



# St. Mary's The Link

## October 2011

### IN THIS ISSUE

yearbook committee and they will try to include as many photos as possible.

## This Fall at St. Mary's

by Jessica Harvey

For all new parents, the Link is a school-wide newsletter that summarizes what has happened at St. Mary's so far and what is going to happen. Some of the teachers even give a brief overview of how classes have been going up to this point. We try to keep you up to date on the extracurricular activities so you can see if it is something your child is interested in joining. The Link also highlights the events to come so you're sure not to miss out on the fun!

### Important Dates:

#### October

20<sup>th</sup> – PTO Marketplace

26<sup>th</sup> - Early Dismissal

27<sup>th</sup> – Vision Screening

28<sup>th</sup> – Report Cards

#### November

6<sup>th</sup> – Daylight Savings Ends

12<sup>th</sup> – Casino Night

23<sup>rd</sup> – Early Dismissal

24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> – Thanksgiving

#### December

4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> – Holiday Shop

7<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Concert

19<sup>th</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> – Christmas Break

### YEARBOOK

Help us capture memories for the St. Mary's yearbook! The success of the yearbook depends on your contributions. Take pictures at each event you attend and submit to the

### Fun Stuff

Clubs are abound! There are plenty of extracurricular activities to join and opportunities to learn new skills. Learn about all the fun things your children can do!

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### Fundraising Focus

Our school depends on the extra funds that we earn through the various fundraising events. It's not just about selling things, it's about having fun while supporting your school!

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### Library, Religion & Computer

Hear about what's going on in the library with Mrs. Taylor. Also, get the scoop on what the Religion Coordinator has been up to. Then read how much more your kids know about computers than you!

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### Classroom News

A lot of our teachers have written a brief summary of how the year is going so far. Read about what they've been up to.

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### PTO President

# FUN STUFF

## CHORUS

Mrs. Zatkulak heads up our music department and is also recruiting for the chorus. The group will meet weekly for practice to be announced.

## Kitchen & Crafts Club

This is a fun after school club for grades 1-5. It is held on Wednesdays from 3-

4PM. We will be dipping, mixing, and decorating while making all sorts of delicious edible treats. On alternating weeks, we will be gluing, creating, and choosing from a variety of holiday and seasonal crafts. There will be two more sessions to come this school year.

## BAND NOTES

Band meets weekly for 30 minutes on Thursdays during the school day. Advanced band meets after school.

The St. Mary's School Band is entering its second year under the direction of Don Crafton, the director of the Saint Cecilia Band Program. This year there are over 40 students in the band program! There are many beginners in

the program and they are off to a great start learning to play their instrument. The band will be performing with the St. Mary's School Choir for our annual Christmas Concert at the Benedictine Abbey. The concert date is TBD. Also, this year, the band will be showing its school spirit by playing at the pep rallies.



Science club meets on Thursdays from 3-4 pm grades 1-5. Last week we made grass heads and I've heard wonderful things about them! Haircuts have begun! The greenhouses have also been successful. Mr. Short and I made a sample for his classroom. Before it deflated, you could see the grass growing. Today, Mr. Short cut open the balloon and showed the kids the bright green grass with roots. Today, we discussed mummification. They

A new season of Lego Robotics is under way. We are steadily preparing for our Lego Competition in November. The theme for this year is Food Factor. Teams are researching causes of food contamination and then figuring out ways to prevent it in

## Lego Robotics

by Kristine Clopton

the future. Each team has finally finished building their respective robots and will soon begin the long process of programming. Teams are also working on building teamwork skills and completing their project presentations. Wish us luck as we compete on November the 19th. Mrs. Clopton and Mrs. Valdepenas will hold another session of robotics in the spring which will be open to current Fourth and Fifth Graders.



## Science Club

by Laura Short

learned their body is made up of 70% water. Salt dries out the body. Mr. Short showed the kids a raw chicken that his class had mummified. We also made a hypothesis about whether table salt or Epsom salt will make a scarier apple face. They are basically guessing which type of salt will dry out the apple better. Results to come next week! Next came exploding things! They loved this! We made pop rockets using antacid tablets and water. We tested the temperature of the water, one cold and the other warm, to see which would produce a better explosion.



### Kick-Off Cookout

Thanks to all who helped make this such a successful event. Fun was had by all, so if you missed this year, make sure you make it next fall!



### PTO Marketplace

What better way to help raise money for our school than a night of shopping and treats? Thursday, October 20th 6-9 pm. Tickets are \$8 at the door. Contact Meredith McNamara at [stmarysmarketplace@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysmarketplace@gmail.com) with any questions.

## Fundraising Focus

### Casino Night

Tickets \$30 until Oct. 28,  
Beer/Wine wristband \$10

Yet another FUN event to help raise money. Take a step into Las Vegas without even leaving Richmond! Try your hand at Blackjack, Craps, Poker & Roulette for a great cause!

### Movie Night

Mrs. Mickle and Mrs. Short host a movie night once a month. It's a great way for a bunch of students to get together and have a fun night out. Grades 1-5 can join us for \$15, from 6:15-8:30 and are given popcorn and a bottle of water. A portion of the money goes back to the school. The movies are based on popular titles. If you are interested, look for information in the school notes to find out how to sign your child up.

# Library

The library is a busy place this fall. Lots of reading is happening in here. Second grade students and parents came for Accelerated Reader Night last week. Students in grades 2 through 5 are busy reading and taking AR prizes. The first AR prizes will be awarded on Friday, October 28th. We will have an AR Parent Meeting on Friday, October 21st at 11:00 AM in the library. If you signed up to be an AR parent in grades 2 through 5, please attend. Our fall Book Fair will begin on Tuesday, November 8. If you can help set up the book fair, work the book fair or help take it down any morning or afternoon from November 7th to 10th, please contact [ktaylor@saintmary.org](mailto:ktaylor@saintmary.org).

More information about the Book Fair and Family Night on Tuesday, November 8th will be coming home later this month. We hope you can attend our Family Night. It has been very successful in the past. Thank you for encouraging to your child to read and for helping him/her to return or renew his/her book on library day. Each week, 4th and 5th grade students are asked to check out a book to read in class during free time. If they are currently reading a chapter book from home, they need to bring those books to library on library day. The last 10 minutes of each library class are spent checking out books and taking AR tests. If a child doesn't want to

check out one of our books because he/she is reading something else, that is fine. However, he/she must bring it to the library to read. Our goal is to put the last ten minutes in the library to good use and not waste that time. Thanks for your help in this matter. I hope to see you at the fall Book Fair in November.

Happy Reading, Mrs. Taylor

## Religion

Things have been busy around St. Mary's these first 6 weeks of school. Our 6th & 7th grade students have met with their Mass buddies and have sat with them twice at Mass. Our students have a chance to learn from each other and develop skills that will last a lifetime. We've also had many Middle School students help out at our weekly Masses. We've seen a lot of new faces helping out and they've done a terrific job!

Our 1st & 7th grade buddies gathered in September to learn about the Saints. Their artwork and bios will be on display in the ECDC & MS hallways. Our K & 6th grade buddies will work together soon to make some decorations for residents of St. Mary's Woods...our backyard neighbors! Our 8th graders cannot wait to meet with their 2nd grade buddies and be a special part of their Sacramental year. Please plan on joining us on **Wednesday, October 26th** for our gam Mass. Following Mass, our very own 8th graders will present the Living Rosary and all are invited to pray the Rosary with us. Come, participate and watch the Luminous Mysteries come to life before your eyes.

Mrs. Heather Heishman



Religion Coordinator

## Technology Lab

### Middle School-

Grades 6th-8th started off the year with learning and reviewing the IB Design Cycle. The Design Cycle is geared to helping students learn how to Investigate, Design, Plan, Create, and Evaluate problems and/or tasks. Students used their Design Work Journals to document their process. Students will use the the Design Cycle throughout the year to complete future projects. The next topic students will be working and reviewing all the Microsoft Applications such as Word, Powerpoint, Publisher, and Excel.

### Elementary School

**K-2** Students were given lessons in Microsoft word. Students learned and/reviewed how to insert Clip Art, Word Art, and shapes. We also reviewed the shift key, space bar, and where the period is located. We also reviewed how to access one of our school programs called Riverdeep. Students also were reminded how to access a popular website called Starfall. Riverdeep and Starfall are popular programs to visit when students are finished early with their work.

**Grades 3-5** Students were introduced to our typing program called Type to Learn 4.

Students were taught where home room keys proper typing form. Students also completed the first few lessons of the program. 5th graders started to complete their typing logs as monthly homework assignments. Currently students are learning about different Microsoft applications such as Excel, Word, and Powerpoint.

# Classroom News

## Preschool Prep Program (2's)

We have had a great time getting to know our littlest Monarchs! We've learned about our new friends, we've taken a "trip" to the fair and in Religion, we have talked about Noah's Ark, The Lost Sheep and The Blind Man. In the coming weeks, we will be working with leaves, apples and before you know it...Thanksgiving will be here!!

Miss Wendy & Miss Heather

## Preschool

We are off to a great start in the Preschool program! So far, we have had fun playing with our new friends and learning about the Fair and our Five Senses. We are looking forward to Fall, Halloween and learning how apples grow!

## Pre-K

The Pre-K classes have had a wonderful start to the year! Lots of new friends have been made! We are working on our alphabet, rhyming, patterning, and just having fun!! We even learned about ants and bees and compared their likes and differences. One fun and "yummy" science experiment the children did was to mix 2 different colors of Jell-O together and see what happens! The children have also made some "Big Green Monsters", "Wild Things", and bats to get ready for Halloween!! The Friday class will be visiting St. Mary's Woods in our Halloween costumes and trick-or-treating at the end of October. We will be entertaining them with our "5 Little Pumpkins Sitting on the Gate" movement poem. In religion we have been talking about our families and how God made us all special! One of our favorite things, however, is RECESS!!

## First Grade

First Grade has had a wonderful time getting used to desks, math workbooks, hardback

readers, and so many other things that are brand new to us! We have gone to mass and began our study of saints with our special seventh grade buddies. We have taken spelling and math tests and learned all about animals! In religion, we know what the Great Commandment is, and we are studying the Liturgical Year (ask us what "ordinary time" means!). We are perfecting our handwriting, as well as discussing what makes a good sentence. We are rewarding ourselves for working so hard with a trip to the pumpkin patch on October 21!

## Second Grade

The Second Grade students met with Father Renninger on Wednesday, October 5th; we will be meeting with him every five weeks as we prepare for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. This is a special time for them as Father does such a wonderful job with the children. We are finishing our "Bag a Book" book report; take a look in the hallway next week and check them out. We will also complete a short project on a Saint; this project will help us prepare for All Saint's Day on November 1st.

## Third Grade

Third grade this year has started off wonderfully! The children have been very enthusiastic about learning. On Friday, October 21 the third grade will visit The Virginia Aquarium in Virginia Beach. The students will attend an assembly presentation titled, "Feet, Feathers, and Fur." At this assembly the students will learn how animals adapt to their natural habitats. The students will also see an IMAX movie titled Under the Sea and learn about the Australian coral reef. The students are working on a saint report due on Halloween. The students will write a short report on the saint of their choice and create a poster. Look for the posters in the hallway in early November. The students are enjoying attending daily Mass on Wednesdays. We are thankful for the many parent volunteers that have already been a part of the third grade happenings; from cafeteria duty to book club to field trips. Thank you for volunteering your time!

## Fourth Grade

The Fourth grade has started out on an exciting 2011-2012 school year. The highlight of the year so far has to be the children's cell projects. Each student was responsible for creating an animal cell and plant cell to present to the class. Many students had edible creations so we chowed down on our projects after learning all about the different parts of plant and animal cells. From the looks of things the next "Cake Boss" could be coming from St. Mary's! Stay tuned for our Jamestown trip in November.

## Middle School

Middle School students are working hard learning to spell words like entrepreneur and miscellaneous. They are also immersed in literature. Sixth grade is almost finished with Hatchet, and next they'll read Tom Sawyer. Seventh grade is reading Huckleberry Finn and Eighth grade is reading Great Expectations. Mark Twain and Charles Dickens would be proud. This week, 8th grade met with Father Renninger after Mass. During his presentation, three of the students distinguished themselves with their knowledgeable contributions. They are Joshua Munro, Caroline Gravely, and Kevin Richeson – Well done!

- The Middle School Back-To-School Bash held on Friday, September 9th was a huge success with record attendance! A special thank you to organizers Jill Long, Murside Jean and Mr. Woodburn. We would also like to thank our very own DJ Mike Valdepenas, the Knights of Columbus and our Youth Minister, Chris Jenkins, for their support. If you would like to volunteer at one of our dances please contact Jill Long at [long3009@verizon.net](mailto:long3009@verizon.net). **The Halloween dance is scheduled for Friday, October 28th. Join us for a howling good time!**

- Middle school students topped off Constitution Day with red, white & blue popsicles provided by the Middle School Committee.

- The annual High School Information Fair will be held on Thursday, October 6th from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Upper Commons. Middle School parents and students are invited to meet representative from over a dozen public and private high schools from the metro Richmond area. This event is always well attended so plan to

arrive early.

# From the PTO President

My daughter, Abby, is in Girl Scouts. They have a motto which goes something like, "Always leave a place better than you found it." These seem like good words to live by. I had this philosophy in mind when I joined the PTO executive board in May. By the time my term ended, the PTO would be a better place.

It didn't take me long to figure out this was easier said than done. Not because I doubt my abilities, but because the Saint Mary's PTO is already such an outstanding organization. I could take up this entire issue of The Link touting all the wonderful things your PTO does. We raise tens of thousands of dollars for the school. Our welcoming committee is second-to-none in getting the Saint Mary's experience for new families started off right. We support our teachers with Teacher Appreciation Week and through the tireless efforts of our room parents. And we like to have a little fun, as those of you who came to the Kickoff Cookout can attest. How could we improve on all this?

Of course, there's always room for improvement. Eventually, I had a couple of people come up to me and say, "Dave, if you are looking for a way to make a difference, why don't you see if you can improve the PTO's communication and visibility?" (That's not quite a true story; almost no one calls me Dave.) And so our group set out to work. We certainly scored a big victory by upgrading the school's Facebook group. While the school website remains the primary source of Saint Mary's information, the Facebook group is intended to supplement the website and serve as a forum for the school community to post relevant information and have questions answered. Even our esteemed principal is known to make Facebook posts from time to time.

I invite you to join this group. Just go to "Saint Mary's Catholic School - Richmond VA" and ask to join the group. Even people who "don't do Facebook" would find membership in this group useful. Messages can come straight to your e-mail account -- no need to log on to Facebook itself once you get set up.

As of this writing, our group has 177 members. Why don't you become number 178?

We will also continue to refine our communications through more traditional means, however that may be defined in today's world of paper, phone, e-mail, website, and smartphone. (I'm thinking holding up a poster at afternoon carpool line might be the best communication method of all.)

Finally, we want to make it easy for you to communicate with us. An e-mail account has been established for each PTO executive board member. Check out the "PTO - School Community" section of the school website for a list of board members and their e-mail addresses. Mine is [PTO.President@saintmary.org](mailto:PTO.President@saintmary.org). Feel free to write me there. I look forward to hearing from you.

David Kupstas

PTO President

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