

ALUMNI FEATURE

Suzi Britton

In the picture I am wearing a yellow blouse, plaid jumper, and navy blue knee highs. I am also wearing the biggest smile of my five years. It was my first day of kindergarten and I had been excitedly waiting for the day I would attend St. Michael School. I attended through eighth grade and have so many happy memories of my years there; Friday mass, sports championships, choir concerts and musicals. Attending school mass and daily religion class brought not only an understanding of the bible and our Catholic faith, but also of ways to live this faith and give back to others through service projects as well as our daily actions. The Catholic faith was not just something we were taught, it was something we lived.

Because of the school's smaller size, I was able to participate in many activities and try new things. When I joined choir in seventh grade, I was not sure what to expect, but it led to a love of singing that carried into high school and college choir.

Participation in sports taught lifelong lessons of teamwork, hard work and winning and losing gracefully. Teachers and coaches were always supportive and there to provide help.

What I remember most about my years at St. Michael are the friendships I made. Many of my classmates and I attended St. Michael for nine years together. I still count friends from St. Michael as my best friends, and know many others who formed lifelong friendships with not only classmates, but also classmates' families. It is this sense of community that I remember most about my years at St. Michael and what makes it special to be a member of the St. Michael community.



S P O R T S

St. Mike's Basketball

by Thomas Vallez, St. Michael 7th Grader

Focus on Sportsmanship, Respect, Fun, and a Love for the Sport

The best sport program I have ever been a part of is St. Michael Basketball. My name is Thomas Vallez and I am in 7th grade. I have been playing basketball since kindergarten. The reason I think it's so great is because the coaches thrive in sportsmanship and most importantly having fun. My coaches have been great to teach me how to excel in basketball. They taught me how to be respectful on and off the court. They expect your attention because they volunteer their time to help us. We have an excellent gym for us to play in. You can either be on the league team or both the league and the traveling team. The league team plays other Catholic teams within a certain traveling distance. The traveling team plays in tournaments usually farther away. They still value sportsmanship and fun, but when you're on the traveling team you play to win. Towards the end of the season, we travel to St. Cloud and stay at a hotel. While there, we play in a big tournament. It is a really great time and I will remember it forever. Every time I play with St. Michael, I am surrounded by my friends and we are all playing a sport that we love. The basketball program at St. Michael is small, energetic, and teams work together. We have a few new players this year and I am excited to be playing again. Over the years, I have understood why people say that St. Michael was the best years as a team.



Coach Tom Schmid talks to the kids at half time



S E R V I C E

Students Serve

by Deanna Vochoska, 4th Grade Teacher at St. Michael Catholic School and Student Council Advisor

Seventh and eighth graders have always been eager to join Student Council at St. Michael School. This year was no exception. There are 52 students representing St. Mike's with their dedication.

One of the main activities for the students is to assist teachers on Wednesday mornings before school even starts! They are willing and excited to do a variety of tasks. On these mornings, you will find the students working on bulletin boards, correcting, filing papers, organizing art projects, putting together packets for teacher use in the classroom, and sorting Campbell's Soup labels, and Box Tops for Education. The students know that all of their help is very appreciated.

Besides assisting teachers, the students are instrumental in organizing the dances that are held throughout the year. In order for the dances to have a DJ, the students volunteer at a Lenten fish fry as a fundraiser. Due to the success of the dances, Student Council is also able to financially assist school organizations such as Kids Are Authors, the Robotics team, and the Spring Musical with donations.

They also organize the Pennies for Patients Drive for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society by hosting the Penny War. This year the students have volunteered to help with the Parent Connections meetings childcare, and there will be a few chosen students to help plan Catholic Schools Week activities.

As the advisor for the past four years, I appreciate all of the hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication each and every one of them puts in. I truly enjoy working with these students!



Becca Brinkley, Tia Neuharth, and Danny DeGross sorting papers during student council.



Ricky Smitz, Sarah Spanier, Danny DeGross, Mara Fossum and Mrs. Vochoska during Student Council

We Are a Catholic School

by St. Michael School Teachers

Is it not the ultimate goal of Catholic education to give witness to the truth of the Gospel which is, in the end, Jesus Himself? Let us be clear - a Catholic School is not just a private school gussied up with a few extra religion classes. (Archbishop Nienstadt 2010). At St. Michael we pride ourselves in integrating Religion across the curriculum.

In seventh and eighth grades, examples of living the Catholic Social Justice principles are found in science class as students become aware of “Stewardship of God’s Creation” through recycling and “Recognizing Creation” as God’s gift to us in Psalms, poetry and photography in an interdisciplinary unit in art, language arts and Religion. Units in social studies promoting human dignity through “The Role of Government” and “Option for the Poor” occur as students become involved in various charitable drives. Beginning classes with prayer allows students to offer petitions for people worldwide, placing emphasis on “Global Solidarity” and “Participation.”



4th Grade students Kaitlyn Becker, Aidan Weightman-Bragg, and Daniel Deis showing some of the collections of Thanksgiving Stuffing. This is one of many ways students demonstrate stewardship and shine in their Catholic faith.

In fifth and sixth grades, class discussions of Shiloh and Number the Stars allow students to grapple with moral and religious concerns. Should Marty lie (the only one besides God who will know) to save a dog? Who is it that numbers the stars? In social studies, the question, “Do slave owners have the right to treat slaves as property?” arises. Students discuss these within the context of their Catholic faith.

In third and fourth grades, an anthology of nonfiction includes reflections on caring for creation in Animals Come Home to the National Parks. Discussion of current events is grounded in faith and Catholic teachings. Art and music provide experiences in the rich cultural heritage of the Catholic Church.

In Pre-K through second grades, Responsive Classroom allows students an opportunity to listen and care for one another as they bring their successes, failures, concerns and ideas to prayer.

Stepping into a classroom, visitors are surrounded by examples that St. Michael is, indeed, fulfilling its designation as a Catholic school.

TEACHER FEATURE

Beth Gillham

This month we feature Beth Gillham, one of our second grade teachers at St. Michael. Beth really enjoys teaching second graders with the preparation and completion of the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Communion and the substantial growth academically, socially and spiritually. Beth says, “the second graders have a wonderful ingenuity about them that gives me such great laughs and pleasure.” Beth grew up in Burnsville with her parents, two younger sisters and a baby brother. She attended two colleges and changed majors five times. She finally decided to major in Speech-Communication and minor in Spanish from the University of MN. Upon graduation, she became a flight attendant and traveled extensively to Asia, Europe, and the United States. When her oldest daughter was in fourth grade, Beth became a parent helper in her daughter’s classroom and her interest in becoming a teacher was re-kindled. She entered a program through St. Catherine’s University and the Archdiocese to obtain her elementary education teaching licensure. Beth is grateful to be on the correct path in life and believes that God has opened many doors for her and continues to do so. Beth lives in Shakopee and enjoys spending time with her husband Tom, two daughters Brenna and Marissa, most recent addition, grandson Samuel, and their dog Max. A favorite quote of Mrs. Gillham’s is by William G. Spady, “All students can learn and succeed, but not on the same day or in the same way.” This is an important message for Mrs. Gillham and one she considers daily in her classroom.

Students Study Etymology

by Kyla Krohn, Abby Glaser, Anna Panek, Erin Palmer, and Grace Schroeder, St. Michael 7th Graders

‘Logophile’ is an example of a word that can be broken down into two stems. The first stem is ‘logos’ meaning word or study; the second stem is ‘philia,’ which means love. Putting the two stems together it means the love for words. In 6th grade when we started etymology, we thought this was way over our heads! We thought etymology was just memorizing definitions but we now know if you know the stem(s) it will help you find the meaning. We now have learned Etymology is very useful in our everyday lives.

Etymology is the study of Latin and Greek roots and stems of words. Etymology helps us understand the meaning of the word. For example, when we take the NWEA tests (Northwest Education Association Test), there is a section called language usage and there is another section called reading. It would be very difficult if we hadn’t learned etymology, because we can now easily understand the word and it’s meaning. This is one of many tests that show us how useful etymology can be when trying to figure out words. To get into college you will need to take the SAT or the ACT. As some of us know, and have heard, it will be essential in these tests.

Etymology also helps with vocabulary development, spelling, and reading comprehension. In 6th grade we started with 100 stems, then it continues in 7th grade with another 100 stems. This may seem like a lot, but it is actually really easy and fun at the same time.



Andrew Yearling, Molly Heimel, Kamille DiTommaso, and Alex Miranda studying their Etymology

Long Distance Friendship Begins

by Ignacio Penagos and Mare Vasquez, St. Michael 2011 Exchange Students

Our names are Ignacio and Mare. We are students from Guatemala and came to Minnesota to live with our host family for eleven weeks. After a long day, we arrived on Friday, September 23, at 11:50 pm. It was the first time we meet our new family. We were so nervous and excited at the same time. We came to Minnesota through the Friendly Exchange - A Cultural Family Program. They have been around for more than 25 years and are dedicated to promote peace through understanding and friendship. The program gives American families the opportunity to learn about a new country, Guatemala, its culture, customs and way of living. We learned about the culture in Minnesota and worked towards improving our English.

I am Ignacio, 4 years ago my sister came to Minnesota through this exchange program. My parents wanted me to have the same experience. I'm Mare, last year two good friends came to Minnesota and they told me what a great experience it was. For 6 months we were preparing to come. They made us fill out paperwork with questions to know about us so they could search for a family that they could match us with. We felt like we were home because our host families treated us like we were their own. We enjoyed attending St. Michael

Catholic School. All the teachers, staff and students were so nice to us. They helped us to improve our English. We like the different activities during school. We experienced carving a pumpkin and celebrating Halloween and Thanksgiving for the first time. How exciting it was when we saw snow falling. We got to see a lot of sites in Minnesota. We went to Valleyfair, Mall of America, downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul. We also traveled to Wisconsin Dells, Duluth, South Dakota, and Iowa. What a great experience!



8th Grade Host Student Will Tinguely with his exchange brother Ignacio, Exchange Student Mare, with her host sister Grace Meidl

The 2011 exchange students stayed with the Kate and Joe Tinguely and the Debra and Kevin Meidl families. If you would like more information about this program and are considering hosting a student in 2012 talk to one of these families or you can contact Heidi Preslicka 612-875-6630 or heidi@preslickastudio.com

Meet "Gilbert" Our Bearded Dragon Class Pet

by Curt Murphy and Shannon Hockman, 7th Graders

Have you ever seen a bearded dragon? Neither had I until I went into Mr. Erdman's room and saw his pet bearded dragon named Gilbert. Everyone thinks that Gilbert is really cool so every time we walk in we always say hi to him. It seems every day he is in one corner of his tank laying on or beside his little log, waiting to say hi to people. He hardly ever moves except when we feed him. When we feed him lettuce, he runs over and waits like a dog waiting for food, and when we give it to him he eats it up fast. Another thing that we feed him is crickets. We usually feed him three at a time.

Some bearded dragon fun facts are that its proper scientific name is the *Pogona henrylawsoni*. The beard is intended to make the lizard look larger to potential foes. This is a common defense mechanism using a sort of camouflage to disguise their true capability like small men wearing thick jackets to appear bulkier and more muscular. Bearded dragon lizards are native to the continent Australia. They live in dry and rocky regions in the country and are skilled climbers. In captivity, they need little care but need a controlled environment to survive because they are cold-blooded (meaning their temperature changes with their surrounding). Their life expectancy is 7-10 years. Bearded dragons have triangular heads with flat bodies and are speedy and agile. They are omnivorous - they eat both insects and plants. Smaller bearded dragons eat insects and larger dragons eat small mice. Things to look for before picking them up: make sure they are blinking their eyes or have them closed which means they are relaxed, if they have their mouth open or are puffing out their "beard" they are agitated and don't want to get picked up. To puff out their beard if they feel threatened or want to establish their territory, the bearded dragons flex the muscles in the throat region, which results in the flaring of the beard and they appear larger. I hope you learned about Gilbert and bearded dragons.



Mr. Erdman and his students admiring "Gilbert"

VOLUNTEER CORNER

Parent Connections

by Lisa Evans, parent to two students at St. Michael

It is very exciting to watch our students start another wonderful school year! We know you have been inundated with volunteer opportunities and we thank you very much for all of your support. Our school could not operate without the generous giving of your time, talent and treasure.

Parent involvement and volunteerism is at the heart of Parent Connections. As stated in our mission, "We are an organization of all St. Michael's Catholic School parents. Parent Connections will coordinate the time, talent and treasure of the school community for the advancement of all students in cooperation with the School Advisory Board and School Administration."

During our meetings we discuss and advise on the many volunteer and fundraising activities happening in our school. Parent Connections is a meeting for everyone! We encourage participation and involvement at all levels. We welcome new ideas and voices. We also welcome parents to just attend and listen. All meetings take place the first Thursday of the month at 6:00 pm in the Parish Office.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please contact Joy Fischer at joyfischer@integraonline.com or Lisa Evans at lisaevans@mchsi.com.