, **Judy Schnur [Carrino]**, **Mary Ann Wrench**, and **Marie Ann Wright [Thomas]**. Fr Valencheck quipped, “I hope that they all had nicknames. If one were to call out, ‘Hey! Mary!’ half of the team would turn around.”

Send Us Your Alumni Updates!

We love to hear from our alumni! Please let us know what you are doing. Email us at alumni@stsebastian.org or use the online form: stsebastian.org/school/alumni/contact.

CLASS OF 1953

Bernard Mong is retired from his career as an engineer. He and his wife Marilyn live in Florence, SC, where they enjoy visits from their six-year-old great-granddaughter. Bernie says he is staying active on the bicycle and with Pilates at the local YMCA.

CLASS OF 1954

Dr. James McDonald, who is retired from the Army, and his wife, Carolyn, enjoy living in Naples, FL. Jim said they also lived in Germany and the Netherlands for 16 years. He writes, “I am a member of the International Men’s Club, where we discuss world events. I also am a 4th Degree Knight at St. John the Evangelist in Naples. I am the Commander of the Color Corp, and that keeps me busy.”

CLASS OF 1955

Mike Garrett was part of a story told recently about the opening of Byrider Hall, which was dedicated in 1953. Our pastor, Fr. John Valencheck, recently heard a story he had not yet heard before about the first basketball game held in the gym. James Flynn, a current parishioner, was then a member of Annunciation Parish, and he was on the Annunciation team that was scheduled to play St. Sebastian at the opening game of their brand-new facility. St. Sebastian won the game, with Mike Garrett scoring around 24 points, and with Mr. Flynn being the lead scorer for Annunciation. Learning about this story brought back fond memories for Mike, who said, “Our coach was Charlie ‘Chuck’ Zeno, who brought out the best in all of us who played for him.” Mike noted that Chuck and his family became friends with Mike’s parents, and they stayed in touch for many years. Mike adds, “I’m soon to celebrate my 82nd birthday and thank God every day that St. Sebastian’s was part of my life.”

CLASS OF 1959

Peter Baldacci emailed to let us know that he found himself in the server photo in the 2023 winter newsletter. “The first server in line with the blond hair is me.”



CLASS OF 1960

Denis Foerst wrote in to say he had been thinking about all the schools he attended over the years: Annunciation, St. Sebastian '60, St. Vincent '64, University of Notre Dame '68, US Army School of Music '69, and finally, Miami University '75, earning his PhD in Chemistry. He writes, "I have fond memories of all these schools: Annunciation - going down to the lumber company to get sawdust to put on the floor; St. Sebastian - Boy Scouts, Mr. Beagle, chrome dome, Camp Manatoc; St. Vincent - SMSG textbook (Some Math Some Garbage), trip to Goodyear Labs, learning to play sousaphone, St. Patrick's Day Parade in NYC, kelly green uniforms; Notre Dame - Organic Chemistry, dorm life, mandatory sport coat and bowtie at the dining hall, National Championship in '66, halftime shows, St. Patrick's Day Parade in Chicago; Army School of Music - learning the Army way, parades, marching; Miami U - got my act together, studied hard, published research, and met Barbara, with whom I celebrate 50 years of marriage this coming week. St. Sebastian School prepared me for what came over the next 60+ years."

CLASS OF 1961

Peggy Duffy Gallagher, a parishioner at St. Joseph Parish in St. Joseph, Michigan, received the Bishop Paul V Donovan Founder's Society Award for Outstanding Service from the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Peggy is pictured here alongside Bishop Paul Bradley (center) and fellow award recipient Msgr. Michael Hazard at St. Augustine Cathedral in Kalamazoo. Peggy was recognized for her more than 30 years of service to the Church. She worked as the Director of Sacramental Preparation and Religious Education for St. Joseph Parish from 1985 to 2012 (and also simultaneously for Ss. John/Bernard Parish for nine years). During her tenure she estimates that more than 800 people came into the Catholic Church through the RCIA program. In addition, Peggy taught music at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School. Her husband, Deacon Michael Gallagher, was ordained to the diaconate in 1999. She was elected to the board of the NDICE representing all deacon wives from the United States to the USCCB for a four-year term. Additionally, she has shared in ministry work with her husband, visiting the sick and the homebound.



Courtesy of Diocese of Kalamazoo

CLASS OF 1964

Peggy McMullen Cogar sent in several items for the parish archives, including First Communion group pictures for both her class (1946) and her brother Tim McMullen's class (1966). Peggy also sent items from her First Communion in 1958: a prayer book, purse, rosary, and veil. Inside the prayer book, Peggy has written in her address and her phone number, which was at the time "Temple 62045." Also included are a vintage navy blue uniform, class photos from grades 6-8, and a stack of letters written to Peggy from her former classmates (her family moved to Cuyahoga Falls halfway through her 8th-grade year), which Peggy thinks was probably a writing exercise initiated by her 8th-grade teacher, Sr. John Bosco. And last but not least, she included two report cards, which report some less than excellent grades. "By the way, to my defense," she writes, "I ended up being a pretty good kid and went on to be a nurse and publish two memoirs, so please don't hold those horrible report card grades against me." Peggy adds, "I will always be thankful for the education I received at St. Sebastian School. I have wonderful memories of going to Mass in the small chapel, getting those huge candy cane sticks on the feast of St. Sebastian ... and making best friends with Jeannie Flynn, Evelyn Olson, Colleen Cochran, and Pat Kelly." You can find both of Peggy's books on Amazon: *Beside Still Waters: A Journey with Guillain-Barre Syndrome* and *My Family, My Country: A Memoir of Patriotism and Faith*.



CLASSES OF 1970, 1972

Renee Longville Conlon '70 and Al Graf '72 received the Fr. Thomas F. Mahar Outstanding Alumni award from St. Vincent-St. Mary High School on Sept. 7, 2023. The following biographies and pictures are courtesy of STVM.



Renee Longville Conlon '70 and all five of her siblings attended STVM, following in the footsteps of their parents Leo Longville and Sally Delagrange Longville (St. Sebastian Class of 1948). Renee graduated from the University of Akron with a degree in Social Work and then worked for over 12 years in Portage County for their child abuse and neglect department. After her second child was born, Renee raised her children and volunteered in many ways, including as a board member for United Disabilities Services, a coach for her children's teams, room mom and hot lunch coordinator at St. Hilary. Eventually she began volunteering for the Guardian Ad Litem program through the Summit County Juvenile Court, which uses community volunteers to represent the best interests of children involved in the court. As the GAL program grew (it is now one of the largest in the state and nation), Renee was hired as a staff Guardian Ad Litem and worked for 17 years at the court. After retiring, Renee continues as a GAL volunteer, handling two or three cases at a time. In the last year, Renee has also joined the board of the Henry and Laura Huth Charitable Foundation, which is dedicated to providing opportunities and support for at-risk infants, children, and young adults. Over the years, Renee has been very fortunate to have the support of her husband, Jim, and her children, Elizabeth and Nick.



Al Graf '72 graduated from The University of Akron with a degree in Industrial Management in 1981. Over the next 40+ years, Al enjoyed success as a manufacturer representative, mentoring many young salespeople and making lasting connections in the community. Al's family has a long tradition at STVM and St. Vincent Church. His parents, Fritz and Rita, raised their ten children, all of whom graduated from St. Sebastian Parish School, to embrace and exemplify the spirit and values of a Catholic education and to serve their church and community. Al and his family have supported the Graf Family Scholarship at STVM for over twenty years, and Al recently funded a new scholarship, the Leppy Scholarship, for students who are chosen by their peers to represent STVM at school events. Al has supported STVM by attending numerous events and serving on committees, including the alumni board, and he is a lifetime member of STVM Sports Booster Club. Al has also endeared himself to his family, friends, and neighbors as the planner and executor of all get-togethers, along with his wife, Susan, where his laughter is infectious and his love of life authentic and genuine.

CLASS OF 1974

Steve Abdenour will retire as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Cleveland Clinic Akron General and Lodi Community Hospital effective November 3, 2023. This culminates a career spanning more than 35 years in healthcare leadership.

CLASS OF 2017

Abby Minear realized a dream in August when she was named a member of the Radio City Rockettes dance company. She will perform this winter with the iconic dance group in the annual Christmas Spectacular in New York City. Congratulations, Abby!



CLASSES OF 2020-2023

Several St. Sebastian alumni were chosen as leaders for St. Vincent-St. Mary High School's house system for 2023-24: **Lola Hall '21**, **Anne Rea '20**, **Mia Ross '20**, and **Clare Rothkopf '20**. The following students were inducted into the National Honors Society at Walsh Jesuit High School (at the end of the 2022-23 school year): **Sydney Borges '20**, **Dominick Calleri '20**, **Logan Hill '20**, **Anysia Reimund '20**, and **Ray Thompson '20**. Several alumni were recognized as members of the Summit County Area High School All Star Teams for 2022-23 by the *Akron Beacon Journal*: **Andrew Karhoff '21** (Archbishop Hoban, baseball), **Brennan Chivers '20** (STVM, volleyball), **Ethan Wyszynski '19** (STVM, volleyball), **Jimmy Bordenkircher '20** (Hoban, volleyball), **Jason Walter '19** (STVM, volleyball), **Anne Rea '20** (STVM, cross country).

SUPPORT ST. SEBASTIAN ON GIVING TUESDAY: NOV. 28, 2023



Giving Tuesday is November 28: On this global day of giving, please consider making a donation to the St. Sebastian Parish Foundation. You can

join the exciting #weGiveCatholic effort on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving by making a gift to the Foundation at www.wegivecatholic.org. For more details, please contact Kathy Holaday at 330-836-2233 x113 or HoladayK@stsebastian.org. Thank you!

GRANDPARENTS DAY 2023

St. Sebastian Parish School was thrilled to host Grandparents Day on September 7. Grandparents joined the students for Mass, visited their grandchildren's classrooms, and enjoyed doughnuts and coffee in Zwisler Hall. As in the past, several grandparents in attendance were alumni, including **Terry McDonald '69**, pictured here with his wife, Peggy, and their grandson James. Other alumni grandparents who RSVP'd were **Tom Bartlebaugh '66**, **Mike Buzzi '77**, **Ceil Bryson Cohen '65**, **Bill Costigan '63**, **Jim Fajt '66**, **Maureen McDonald Jonozzo '71**, **Joan Siegfert Langenbeck '66**, **Jim Large '66**, **Meg Witt Lee '74**, **Mary Baumgartner Marino '67**, **Mike Ochsenhirt '67**, **Marjie Reiheld Parrish '69** and **John Sloan '68**. Thanks for visiting, it was a wonderful day!



COME VISIT ST. SEBASTIAN!

CAMPUS TOURS

If you would like a tour of our campus, please contact Kathy Holaday at 330-836-2233 ext. 113 or HoladayK@stsebastian.org. Kathy would be happy to show you around!

VIRTUAL TOUR

The St. Sebastian Parish Foundation created a special virtual tour of our campus, with highlights of the school and classrooms, as part of the Foundation's 50th anniversary celebrations. To view, please visit www.stsebastian.org/foundation and click on "Foundation 50th Anniversary Virtual Tour."



++ We Will Remember ... ++

The Alumni Association extends our sincerest sympathy to the families and friends of our deceased alumni (mid-June to mid-Sept., 2023). If you learn of the passing of a St. Sebastian alumnus, please contact us by phone at 330-836-2233 ext. 113 or by email at alumni@stsebastian.org.

Suzanne Huggans Ferron '45, October 23, 2022
Agnes Myers Stitz '48, June 22, 2023
Joyce Shields Beatty '50, March 28, 2023
Mary Rita Berry Bennetts '54, January 22, 2023
Patricia Murty Conner '57, July 9, 2023
Richard C. Hummel '58, July 8, 2023
Rosemary L. Reymann '60, July 23, 2023

Maureen Sullivan '61, October 24, 2022
Brian J. Sullivan '65, August 16, 2023
William R. Heising '67, June 10, 2023
Joseph M. Costanzo '70, June 17, 2023
James E. Magyary '72, July 16, 2023
Daniel A. Denholm '73, February 21, 2022
Beth Anne Wise '80, December 6, 2021

BRICK ROAD RESTORED ON MULL AVE.

As current school families and parishioners are (perhaps painfully) well aware, Mull Avenue has been under construction for six months, with work having begun in early April of 2023, just after Easter Sunday. The brick road, which runs along the front of the church, has been closed to traffic for most of that time while the City of Akron conducted a major replacement of the road. The roadwork is part of a larger project, which includes new sidewalks and street lighting, a new water main, and a new storm sewer mainline, as well as the reinforcement of existing sewer pipes. Work is ongoing and is expected to be complete before the end of the year, but the results so far are beautiful and much-appreciated!

Alumni will be happy to learn, as evident in the pictures below, that rather than new cement or pavement, Mull Avenue was re-paved using red brick, maintaining the look of the original road. The new bricks were even supplied by the same company, The Belden Brick Company of Canton. The bricks, which were laid by hand, were installed on top of an 8-inch concrete base, which should change the road's reputation for the bumpiest ride in town. The older bricks were saved by the city for re-use on other projects.

The parish held a brief road blessing when the road opened, and our pastor, Fr. Valencheck, made sure his 1946 vintage Plymouth automobile, pictured here, was the first car to travel on the new road. Although Mull Avenue is fit for travel now, please don't rush on by! Follow the red brick road to stop in to see us – we are always happy to offer tours! Please contact Kathy Holaday at 330-836-2233 ext. 113 or HoladayK@stsebastian.org.



Photos courtesy of Alice Maher Luse '72 (left), Ed Balaun '76 (center), and Fr. Valencheck (right).



PLEASE SEND US YOUR MEMORIES

We love to hear from our alumni! Do you have a story about: Confirmation or First Communion? Your favorite teachers? Playground games and antics?

Email your memories to alumni@stsebastian.org or contact Kathy Holaday at 330-836-2233 ext. 113.

ANNUAL ALUMNI MASS

Saturday, November 25
4:30 p.m. Mass
Live stream available

All alumni and their families are invited to celebrate Mass at St. Sebastian Church on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

No RSVP required. If you want to join us virtually, the Mass will be live-streamed on the parish

YouTube channel:
youtube.com/StSebastianParish

Questions? Please contact Kathy Holaday at 330-836-2233 ext. 113 or HoladayK@stsebastian.org.