

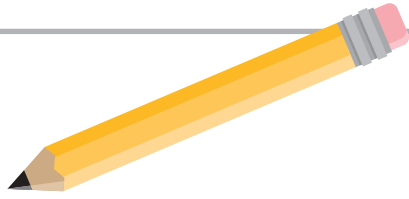


# SCHOOL NEWS

ISSUE TWO

## Principal's Notes

by Mrs. Maura Nash, Principal



Finally, spring is here! At least, on the calendar, and occasionally on my weather app! I hope everyone had a restful and fun break! This time of flowers budding, lawn mowers starting and kids running around without coats for the first time in months always makes my heart sing. I cherish this time of renewal, especially this year, as I continue to navigate more "firsts" as principal here at St. John Fisher, and enjoy some now-mastered "routine," too! For me, Spring 2019, represents so much hope for our school as I get even more enthusiastic about what's to come! And, it is thanks to our students, families and our teachers/staff for infusing such a sense of hope in me and all of us!

As I map out my future priorities and planning, I am grateful that part of my required "analysis" allows me to sit in classrooms. That means, I get to see firsthand all of the remarkable teaching from our lineup of tremendous teachers, along with the steadfast learning from our thriving students. The smiles and giggles from the younger students always brightens up my day and reminds me about much of my purpose here - to cultivate kindness and self-worth, and to feed and nurture every curiosity. Just ask them about our new, favorite school mantra: "Be the nice kid!" Even our eighth graders, who are leaving us for the next stop, share such a dynamic energy at this time. It is beautiful to see these young men and women - our real-life, outstanding "work product" - get ready to set foot into high school, with SJF imprinted into their beings.

As I try to build relationships and get immersed in all things "SJF," I have been fortunate to partner with many of our sister and brother organizations. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your passion and zeal: Holy Name Society, FSA, The Women's Club and The Athletics and Parish Council. These groups are chock-full of folks who truly go beyond to help fundraise for new improvements to our school, bring more awareness to SJF and create fun networking/social events for our families and neighbors.

I have also had the privilege of joining in on the Queen of Hearts venture, Alderman O'Shea's "Get Behind the Vest" pancake breakfast and our inaugural St. Baldrick's event. To experience firsthand what an undertaking these types of projects entail was humbling and made me even more impressed with the SJF volunteers and participants. Thank you to all who devoted efforts to these events and for allowing me to get involved.

The School Advisory Board (SAB) also brings a fresh breath of air for me. With this enhanced group of SJF stewards and partners, I am excited for new ideas, better methods to address challenges and to celebrate successes and an overall desire to plan for the school with the partnership of our school/parish community - all with thoughtful and intentional consideration.

Thank you to all of you for the warm welcome and patience as I got my footing this past winter. This is going to be a wonderful Spring here at SJF!



by Dr. Elena Chermak, Religious Education Coordinator

## Living the ALLELUIA - Saint John Fisher School Excelled during Lent and Easter 2019 Prep!

*A sampling of Saint John Fisher School ideas for Lent:*

**A**mazing good deeds, keeping Lenten promises

**L**oving kindness to our classmates

**L**eadership in service, prayer, and going to mass.

**E**xcellence in school, sports, and kindness by limiting time on video games and social media

**L**oyalty to classmates - seeing people with God's eyes - laboring -working hard to do homework on time and studying for tests

**U**nderstanding the need for good nutrition and listening to our parents.

**I**ntuition to think of others and initiative to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

**A**dventure - to learn of all we can do to make God's world kinder, more peaceful, more hopeful and loving.

When people need a new idea, they often go to Pinterest. While I appreciate that fun website, when I'm looking for creative help, I look to our students, filled with God's spirit, and a consistent source of the best ideas.

*continued...*

*This newsletter is produced by the SAB in collaboration with SJF Faculty & Staff. If you have any content to share, please email Mary Walsh-Neumann (neumz567@gmail.com), Sara McGann (saramcgann@gmail.com) and/or Nikki Carey (hynesecarey@gmail.com). Limited print copies available at the school office, as well.*



As I often tell them, “28 (or the number of students in that classroom) heads are better than one.”

On February 27th, we began Lent as we usually do by “burying the Alleluia”, a joyful word we will not hear or say until Easter. The children take this prohibition seriously. Even during first communion singing practice, we sing the “Alleluia” in a whisper, with some of the second graders steadfastly refusing to sing it at all. They are waiting!

As I asked the 8th graders for help planning Lent, they suggested, “Eight letters in Alleluia, one for each grade 1-8.” Wanting to include all the students, we amended that idea to one letter to guide our actions for each school week of Lent. Letter by letter, we would spell out A-L-L-E-L-U-I-A, and allow each letter to inspire our actions for that day. Morning prayers over the P.A. would include suggestions and reports of Lenten promises, offered by students throughout the grades.

In addition, our eighth graders painted each letter and added suggestions starting with that letter to hang in the windows on the school bridge as a visual reminder. The students painted on clear vinyl – to let in the welcome springtime light. Each week we came closer to building the entire word.

We couldn’t say, “Alleluia”, but we would help this word to come back by our activities and attitudes, our prayers, our sacrifices – the things we gave up, and our Lenten good deeds. We hoped to spell the word, and live the word to have an awesome celebration of Easter, having achieved our goals and fulfilled our Lenten promises.



As I reflect on the blessing of this school year, Lent, and Easter season, this is what those Alleluia letters mean to me:

**A** Always anticipate success and expect the best of students. This is not my first year here, yet every year feels like my first year because of the excitement of the youngest students for whom every day is a wondrous adventure: Birthdays! Spring! A new tooth! For the older students, I see the enthusiasm they have to form and actualize their dreams. The students’ excitement, hope, and enthusiasm is infectious, and inspires great energy as I imagine the wonders which await these students of all ages.

**L** Loyal longevity here gives me the privileged position of seeing how life has unfolded for some of our students. I am happy to see graduates in our neighborhood, some of whom now have children of their own in our school. In addition, I encounter out of town graduates and those who have moved out of the neighborhood at celebrations and, recently, at the wakes of Father Purtell, Jessica Bryar, and at their grandparents’ funerals. As with our local alumni, I am delighted with the warm greetings of these students with whom I spent countless school days during their formative years. As I look at them as adults, I try to recognize the fourteen-year-old who graduated back then, and do a mental fast forward to see how they have become the handsome or beautiful young man or woman before me.

**E** “Everything, turn out okay?” I ask them with great curiosity. The students tell me about their lives, about friendships, professions, family. They speak of empathy and compassion which grows as they face life’s challenges.

**L** Looking back at their years at Saint John Fisher we talk about the lessons that stayed with them and the relationships they have maintained with their classmates – some of whom have remained life-long friends. They sometimes mention that one event, expression, or life-lesson they learned from a classmate or teacher.

**U** Understanding of faith, its influence in their lives, and their current church community becomes a topic if we have more time. I ask about the ways they are using their unique talents to make the world better: more peaceful, more hope-filled, more loving, and am gratified to hear their successes and hopes for the future. They are involved in communities where faith is important and life-giving.

**I** Intelligence, imagination, and introspection are three qualities I see and admire in our students, past and present. Our graduates are faith-filled laity who bring Christ’s presence to their daily lives across a wide variety of professions. They have gone on to be loving parents and family members. They are informed citizens and people of great service to our nation and community. They continue to be vital and enthusiastic people in God’s awesome world. They illuminate the lives of others with their insights, humor, and kindness.

**A** Achieving amazing things, our alumni are attentive to God’s spirit moving among them. They are “all-in” to help the poor and those in need. They alleviate suffering and always value faith, family, and community.

As our current students concluded their Lenten practice, they added the final “A” in “Alleluia,” with these thoughts from a member of the graduating class of 2019:

“Acknowledge all that you’ve absorbed over these 40 days, and accept, aid, and appreciate others in God’s admirable world.”

Alleluia, indeed.

Hope you and your family had a very happy Easter!

# Faculty Spotlight

## Ms. Cathy Browne

7th & 8th grade Math Teacher

### How long have you been teaching at SJF? What led you to teach here?

This is my 6th year teaching at SJF.

Before I was a teacher, I worked as a CPA in the banking industry. When I changed careers, I hoped to find a position teaching math in a junior high or high school.



### What do you love about teaching SJF 7th & 8th Grade Falcons?

I love teaching "the big kids". They are smart, funny, creative and curious. They go out of their way to help our younger students. I enjoy seeing the students develop their sense of independence. They never cease to amaze me.

### What is your favorite SJF tradition/event/happening?

May Crowning has become a favorite tradition of mine here at SJF. I see all the preparation and how hard the students work to make it a special day. In addition to celebrating and honoring Mary, it is the last time we celebrate together as a school community. It is an incredible site to see all eyes on the 8th grade students as they process into church.

### Can you share something interesting/fascinating/funny/special/etc. that the SJF community might be interested in?

At the end May, the 8th grade students celebrate their accomplishments at another SJF tradition, Just Desserts. Students' service and academic achievements are recognized in this annual awards program. The different ways that students provide service to our school, parish, and community is remarkable. Their academic achievements are just as impressive. Each year, the graduating class earns over \$100,000 in scholarships for high school.



# I SPY FALCONS

## Nikki Murphy, '15 (Mother McAuley, '19)

There are so many great memories I made at Fisher, but if I had to choose one, it would be winning the "gold ball" for basketball. It was a dream of mine since I was in 4th grade so to see it come true was absolutely amazing. The fact that my dad was the coach and that I played with my best friends was so special to me. We had so much fun on that team and I wouldn't want it any other way. After winning that game, I've realized that dreams come true if you work hard and stay positive. I took that positive mental attitude into high school and noticed it has gotten me to where I am today. I have been blessed to be apart of so many great organizations at Mother McAuley. Some of those include basketball, soccer, NHS (National Honors Society), Respect Life Club, Science Club, Athletic Board, etc.

I was so thankful to have gone on Kairos this year. I believe Saint John Fisher prepared me to be a leader on Kairos. Through the many meaningful experiences that had strengthened my faith at Fisher, I was ready to help so many young ladies learn to love themselves and know their self worth. I was able to open up and talk about my faith to girls I never even thought I would talk to before. It was truly something special and I am forever grateful for my wonderful Kairos experience.



What I miss most about Saint John Fisher are all the smiling faces. Everyday I walked through those doors to see the most welcoming and friendly people. Fisher was a place that was always filled with joy and laughter and I felt so loved in that place. It was my second home. A place where I could have fun but still receive a great education from some of the best teachers. It was truly a lifetime advantage.

At McAuley, Fisher Falcons are known for being so kind and making many new friends. Throughout my four years at McAuley I've noticed that Fisher Falcons are so accepting of others and it's something so special to see. I always see them smiling and saying hi to everyone in the halls and it warms my heart to see that.

My advice to my fellow Fisher Falcons would be to stay true to who you are, stay hopeful, and have fun! Don't feel like you need to change yourself to make someone else pleased. If you be yourself, it will get you far in life and especially in high school. Stay hopeful. Being optimistic will only help you to become more successful in achieving your goals, and you will be overall more happy in life. Have fun! In today's society, kids are pressured to be perfect, but nobody is. Just relax, live in the moment, and enjoy every moment at Saint John Fisher!

Nikki recently signed at St. Mary's of Notre Dame to play basketball and soccer! Congratulations on all of your hard work, Nikki! Fisher is so proud.

## Get Social with Us!

 @SJFschool

 stjohfisher

 St. John Fisher Elementary School

**STAY TUNED** for a new SJF Facebook Page (& other social media handles) for the most current updates & info!



## The SAB Newsletter is going "GREEN"

That is, we will share virtually ONLY but happy to print a copy for any folks who might not have access!

Just text or call Sara McGann (773) 882-7785.





## Roses & Hats Off

**Did you know** that one in seven people in Cook County will experience food insecurity this year? What is "food insecurity"? (Food insecurity is the condition where people cannot reliably access adequate, nutritious food. Lack of financial and other resources can cause it. People who are food insecure struggle to avoid hunger, a more narrow physiological condition.

*(Source: Greater Food Depository of Chicago)*



Yahoo to the **Holy Name Society** (HNS) who recently filled a large U-Haul truck with bags of food from parishioners and neighbors! 75 volunteers hit the pavement and picked up these bags of food to deliver them to the Morgan Park Food Pantry and the Evergreen Park Food Pantry. Thank you to HNS and all who participated! You helped make a huge difference.

Shout-out to **Sean Slevin** and Team for Bringing Queen of Hearts Raffle to Fisher!

After a short-lived initial Queen Raffle, Sean stayed persistent and ignited it again after building the second pot to \$20,000 to kick it off! He credits an awesome group of volunteers for keeping the momentum going with the raffle, including, **Kate Keller, Brigid Riley, Nora Bansley, Mary Kay O'Leary, Erin Rech, Erin and Reed Ortell, Tim and Kathie Maloney, Katie Guinane, Megan and Steve Scarsella, and Dave Cahill!** He gives props to the many families who helped sell including but certainly not limited to these families: **Curran, Barsch, Nelligan, McNicholas, and Schneller.** And, **Mary Kroll** sold religiously (pun intended) in the rectory every week! **Tim Nitsche** also generously provided the promotional materials and a special low cost to the school.



At 37 weeks, the pot was growing at an astounding \$4500-5000 a week due to the efforts of Sean and these dedicated ambassadors. And, then, at last, the Queen was found! We had a total of \$123,075 raised. The split was 60/40 to the winner. Parishioners **Matt and Denise McNicholas** who sold EVERY Sunday after 10 a.m. mass found the Queen under #34.

Thank you Sean and EVERYONE involved - you stole our hearts with your commitment to making this a dynamite success!

## SJF SAB #happenings

### SJF Book Club

The SAB is excited to host its first book club session. Bring a friend or neighbor! All are welcome. BYOB. Light bites provided.

Email [saramcgann@gmail.com](mailto:saramcgann@gmail.com) with any questions.

**May 30**  
**7:00 - 9:00 p.m., Kane Hall**

*"Educated" by Tara Westover*



## FACT OR FICTION

**The first parish mass was held in the SJF Church on Washtenaw?**

*Answer: Fiction. The first mass was held in the home of now-parishioners, Pat and Gerry Hayes, on Talman Avenue (the then Huddleston family home), sometime between 1949-50.*

Welcome

# Future Falcons

**SUNDAY, April 28th**

SJF School Advisory Board and parent organizations would like to welcome you to St. John Fisher School. Join us for donuts and coffee while your child meets new friends! RSVP @ [SJFSAB@gmail.com](mailto:SJFSAB@gmail.com)

**11AM - 12PM**

**SJF Preschool Playground**

**For those attending 10 AM Mass, we welcome you to sit with us in the front of the Church. Noisy Children Welcome!**

The SJF School Board presents

DESSERTS



DISCUSSION

All SJF parents and parishioners are invited to join members of the School Board in round table discussions over coffee and sweet treats.

Tuesday, May 14th (7 p.m.) OR  
May 19th (11 a.m.)

Dialogue topics include:

- ✓ Academic advancement and curriculum
- ✓ School mission and culture
- ✓ Financial health and fundraising
- ✓ Campus space and maintenance

Guests are invited to pre-select the round table discussion(s) in which they would like to participate.

\*Please contact SJFSAB@gmail.com with questions

Register at: <http://bit.ly/SJFRoundTable>  
Walk-ins welcome!