

ALUMNI FEATURE

Katie Jondal

My name is Katie Jondal and this year I am a freshman at Prior Lake High School. Moving to the high school from St. Michael was a big change but one that I was fully prepared for. As a freshman, I am involved in Student Council, Alpine Skiing, and hopefully golf in the spring. St. Michael provided me with the skills I needed to be successful academically, socially, and mentally. This year I am taking four advanced or honors classes including Honors Geometry, Biology, Spanish II, and Honors English. Coming to the high school, I also had an easy time making new friends while still keeping in touch with the old. One thing that I often still think of is Mrs. Gibbon's reminder to always keep our sponge wet. She meant that we must always try to soak up as much knowledge as possible and never let it go. In second grade I had no idea that keeping my sponge wet would help me so much in my future but it still reminds me to do my best even if it isn't always landing me A's on my report card. Lastly, my experience at St. Michael has helped me to make good decisions that will benefit me throughout my high school career and forward.



S P O R T S

St. Michael Student is Rising Star

by Susie Williams, Parent of St. Michael School Student

I would like to introduce you to P.J. Lenz. P.J. is a 5th grader in Ms. Kaczmarek's class and he is 10 years old, but there is more. Last month, P.J. competed at "National Future Stars" in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "National Future Stars" is where the best gymnasts from all over the country come together and compete. P.J. competed at his age level and did awesome. He came in 44th place out of all the 10 year olds in the country!

P.J. showed interest in gymnastics at the age of 4 and began competing when he was 6 years old. Minnesota Valley Gymnastics Center is where P.J. learned his craft and spends much of his free time. These days, P.J. practices close to 14 hours per week and loves every minute of it. The skills he works on are the same ones you would see in the Olympics; the high bars, still rings, parallel bars, vault, floor exercise, and pommel horse.



P.J. Lenz at National Future Stars in Colorado Springs

The ribbons and medals are piling up at the Lenz's house but two accomplishments are worth noting. First, P.J. won the Regional Championship when he was 8 years old. To win that, you have to be the best gymnast from Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. Second, P.J. was the Minnesota State Champion when he was 9 years old; the best in the state! I wouldn't be surprised, if one day, we will be watching P.J. in the Olympics. Go P.J.!!!



C O M M U N I T Y

Students Provide for the Needy

by Lauren Reishus 4th Grader and Abby Jansen, 7th Grader

Imagine if you did not have a coat to keep you warm during the winter. The students of St. Michael Catholic School were concerned about the people in that very situation and decided to do something about it. The prayer buddies team of Mr. Olson's and Mrs. Vochoska's homeroom students sponsored a Coat Drive for the CAP Agency from October 11 to 19, 2010. Students created posters and went on BNN to let their fellow classmates know about the coat drive. Students from pre-K through 8th grade brought in coats for the needy. Randy and ReNae Wintheiser volunteered to help out and delivered 59 coats to the CAP Agency. The coats were collected outside the library in the Coat Corral. We thank all those who contributed to this worthy cause.



Students who helped plan the coat drive: (back row) Thomas Neuharth, Michael Tinguely, James Cirillo, Alec Tsarehradsky (front row)

Advent - A Time to Give

by Emma Kuboushek,
St. Michael 3rd Grader

Every Monday morning during this holy season of Advent, students and staff of St. Michael School are gathering in the school gym to sing, pray and light another candle on the Advent Wreath. We are preparing for our Savior's coming. Throughout the season of Advent, we're collecting money for Heifer International. We hope to be able to purchase a lamb, a goat, and a cow for some very poor communities around the world with the money we raise. We believe these animals were present in the manger the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem. We are displaying the stable in the multipurpose room where we are placing pictures of the animals we raise money to purchase.

Each morning during BNN, students from each of the grade are explaining the symbols of the Jesse Tree: Jesus' family tree. Our Jesse Tree is on display in the passageway between our buildings.

During this special season, some young men and women of our parish are far from their families and friends as they serve in our country's military forces. We are sending them cards with heartfelt wishes for their safety and comfort while they are away from home.



Luke Schmid, Emma Kuboushek, Catherine Vallez, and Matthew Becker standing by the School's Advent Wreath

Kindergarten Curriculum

Designed for all Learning Levels

by Jane Engel and Kelly Rohlfson
St. Michael Kindergarten Teachers

At the kindergarten level, students start the school year at all ability levels. Some students struggle to recognize the letters in their name while others come in reading. In order to meet the individual academic needs of all students, the curriculum is highly differentiated.

Assessment Packets – Our trained classroom aides individually assess students in a wide variety of language arts skills. This assessment process is ongoing throughout the year, quite extensive and provides the kindergarten teachers with an accurate account of each child's mastery of skills. **Running Records** – This tool provides data on each child's fluency in reading and comprehension, both of which must be mastered to move on to the next level.

ROAR – Repeated Oral Assisted Reading is a part of our reading curriculum that is dependent on our parent volunteers. Each child reads individually with a parent at his or her own level. This one-on-one attention has proven to be an extremely valuable opportunity in developing student progress.

Book-in-a-Bag – The children have access to leveled take-home readers with the purpose of reading to their parents. This program also allows for comprehension assessment. Students have the opportunity to read as high as fifth grade through this series. By utilizing all of these resources, kindergarten students develop a strong foundation and thrive in their quest to be lifelong readers.



Madi Metcalfe and Zack Wieser - Kindergarten Students writing in class

Ann Prchal

This month we feature one of our most seasoned teachers with over 21 years experience teaching both in special education and in the traditional classroom. Mrs. Ann Prchal currently teaches 7th grade Language Arts and also Strategies at St. Michael. English and literature have always been her passion and she is currently loving this part of her career. Mrs. Prchal comes from a family with many teachers. Six of the eight kids in her family are teachers. It wasn't until after high school that Mrs. Prchal realized that she wanted to go to college and become a teacher. Mankato State University is where she earned her B.S. Teaching degree, special education degree, and a coaching license. Ann understands how tough it is to be an adolescent in today's world. Adjusting her curriculum often to support her students varying needs, is something she is committed to. She especially enjoys the moments when she is teaching a new concept and she sees the "I get it" look on a student's face. Humor and respect are an important part of her class. She teaches her students the importance of being able to laugh at what isn't important, and yet be serious enough to give students the guidance and respect they need. In return, the students have a great deal of respect and admiration for her. In addition to her classroom work, she has been a student council advisor and currently operates the BNN morning broadcast at school. In her free time, she enjoys her book club, biking, walking, and operating her small card making business. She has a great husband, Ralph and 3 sons who are the love of her life - Eric, Adam and Alex.

Exchange Students

by *Diego Fernandez and Guisela Matta,*
Guatemala Exchange Students 2010

On September we arrived to Prior Lake, MN. We were amazed of how beautiful it is here, with all the lakes and trees changing colors. We also were very happy with our families here. They welcome us really nicely and treat us like one more of the family. When we came to St. Michael we really liked the school. Everyone in St. Michael Catholic School was very nice to us the first day. We love this school because everything is much easier to do here. We made a lot of good friends here and we had a lot of great experiences: trick-or-treating, carving pumpkins, thanksgiving, and of course the thing that we were most excited all this time: playing with snow! We experience the real cold weather because it's always warm in Guatemala. We also went to different places like the Mall of America, which we think is really big. We loved the Water Park of America as well as Nickelodeon Universe and Valley Fair. We both want to come back to visit our wonderful families that were assigned to us and our great friends that we made here. ~ Guisela Matta



Left to right - Exchange student: *Diego Fernandez* Host Students: *Evan Preslicka, Eva Hall,* and Exchange Student: *Guisela Matta*

We were very happy, we made a lot of friends that we are never going to forget. All the persons were very nice to us. Other thing we never going to forget is the snow. We were very sad the last day of school because it was time to say goodbye to all of our friends. Now that we are in Guatemala we miss Minnesota and all the persons we met. Good bye ☺- Diego Fernandez

Students Guisela & Diego returned to 75° Guatemala on Dec. 12th. Thank you to all who were so gracious in welcoming the students. Thanks to the teachers for putting in the additional time needed to support the program. We are grateful to have this wonderful opportunity here at our school. Many students who complete the program return to Minnesota to visit their host families and the life-long friends they made at St. Michael. ~ Kris Hall & Heidi Preslicka, Host Moms

Eagle Bluff E.L.C.

by *Abby Glaser and*
Sophia Zak, St. Michael
6th Graders

Building Friendships and Educating Students

This September the sixth graders went to an environmental learning center called Eagle Bluff. During this very fun and entertaining trip we created new bonds and friendships that will last a very long time. We were divided up into three groups.

During this experience, we learned about the Earth's geology in Earth Exploration class. While searching for fossils by the Root River, some of the sixth graders found some very interesting fossils. Another class at Eagle Bluff was Stream Lab. This class took place at the Root River. We learned about different tools that scientists use to find facts about the river. Another class that was included was Archery. During this class, we learned about the history, the different bows, and hand-eye coordination. The last class included was Treetops. During this class, some kids faced their fears and were able to build self-confidence during the ropes course. There were also some other activities such as the Naturalist program. This is when a naturalist came in and talked to us about animals. The last of the activities was the team-building event. This activity challenged us to work as a team and conquer the challenges. Everyone liked the food and would recommend this place to anyone.



Christina Hanson, Lauren Benedict, and Margaret Kobs during their *Water Quality Testing Class*

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Rewards from Volunteering are Priceless

by *Karen Sher, parent to two children at St. Michael*

When I think of volunteering and what it means to me, I often think of a quote by J.W. Goethe; "Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and help them become what they are capable of being".

Volunteering at the school, not only gives me time with my own children, it also gives me the opportunity to meet new ones, watch them grow, and interact. I see their desire to learn and witness great respect and support they share with their schoolmates of all grades, and the school staff. Being part of the students lives, helping out in the classroom, playground, and lunchroom, to meeting new families/parents working with the ambassador program, book fairs, actively participating in Parent Connections, and the School Advisory Board, has given me an overwhelming gratitude for the entire St. Michael community. Knowing I have the potential to possibly help one child, one staff member, one community member, gives me a feeling of elated reward! Not only have I enjoyed helping them, they have unknowingly helped me to grow into the person I did not know I was capable of being!

To see it is a great thing, but to live it is priceless!