



## ALUMNI and FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

### WINTER/SPRING 2016

[www.stmark-school.org](http://www.stmark-school.org) | 410.744.6560



#### A Letter from the Principal

Dear Alumni, Parents and Friends,

Our mission at St. Mark is to provide an education based on the teachings of Jesus and emphasize our Christian values, service, and strong academic performance. In my two year tenure as principal, I have witnessed the multitude of ways the school community has attained these goals. As we are in the midst of the reaccreditation process with the Archdiocese, this process lends itself to reflection and assessing our present goals and plans with the purpose of improvement and planning for the future. All stakeholders (students, teachers, staff, parents, and board members) have contributed their input and worked together in harmony to continue to improve our school.

Our success as a school community is also attributed to our many faithful and generous donors who support us financially and just as importantly, spiritually. We are always so grateful for the many ways in which our alumni and parish family have reached out to contribute to the well-being of St. Mark School. The bonds shared between St. Mark and you are lasting. Thank you for keeping St. Mark close to your heart and helping the next generation of students to receive the gift of a strong foundation with a Catholic education

Sincerely in Christ,

*Mary Destino*  
Principal

#### Looking ahead to our future needs!

We have been blessed to have so many kind and generous donors and benefactors who have assisted us in providing for our students' needs. The 2016-2017 academic year is looming on the horizon and, with it, our hopes and dreams for new teaching materials.

Last year, we were excited to implement a new reading program for our students preschool to Grade 2. The Reading Wonder series allows a much more interactive experience for our students and connects both students and teachers to multimedia resources for Reading and English Language Arts. Students become immersed in different genres, eras and cultures through literature and practice skills to become accomplished writers and collaborators with their peers. We want to continue this experience with the next level of students in Grades 3, 4 and 5. Please consider a gift to St. Mark School to help us achieve that goal.

In addition, a new science curriculum is being introduced and we need to update our science materials to reflect the grade level learning that will be taking place across Grades K-8. It has been years since any science materials have been purchased and teachers often rely on subscription services for science learning. New textbooks would enable our faculty to teach the concepts and principles within a faith based learning environment. We hope you can support our efforts to bring current materials into our classrooms.

#### National Junior Honor Society

In January, we were proud to induct the first members of the National Junior Honor Society to a St. Mark School chapter. The National Junior Honor Society is the leader among educational organizations and societies that promotes recognition for middle level students who reflect outstanding accomplishments in the area of scholarship, leadership, service, citizenship and character (NJHS handbook). Students were first required to meet academic standards and be invited to participate in the application process. Student applications were reviewed by a panel of faculty to determine admission into NJHS. At a special ceremony held on Parents' Day during Catholic Schools Week, 34 of our grade 6, 7 and 8 students were honored during an induction ceremony. Ms. Meghan O'Leary, faculty advisor states, "They are astounding students who demonstrate strong academics as well as leadership roles, commitment to service, and have great character. Some of the students being inducted are weekly lectors at mass, have completed Boy Scout projects all over the state, spent hundreds of hours in service each summer - the list goes on and on." We look forward to their continued good works in both the group and individual service projects they will be implementing as part of their membership in NJHS.



## What does belonging to a Catholic School Family mean to you?

Across the nation, Catholic Schools join in celebration of Catholic Schools Week to promote the value of a Catholic education. The theme for the National Catholic Schools Week 2016 is "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service." During the last week of January, we set aside time and plan special events, Open Houses and Masses, as well as invite parents and the community to join with us to extol the virtues of Catholic education. We are very blessed to be able to take part in this special mission with our families and minister to our young people with the hope that they will continue to share these good works with their school, families, communities and nation. Among some of the community sharing we do is to provide baskets of goodies to our local community helpers who serve us in many capacities. This year we gave baskets to the Wilkens Police Precinct, Catonsville Fire Department, Catonsville Library, St. Agnes Hospital Emergency Center, and our postal officer. They were gratefully received and appreciated as we, in turn, appreciate their service to our school community.

At our Parent's Day Prayer Service, both faculty members and parents spoke about Catholic education. It is a meaningful topic for many of our faculty who either attended St. Mark as students and returned to teach or have children currently attending as students here. Ms. Destino, principal, spoke of the sacrifice her family undertook to ensure that they attended Catholic School, at a time when the costs were far less than today's tuition rates; but, for the time, it was a great sacrifice to make ends meet and pay tuition.

Mrs. Helenmarie Hahn, parent, also provided a loving tribute to St. Mark. Recalling her own childhood of belonging to St. Mark School she implored them to "try and treasure this gift you have been given ... it is not always easy to be a youth in today's world. But trust in the fact that you are being given a foundation and life tools here that most other children will never receive or understand ... this place is special and you will look back one day and smile with special memories."



*Students delivering the basket to the Wilkens Police Station as part of our thank you to community helpers.*

We know that many of our alumni, parishioners and grandparents share those sentiments with fond memories of their Catholic School experience. Thank you for supporting St. Mark and allowing others the opportunity of a Catholic education through your generous gifts and prayers for our success. We hope our current students carry on the legacy left to them by previous generations of St. Mark families and benefactors.

### Our Art Room Gift in Memory of Robyn Kirby

We are pleased to share with you the gift we acquired from donations received in memory of Robyn Ann Kirby. Robyn was our art teacher from 2008-2013. She left the world too early at 31 years old and was an inspiration to many for her strength in dealing with her illness. Her love for St. Mark School and teaching children was a source of great happiness for her. It was especially memorable to be able to teach some of her many cousins and students she coached over the years.

Mrs. Melina Blackwell was touched by the opportunity to bring a new Ellison Die Press Cutter Machine into the art classroom in memory of a beloved teacher. It has made preparing and presenting art projects so much easier and more efficient. Students have studied the works of artists such as Van Gogh, Cassatt, and Gustav Klimt while utilizing the press.

We want to offer a sincere thank you to the people who made this donation possible. If you wish to memorialize a loved one with a gift to St. Mark School, please contact Ms. Mary Destino, principal, for information on how to assist St. Mark School by a directed donation.

### The Class of 1976 is planning a Class Reunion!

#### Where are you?!

On behalf of Mr. Carlos Ugarte, we are seeking information from the classmates from the St. Mark Class of 1976 to plan a reunion in the fall. He asks that you contact him in one of the three following ways: (1) contact him Carlos Ugarte (aka Ricky Ugarte) @cugarteblair@gmail.com; (2) join the Facebook group "St. Mark's Class of 1976;" or (3) join the googlegroup at stmarksclassof1976@googlegroups.com.

Class reunions are a memorable way to re-connect with the St. Mark community and renew old friendships. If other alumni are also interested in the a class reunion event, please call and we can help in the effort to locate classmates' information.

If you have any news of your own to share, please contact Mary Morrison at 410-744-6560 X249 or e-mail [mmorrison1@stmark-school.org](mailto:mmorrison1@stmark-school.org). Thank you for your support of St. Mark School.

Look for our next alumni newsletter coming out soon and more news about our Grade 8 graduates and St. Mark Class of 2012 graduates and their college destinations.

## Our Olympic Hero

The crooked impish smile belies the fierce little girl that exists beneath the surface. She may be just 10, but she has the determination of a seasoned athlete in the swimming pool.

In January, fourth-grader Tatiana Orsburn travelled to Colorado to compete in the Paralympic swim events. She was the youngest swimmer at the U.S. Paralympics' Jimi Flower Classic sometimes competing against athletes twice her age. However, her enthusiasm did not wane and she swam her heart out beating personal bests in some of her heats. St. Mark students sent Tatiana off in style, showering her with special going-away gifts intended to make her trip easier and remind her of her friends back home. The school also made three banners to encourage her in her quest, as well as standing in unison to form the Olympic rings and wish her good luck.

Ironically, Tatiana's coach is also a St. Mark alum. Maureen Farrell Kogut hails from the Class of 1975 and remembers with fondness piano lessons with Sr. Benetia, the May Pole Dance and helping Sr. Frederick Mary during recess. Tatiana was new to the sport of swimming and Ms. Kogut states, "She is one of the hardest workers and has taught all the coaches that she does not have any limits."

Tatiana came home with a medal which she proudly wore to school and students all exclaimed great delight at the uniqueness of having an Olympic star amongst their ranks.



Tatiana continues to swim and is rather nonchalant about the honor of competing in the Olympics and we can bet that her light has many more moments to shine!

## Heroes of St. Mark School!

### Walking the path of faith towards Confirmation

Middle School—the in-between years when you yearn for independence, yet still require loving care and guidance to get you through the turbulent years of adolescence. There is so much asked of you to prepare for entrance to high school and for the sacrament of Confirmation, as well.

This is where our hero Rae Ellen Clegg steps in. Rae Ellen has been the Parish Program Coordinator for 6 years and enjoys working with this age group and, in fact, feels that she learns something from her students. She singlehandedly runs the Confirmation Prep program with the help of adult volunteers for the Monday night sessions. Her "other" job is full time secretary for our very busy parish.

Ms. Rae Ellen has an inspired understanding of the middle school mind and she realizes her grace when the students come upon their "ah-ha" moment when "they finally grasp that they are confirming to God, in their own voices, their Baptismal promises and that the Bishop is confirming their Baptism in Christ. I can actually hear the Hallelujah Chorus when all of the puzzle pieces click!"

Thank you Rae Ellen for all of your hard work in bringing our children closer to God and sharing the Light of Your Faith!



### And yet another hero of St. Mark School!

Mr. Gary Auer, maintenance supervisor, is a one man wonder. He is handy and can fix anything. He greets the boys and girls in the morning in the carline with a warm smile, regardless of the weather. He is on call at all hours of the day and weekends. When the worst of the snows and ice hit, he is there making the walks and lots clean and safe. When a teacher has car trouble, he is there to help! He is the man around campus that we can call on for many situations and all the students know and love "Mr. Gary."

When not at work, Mr. Gary enjoys time with his family including his wife, Robin, and children, St. Mark graduates Michael and Madison. He is known to tinker around the house and neighborhood too, often offering his assistance to friends and neighbors.

There are so many people that work behind the scenes on a daily basis making our school the wonderful facility it is. We are fortunate to have such dedicated people part of our staff and just want to say a big THANK YOU!



*Grades K-5 assembled to make the five colorful Olympic rings to wish Tatiana well during her January Olympic quest!*



St. Mark School  
26 Melvin Avenue  
Catonsville, MD  
21228

410.744.6560

stmark-school.org

**The newsletter for  
Families, Alumni,  
Grandparents and  
Friends of St. Mark  
School!**



**NON PROFIT ORG.**

**U.S. POSTAGE**

**PAID**

**BALTIMORE, MD**

**PERMIT NO. 4596**

**Address Service Requested**

### Dates to Remember

#### **April 29 & 30**

St. Mark Drama Club Production of "Finian's Rainbow"

7:00 pm Fr. Henry Hall

Tickets can be purchased at the door

#### **May 6**

Mother's Day Plant Sale

8:00-3:00 St. Mark Gym

#### **June 1**

Grade 8 Graduation

7:00 pm Church

**June 8**-Last Day of School!



### **One More Shout Out for Heroes!**

We have named them "The Glory Singers" and they are our student cantors for school liturgies. Elodie Scala, Thomas Norden, Raquel Gabin and Stephen Hook (L to r) are heroes for standing in front of large crowds of students, parents and parishioners and leading us in song for every school Mass. Not only are they brave, but they have wonderful voices and help us to worship with raised voices in praise and joy! Thank you for sharing your talents!