

# THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ALUMS & FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Providing tuition assistance to students at Community of Saints Regional Catholic School



## End of Year Challenge!

Donations to A&F&F Tuition Assistance Fund will be matched 100% up to \$7,500 through December 31, 2020.

## Honor a Loved One...

who values Catholic education. See page 14 for details.

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BELOW: Middle school science teacher embraces STEM to engage students — see page 5.



Learn how COS is educating during COVID-19. See page 8 for Principal's Update.

PHOTO BY EANNINE MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY

## COS Partnership with Notre Dame Delivers Highest Quality Academics

### Blended Learning and STEM Increase Equity in Education

When Fr. Nate Wills, C.S.C., Ph.D., heard that COS received a grant to participate in Notre Dame's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Teaching Fellows initiative, he was pleased but a little surprised. Wills is the Director of Blended Learning at the University of Notre Dame, and his team had begun working with COS a year earlier when COS had been one of five Catholic schools in the Archdiocese to receive a grant from the GHR Foundation to fund the program. He was surprised because STEM and Blended Learning each required three-year rollouts, and no other school had received grants to do both, but based on his experience, he wasn't worried. "I absolutely love working with the teachers and the leadership at Community of Saints," Fr. Wills said. "From the beginning, they jumped in with both feet and were willing to work hard."

When COS was chosen for the Trustey Family STEM Teaching Fellow, it was one of only 10 schools nationwide chosen that year and the only Catholic elementary school selected. "It's a very competitive process," said Center for STEM Education Director, Dr. Matt Kloser, pointing out that both public and private schools were eligible to apply. "We look for who has the hunger and thirst for growth, and who demonstrates the ability to work together best."

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## MESSAGE FROM **father steve**

Dear Alums, Families, and Friends of Community of Saints,

I pray that you are doing well and have the support that makes life in this pandemic possible for you. Our students pray for you daily.

Students and teachers have been marvelously resilient in adapting to the demands of this year.

Many of our families have additional burdens with loss of job or being furloughed. The national and international result of the death of George Floyd has touched many of our families, especially families of color. 2020 has been a year unlike any I have experienced.

“

In the face of racial tension, we remember that each of us bears the very image of God...

— FR. STEVE

Our school mission calls for a safe, loving place where children grow and learn — and that happens every single day at Community of Saints. We are a Catholic school, and the teaching of Jesus is integral to the growth and learning of our students. In the face of racial

tension, we remember that each of us bears the very image of God and that to accept and respect and cherish our neighbor is what disciples of Jesus do.

How one views the world has everything to do with how one acts and lives. Community of Saints students and faculty see the world through the prism of discipleship. We try to see the world with a God's-eye-view.

Your generosity and commitment to COS makes this possible. You are the reason so many families are able to give their children the great gift of a Catholic education. Thank you! Pray for us, as we pray for you — and with the grace of God we will all come out of this.

Stephen Adrian

Pastor and Canonical Administrator of COS



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“She was someone who always thought of others,” recalled John Riehle (pictured above), who visited his classmate, Judy Klotz Morhar, in Napa, California, in 2018.

## 50-Year Reunion Reconnected Alum with Classmates

*Judy Klotz Morhar '57 Remembered School with Estate Gift*

We'd like to express appreciation for the generous legacy gift from the estate of Judy Klotz Morhar '57, who passed away in 2019 at the age of 75. After graduating from St. Matthew's and Humboldt High School, Judy received a scholarship to attend the University of Chicago. She served as a Peace Corp volunteer in Peru before settling in Napa Valley, California, where she and her husband, Lee Morhar, raised their daughter.

In 2007, Judy returned to St. Matthew's for her 50-year reunion, where she reconnected with many classmates she hadn't seen in decades, including John Riehle. “I remember Judy as a very kind person in grade school. She was someone who always thought of others,” John said. “In 2018, I had breakfast with Judy and Lee when we were in Napa, CA, for a nephew's wedding and we had a wonderful visit. Lee told me later that she named COS in her will because of the wonderful formation she received at St. Matt's.”

If you would like to consider putting COS in your estate planning, please contact Doug Lieser at 651-457-2510.

COS Partnership with Notre Dame Delivers Highest Quality Academics, *continued from page 1*

Last January, COS students' MAP test scores indicated 98.7% growth in reading and 69% in math. Normal mid-year growth is 50%.

Blended Learning leverages technology to dramatically improve student outcomes, while STEM looks to transform student engagement in math and science. They are among a broad range of programs available through the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Educational Initiatives and the Alliance for Catholic Education. The University conducts research to identify education best practices, then translates that research into action in partnership with schools across the country.

Notre Dame's education initiatives are rooted in the principles of Catholic social teaching; the goal is to increase equity in the classroom by delivering the highest quality academics to under-resourced communities. "Lower income kids have done well in Catholic schools because students are known and loved, and we have high expectations for them," stated Fr. Wills. "It's what we call the Catholic School Advantage."

### Targeted Technology Raises Performance

Fr. Wills explained that technology gives teachers new tools to individualize learning, but it's not enough to simply give students iPads and laptops. How schools use technology and the data it generates is crucial.

"In most classrooms today, teachers aim their lessons for the middle ground — the average student," Fr. Wills said. "They hope the kids on the bottom can keep up, and the kids on the top don't get bored. Teachers don't know until a test or quiz which students picked up the information and who was left behind."

With the Blended Learning model, after the teacher walks through a lesson, students use adaptive software designed to reinforce the concepts they've just learned. The software immediately sends feedback to the teacher, providing data on each student.

At a glance the teacher can see who grasped the content and who needs more help. Teachers can then use that information to fill in the knowledge gaps.

The speed at which teachers remediate is a critical factor in a student's academic success. With Blended Learning students may progress at different rates, but no one is left behind. "Kids stop seeing themselves as 'good' or 'bad' students," said Fr. Wills. "They come to see how the effort they put in equals the progress they make."

Last year Blended Learning was rolled out to all grades at COS, and in January, students took the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test to measure academic growth halfway through the school year. Fr. Wills found the results impressive. "At mid-year they were very close to a full year's growth in reading, and on pace to achieve 125% growth for the year in math" he said. "Those were school-wide results. We're really proud of the progress they're making."

COS is in the third and final year of implementing Blended Learning, which has been an important tool for teachers with distance learning during the pandemic. Fr. Wills credits the teachers and administration for making Blended Learning a success. "We can give professional development all day long, but if the school

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COS Partnership with Notre Dame Delivers Highest Quality Academics, *continued from page 3*

doesn't have the leadership and teacher buy-in, it won't work. We found both at COS."

**Student-Led Approach Broadens Reach of STEM**

As the director of the Center for STEM Education at Notre Dame, Dr. Matt Kloser wants to fundamentally change how science and math are taught. "We tie STEM to Catholic social teaching. It's high-quality science and math instruction where students have the opportunity to solve real problems in their community."

Kloser describes the typical approach to teaching science. "Let's say we're learning about cells in biology and the teacher asks, 'What is the function of the mitochondria?' The teacher calls on a student who gives the wrong answer. The teacher corrects the student and moves on." Kloser breaks down what just happened. "The teacher asked, one student answered, the teacher evaluated, and no one else had to do anything."

By contrast, high-quality STEM education is student-led. The teacher asks open-ended questions to spark dialogue among students, prompting them to take up each other's ideas and build a collective understanding of the concepts. Research shows the approach engages students far more than rote memorization. "It's difficult work to do, but much more effective and it empowers students," said Kloser.

As part of the STEM Teaching Fellows, participants develop an understanding that high-quality STEM integration addresses at least two disciplines and real-world problems. Instead of students finding a way to drop an egg out a window without breaking it, they might be tasked with figuring out



"COS is working to become better at everything they do. It comes from their love of students and their dedication to Catholic education."  
— FR. NATE WILLIS

how they would air drop food and medicine to refugees who've been isolated after a tsunami. "What do you put in the package? How do you design it so it's structurally sound but not impenetrable? You need a parachute system that allows it to fall safely," Kloser said. "It requires knowledge of physics and mathematics — and it's a real problem about helping people."

COS is in its second year of the Trustey Fellows program. Next summer, the three lead teachers along with Principal Bridget Kramer will work with Notre Dame's STEM team to develop a three to five year STEM strategic plan for what STEM will look like at COS.

**Dedicated to Becoming Better**

Fr. Willis likes to say that over the next decade, Blended Learning will become so widely accepted that it will just be called "learning." He's pleased to see how COS has taken the model and run with it. "COS is working to become better at everything they do," he said. "It comes from their love of students and their dedication to Catholic education." Matt Kloser agrees. "They have taken on a growth mindset and want to be change agents," he said. "It's a great sign of hope for our schools, our children, and our church."





**Middle School science teacher Audrey Moorhouse is one of three COS teachers leading the effort to develop a strategic plan to implement STEM at the school.**

## Teacher profile — Audrey Moorhouse, Middle School Science

### Mission to Attract Diverse Students to STEM is Both Personal and Professional

**G**rowing up, I was told multiple times that girls shouldn't go into science. I accepted that and I'd attribute that at least in part, to why I hated science and math growing up, they didn't seem relevant to me. But when I was in college, I had to take a class called Calculus for Biology, and I saw how math and science could be used together to solve problems in the world. Now I teach science.

The Pew Research Center found that over the last 30 years, initiatives meant to increase the number of women and people of color going into STEM fields have not yielded the desired results. Our work with the University Notre Dame is to participate in research to identify best practices for how we can change that.

The traditional model for teaching science is that the teacher is the expert in the classroom. The teacher dumps knowledge on the students, and students do a lot of memorization. That's what we've been doing for a long time, and given the state of science literacy today, we need to try something different.

The University of Notre Dame has been studying best practices for STEM education for five years. The emerging research is that student-led learning is the way to go. With this approach, students have more choice. Students do more talking. Students collectively, with the guidance of the teacher, come to an understanding of science phenomena.

The way I've changed my teaching in the last year, the students are way more engaged. They're hungry to learn. We have a really good school for this program.





“We were very excited for two kindergarten classrooms and then it turned out to be this year with the pandemic.”

— LAURA LUNDQUIST, COS KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

## COS Adds 2nd Kindergarten Classroom

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With 36 students, this year’s class of kindergarteners is Community of Saint’s largest. Because a large number of siblings attend COS, the school had been planning to add a second kindergarten classroom since last winter. Now, given the need for physical distancing at school, each kindergarten class has been capped at 18 students. As a result, there is a waiting list of students.

This will be Laura Lundquist’s sixth year teaching kindergarten at COS. “We were very excited for the two classes and then it turned out to be this year with the pandemic,” Ms. Lundquist said. “There’s not as much mixing for the students but the other teacher and I are collaborating, which is nice.”

At COS, kindergarten and first grade students attend school in person everyday, while grades 2-8 follow a hybrid model, with a mix of in-person and distance learning. The school chose to prioritize full-time in person learning for younger students since their ability to work independently at home is limited.

Despite the COVID protocols, Ms. Lundquist says the students are off to a good start. “We’re doing the best we can to keep it like your typical kindergarten, just with extra safety precautions,” she said. That means instead of sitting together at tables, each student has their own desk space, equipped with a desk shield. Each student has their own bucket of materials, so there’s no sharing of

markers and crayons. Students have their temperature checked mid-day and are required to wear masks indoors; they can remove them for outdoor activities. Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing have become part of the daily routine.

“The biggest challenge is making sure that students are following the safety precautions,” Lundquist said. “Otherwise, it feels like a regular school year.”

With funds from the GHR Foundation, every student, including kindergartners, has their own Chromebook. In the past, Ms. Lundquist would introduce computer work



At COS Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade students attend school in person every day.



“We’re doing the best we can to keep it like your typical kindergarten, just with extra safety precautions.”

— LAURA LUNDQUIST,  
COS KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHER

later in the year but given the possibility that a student might need to quarantine suddenly, she wants all of her students to be prepared. “I introduced Blended Learning earlier than normal to get students used to the computer in case a student — or the class — has to switch to distance learning.”

Ms. Lundquist uses Blended Learning software to help students develop their reading and math skills, and says the students find the apps a lot more fun than flash cards. “It’s like a game for them, so they like logging on and completing the work,” she said. “And I can log on and see immediately if one student is struggling with letter names, while another is struggling

with sounds.” That insight allows Ms. Lundquist to zero in on the needs of each child. “Last year was the first year we used Blended Learning in kindergarten, and I was able to see the results — a substantial growth in MAP scores for students.”

Other than washing their hands all the time, Ms. Lundquist says things feel pretty normal. “I thought I’d have to remind the students to wear the masks, but they’ve adapted to those very easily,” she said. “I think it’s shown us how resilient these students are. They’re overcoming a lot of challenges that many adults would find hard. They’re just having fun learning.”



John and Cynthia O’Halloran with their children (left to right) Mike, Emily, and John.



## Following Their Dad’s Lead

### *Siblings Honor Dad with Gift to Tuition Assistance*

When John O’Halloran celebrated his birthday this year, his children decided to honor him by joining him in support of Community of Saints. Siblings Emily, John, and Mike made a \$4,180 gift to cover a full scholarship for one child, plus an additional \$1,000.

“My father is at an age where he has every material thing he could want,” Emily said. “He learned about the school a few years ago and really feels a bond with the mission.”

For the past two years, John has made gifts to cover the full tuition of two students annually, plus additional funds to cover extracurricular expenses that a family might not be able to afford. His commitment to the school grew this year when he joined the COS board of directors.

John O’Halloran is the owner and director of O’Halloran & Murphy Mortuary and Cremation Services, where he works with his son Mike. Emily works for Accenture in Dallas, and John is a St. Paul police officer.

Emily says she and her brothers are just following their father’s lead. “Dad is a big believer in education and thinks whether you can afford it or not, every kid deserves a good education. That’s really his goal, to help kids who can’t afford it. It’s pretty simple.”

## PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

# Education During COVID-19

*During pandemic, Principal Bridget Kramer focuses on keeping kids safe, and on how she can use technology to keep kids engaged and learning.*

### What is the school's current enrollment?

**Kramer:** We have 214 students in K-8. This is our fifth straight year of enrollment increases. We have 36 kindergartners this year, which is our biggest group ever. We still have a waiting list for kindergarten and first grade.

We knew last year before the pandemic that we'd need to add a second kindergarten class, so we had time to prepare. Now, with kindergarten taking up two classrooms, we literally have every class full. It's a good problem to have and it's one our Board of Director's Facility Committee will be addressing. At our next meeting we'll talk about more long-term facility planning and enrollment trends.

### What schedule is the school following?

**Kramer:** We have preschool, kindergarten, and first grade in person every day. Grades 2-8 are split into two groups, with Group A coming to school on Mondays and Tuesdays and Group B coming on Thursdays and Fridays. On Wednesdays both groups distance learn, and we deep clean the school. About 27% of our students requested distance learning everyday.

### What led you to choose hybrid vs. daily in-person learning for all students?

**Kramer:** First, it's about keeping our students and teachers safe. If all of the students are in the building at once, we don't have room for everyone to practice safe social distancing. We prioritized having the younger students in school every day since they have the least ability to work independently.

Second, we felt that a hybrid model would give us the most flexibility. Our families are part of the demographic that's been hit hardest by COVID and many are essential workers. With the hybrid model, if a student needs to quarantine, it's a seamless transition. If there's another shutdown and all the students need to go back to distance learning again, it's not a problem.

Third, we felt very confident in our ability to provide a good learning experience for our students on

the days they're at home. Blended Learning has been a critical tool. We've also invested in some additional technology to improve the experience for everyone.



**Bridget Kramer,**  
COS Principal

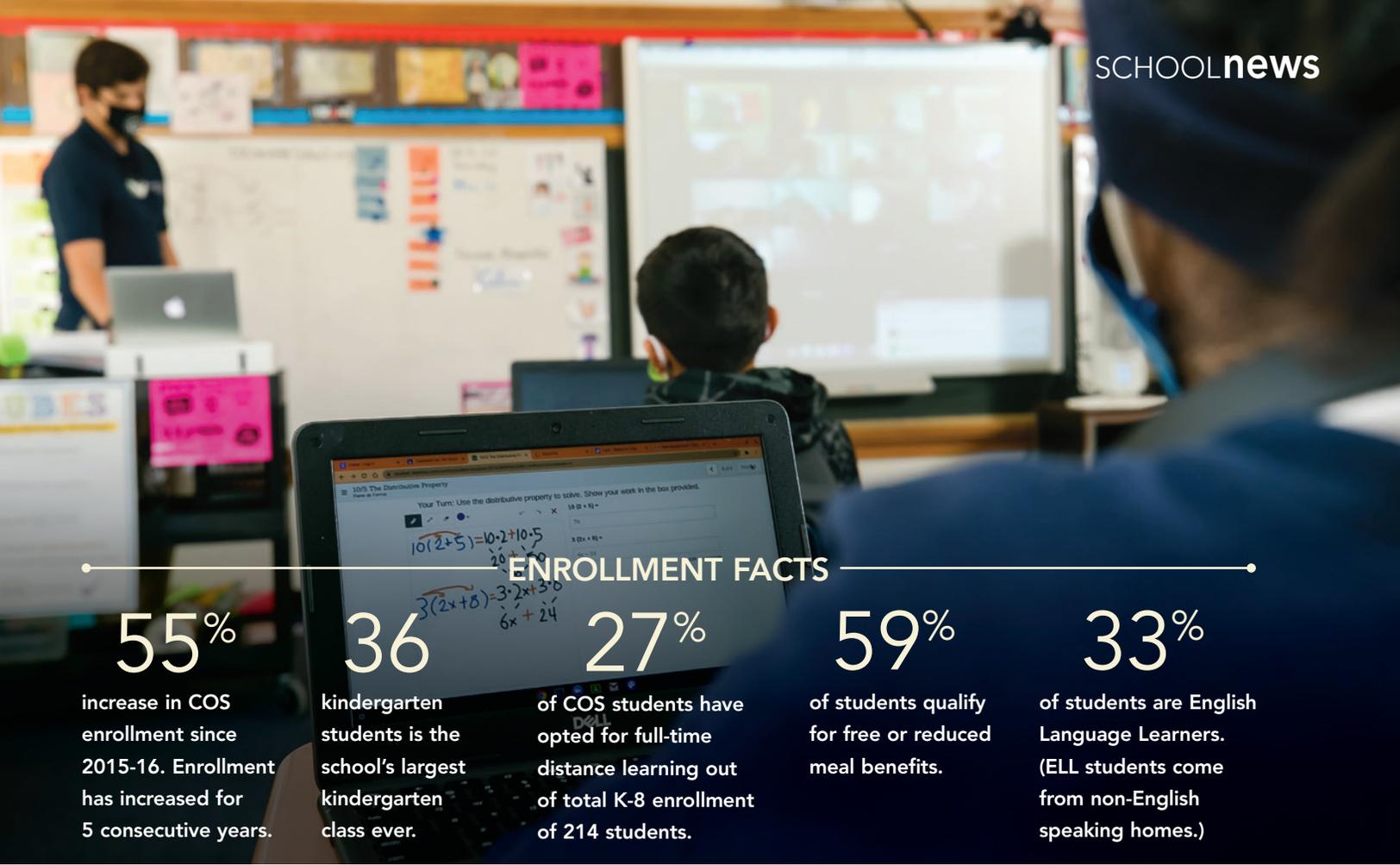
### What new technology are you using?

**Kramer:** Thanks to the GHR Foundation, all the students, including kindergartners, now have their own Chromebooks. That's a big improvement. Also, we are using learning management and log in systems that make it easier to navigate all of the on-line programs students and teachers need to access during the school day.

I think the most exciting change is the synchronous learning that bridges the distance and in-person learning experiences. With this new platform, students in the same class are all learning together, at the same time, whether they're at home and joining via Google, or sitting at a desk in the classroom. When the teacher writes on the Smart Board, students see it on their computer screen. Students at home can ask or answer questions, they can talk to their classmates. It's fully interactive and the students love it.

**At COS, Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade students attend in person every day. Students in 2nd-8th grade are hybrid, with half of each class distance learning. Each classroom has synchronous learning so students at home and in the classroom can learn and work together.**





ENROLLMENT FACTS

55%

increase in COS enrollment since 2015-16. Enrollment has increased for 5 consecutive years.

36

kindergarten students is the school's largest kindergarten class ever.

27%

of COS students have opted for full-time distance learning out of total K-8 enrollment of 214 students.

59%

of students qualify for free or reduced meal benefits.

33%

of students are English Language Learners. (ELL students come from non-English speaking homes.)



## 547 Donors Contributed \$345,927 for Tuition Assistance

### A Record Number of Donors and Donations

To say that it's been a challenging year for schools is an understatement. Figuring out how to safely teach children during a pandemic has been riddled with variables: What if a student gets sick? What if a teacher gets sick? What if there's another shutdown? Principals have also been forced to stretch budgets to cover unexpected costs for cleaning supplies, masks, desk protectors, technology upgrades, etc. At Community of Saints, these new expenses occur at the same time many of our school families struggle with lost income as a result of the pandemic, increasing the need for tuition assistance.

This year when COS really needed extra support, you came through. Your generous giving ensures our school has the resources to provide students with a top-notch education in a safe and loving environment. In a time with so much uncertainty, our families know they can count on their school. Your contributions make that possible. **Thank you.**

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Gloria Romo (center) with children (left to right) Emilio, Brielle (6th grade), and Amari (4th grade).

## Gloria Romo Family

No one in my family has gotten sick but we had a scare last summer. Amari went to a birthday party with close friends and afterward one of the kids tested positive. We didn't find out about it until the next weekend. In the meantime, my kids had stayed with my parents, and my mom has underlying issues. Everyone tested negative but I felt horrible.

I work at Lutheran Social Services and have been working at home since March. Based on the way my job was handling the situation, I decided it didn't make sense for the kids to go into school. I wanted to be safe, so they're both fully distance learning.

With the changes at COS with technology, it's 100% better. The very first week teachers took time to go through the Google classroom and show how to do everything. My kids are able to see and talk to their classmates live online. The students who attend from home are on the whiteboard, so everyone can see and hear them. They feel like they're part of the group.

My kids have been so independent, I've hardly had to help them with anything. They connect with their teachers when they need to. Amari misses recess with his friends. Brielle takes that time to get her work done. Academically, they're both doing fine.

I do look forward to them getting back in school and I'm glad we have the ability to opt back in whenever we want. There's no way of knowing what's right and wrong in this situation. I feel blessed to have my kids at COS.

— Gloria Romo

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## Jessi Orme and Heriberto Cortez Family

For the last five years I've worked for a large insurance brokerage. Starting in March with the shutdown, our salaries were cut 20% for an extended period. It was difficult but manageable compared to people who have lost their jobs. Those of us lucky enough to be left at large companies are doing more work with fewer people.

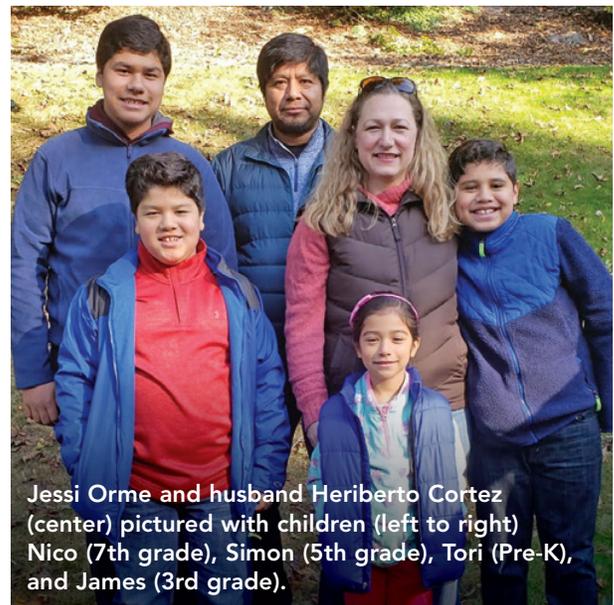
We're so impressed by all the tools COS has in place and how they communicate with the families. I thought it went well last spring because we already had Blended Learning tools in place, but this year there's such a structured, detailed plan. People really spent a lot of time putting it all together. My daughter is in preschool every day, and hybrid is going well for my boys. Even on the days they're at home, they're interacting with their classes. This year each boy has his own Chromebook to use, which is nice. Last year they had to share.

At work I'm part of a large team and I'm always comparing notes about schools with my co-workers.

From what I hear, our school feels more organized. A lot of schools still depend on hard copy packets that parents have to pick up. Some parents feel paralyzed because they don't know what's happening at school so it's hard for them to make a plan. I know if things change, we're ready to go fully remote.

I have four very different children and they've all thrived at COS. It's a good place for kids to learn what a community is. We're all unique families, and everybody and anybody fits in. It's a warm and welcoming place.

— Jessi Orme



Jessi Orme and husband Heriberto Cortez (center) pictured with children (left to right) Nico (7th grade), Simon (5th grade), Tori (Pre-K), and James (3rd grade).

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Continued on page 14

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Our Loyalty Circle honors individuals and families who make a lasting impact on our students and school. Their generosity is critical to our mission of educating all families who desire a Catholic education for their children in this region. Membership in our Loyalty Circle is based on a history of consecutive giving, significant financial support, or inclusion of Community of Saints in estate plans.

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Use the enclosed envelope or mail your gift to:  
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Make checks payable to *Community of Saints.*

You can also give online by visiting  
[www.communityofsaints.org/supportourschool](http://www.communityofsaints.org/supportourschool)

*Your contribution is tax deductible and all gifts made by December 31, 2020, will be matched 100% up to \$7,500 thanks to the generous support of an alum and good friend of COS.*

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## Other Contributions

**Throughout the year we receive additional contributions in the form of restricted and unrestricted gifts and grants. Thank you to the following individuals and foundations for supporting our students.**

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Nicole Miller (center) with children (left to right) MJ (3rd grade) and Jayda '20.

## Nicole Miller Family

I work at Gillette Children's Hospital in scheduling. I went into the hospital during the shutdown. I live in a duplex next to my sister who's a nurse, and we were scared to go to work at the beginning. We didn't want to bring the virus home and make our families sick, but we adjusted. Starting in May, I began working from home.

School this year is going a lot more smoothly. I love the hybrid model and MJ has a better understanding of what's expected of him. Last year he was in 2nd grade and he couldn't log in by himself, and it was hard for him to navigate to the different sites. They really condensed it this year. He has a dashboard now and it's a lot easier.

When MJ's at home, he logs in and there are a few minutes where the kids have a chance to talk to each other. Then the teacher comes on and walks them through whatever they're doing for the day. All their faces are on the screen, but the teacher's face is largest. They can type in chat or unmute to ask a question. No matter if they're at school or home, everyone's wearing their uniform or COS spirit wear. When MJ's at home he wears his uniform shirt, but no pants!

When MJ started in kindergarten at COS, his sister was attending SPA, but she wasn't happy. Within three weeks, we switched her to COS. It was like we had come home. She graduated from 8th grade last spring. Now both my nieces go there, too. I couldn't imagine them going anywhere else.

— Nicole Miller

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**SPECIAL THANKS TO  
JEANNINE MARIE  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

Jeannine is one of our school parents and she is responsible for all the beautiful photos of students in this issue. Thank you Jeannine!

To see more of Jeannine's work visit her website at [Jeanninemarie.com](http://Jeanninemarie.com).



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

**A MASS TO CELEBRATE YOUR  
GENEROSITY**

**Tuesday, December 8 | 9:10 a.m.**

Please join students at Community of Saints for a **VIRTUAL** Mass to honor your generous support. Fr. Steve Adrian will preside. You can find the Mass on the homepage of our website [www.communityofsaints.org](http://www.communityofsaints.org) or watch it on Facebook — search Community of Saints Regional Catholic School to find our page.