

# THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ALUMS & FRIENDS & FAMILIES

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



## Reunions Are Back! Alums Reconnect & Remember

After the pandemic forced many alums to cancel their plans over the last two years, reunions are making a comeback. St. Matthew's Class of 1961 and 1972, as well as St. Michael's Class of 1980, are among the groups who have either held a reunion or have plans for one. (See pp 3-5 for more info.)

### Reunion Website for Alums

Due to uncertainties around COVID, we are not planning an All-School Reunion Sunday Mass and breakfast this year; however, we do want to support the efforts of alums who'd like to organize their own event. With that intent, we are setting up a website where alums can find reunion information for their class and get some help when planning their event.

<http://communityofsaints.org/reunions>

The website will post reunion information for alums from St. Matthew's, St. Michael, St. John Vianney, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. We can also be a resource

for class lists and photos, help provide access to your former school, and promote your event.

### Preserving a Shared History

For most people, going to a Catholic elementary school was a defining experience. Some of the friendships formed during those years have lasted a lifetime, as Alex Uhler, one of the organizers for St. Matt's class of '72 reunion, points out, "These are people I've known for 60 years. These days, to have a connection to people for that long is rare."

In this issue we do one of our favorite things — share the stories and cherished memories of alums. Capturing these remembrances is an important function of *The Good News*. If you have a story or photo from school days you'd like to share, let us know by contacting [info@communityofsaints.org](mailto:info@communityofsaints.org). These classes are our history. Let's preserve and pass them on.

**St. Matthew's Class of '72 will gather for 50th Reunion on May 14. See page 4 for more information.**

## MESSAGE FROM **father steve**



Dear Alums & Friends & Families of COS,

This April I will observe my 80th birthday. I do think of 80 as being old; yet I do not think of myself as old — oh, I am a bit slower physically and mentally, and I simply regard those as some limitations to which I need to adapt. I will live differently, and different can be better.

Shakespeare wrote about the different stages of life and his description was fairly pessimistic. I believe there are different challenges and different opportunities at every stage of life; and I think that the last stage of living is the stage of gratitude, remembering and giving thanks for all the gifts received.

This Lent I will spend the time remembering and thanking.

One of the blessings of life has been Catholic education. I am a product of Catholic education from kindergarten through graduate school. Over the past 53 years there has not been one day when I have not been directly involved in the working of a Catholic school as pastor or teacher or chaplain — Incarnation, Saint Matthew's, Regina High School, Archbishop Brady High School, Saint Thomas Academy, The College of Saint Thomas, and St. Catherine University.

Most recently it has been my honor and privilege to be part of the Community of Saints family; and together, you and I, have worked to help make COS the shining example of Catholic education it is. We have been and are privileged to play a role in the education and formation of those who will make a difference in tomorrow's world.

So, in this, my age of gratitude, I think of you; and I give thanks for you. Know that your support makes COS possible. Please continue to join me in the regular financial support of our students.

The "powers that be" are arranging an opportunity for us to meet and greet in April (see pg 11). Know that I would be delighted to thank you personally for the gift you have been and continue to be to the students of Community of Saints.

With gratitude,

Father Steve Adrian, Canonical Administrator of COS

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## RMD Contributions Simplify Giving

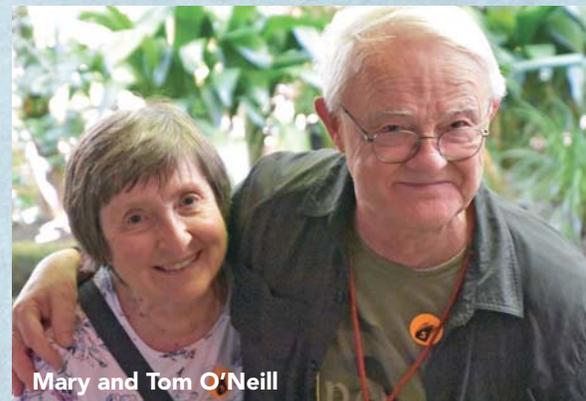
In Eagan, located near what's now the Vikings' training complex, used to be the site of the O'Neill family farm. Tom O'Neill, who graduated from St. Matt's in 1958, grew up on the 200-acre property that had been in his family since 1858. The farm was six miles from St. Matthew's, where Tom and his two siblings attended school.

The farm is long gone but Tom and his wife, Mary, still own a little piece of it; enough for a home where they raised their own children. They've also continued their connection to St. Matthew's over the years by supporting tuition assistance. "Catholic education is really important to us," said Mary. "Community of Saints is a perfect fit."

A few years ago, Tom and Mary stopped writing checks and began using their Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from their 401k to make contributions. "Financially it's better for us," explained Tom. "We don't have to take the RMD income. Instead, it goes directly to Community of Saints. It saves on taxes and allows us to give a little bit more money to charity."

The couple said there's some paperwork involved, but it's worth it to help children who couldn't otherwise afford a quality Catholic education. "By donating our RMD," said Tom, "We give more, and it costs less."

For information on how you can set up an RMD charitable contribution, contact Doug Lieser, COS Director of Advancement, at 651-457-2510.



Mary and Tom O'Neill



"We give more,  
and it costs less."

— Tom O'Neill

# 60-Year Reunion for St. Matt's Class of '61

On September 18, 2021, classmates held their 60th reunion at Joseph's Grill in St. Paul, but that's not the only opportunity this group of alums has to see each other. For the past five years, the '61 classmates have been meeting about every three months at Joseph's Grill. "The day varies but it's either for breakfast or lunch," said Joe Mansur. "The numbers have been building — we get about 15-20 people who usually show up."

## 130 Students — School's Largest Class

Born around 1947, the class of '61 was the beginning of the baby boom and while their class was the largest, all the classes at that time were big. St. Matt's was limited to three classrooms per grade, which meant that for the class of '61, there were about 45 students in each classroom. "With such big classes, I'm sure it was difficult for the nuns," observed Judy (Wanger) Pekarek. "But they did their best and a lot of very successful people graduated from our class and went on to do great things. We were blessed."

In 1958, St. Matthew's School had about 1,000 students enrolled, and the class of '61 was in 5th grade. Here's one unvarnished story that gives a hint of what that was like for the students and the nuns who taught them.

In 7th grade, St. Matthew's class of 1961 had about 45 students per classroom.



## The Cover Up

As told by Tom Armstrong

I was in 5th grade, and Sister Paulette had kept Dave O'Connor and me after school as punishment. I was nervous about staying late because I was a walker and my mother would be expecting me. Dave and I stayed for a time and then I told Sister she didn't have any right to keep us. Dave agreed and we walked out.

Next morning, Sister Paulette made us stay in the hall and wouldn't let us in the classroom. By standing on my toes, I managed to look through the door's little round window which got a big reaction from the class. Then Sister

came and stood by the door, so her wimple blocked the window, leaving Dave and me alone in the hallway.

I'd recently done some work with my uncle and had learned how to take a door down by removing the hinge pins. Usually, you need tools, but these pins were well greased and the first one came right out as I pulled it up. I pulled out the other two and tried to show them to Dave. My intention was to put them back, but Dave didn't realize what I had done. He had decided we should try to get into the classroom, so he opened the door. When he turned the knob, the door fell into the hallway and we both jumped out of the way. It was a big, heavy door and landed on the tile floor with a loud bam! All the classroom

doors flew open and the next thing I saw was Sister Dominica coming towards us with several large 8th grade boys. By the look on her face, I thought maybe they were going to beat us up, but the boys picked up the door, put it back on the hinges, and I replaced the pins.

Dave and I returned to the classroom, and we never heard anything about it again. I never got punished and the school never called my parents. Years later I realized the nuns had executed a cover up. Sister Pontia was the principal at the time and clearly, the nuns didn't want her to know what happened — a child could have been hurt. Years later at a reunion we toured the school and I visited my old 5th grade classroom. The pins were still well greased, and I removed one by hand.

Afterward: Tom was expelled from St. Matthew's the following year. Through a family connection he got into St. Michael, going from a class of 130 students to one with just 40. In October of 7th grade, his teacher, Sister Sarita, accelerated his classwork so he could bump up to 8th grade and graduate in 1960, a year early. He went on to earn a law degree from the University of Minnesota, serve in the Army Judge Advocate General Corp (JAG) four years active and 27 more in Reserve units, retiring as a Colonel in 1998. Tom was an elected District Court Judge for Washington County from 1981 until retiring in 2011.



Tom Armstrong



# St. Matthew's Class of 1972 Celebrates 50-Year Reunion

May 14, 2022 | St. Matthew's Social Hall | 5 p.m. following 4:15 p.m. Mass

St. Matt's class of '72 celebrated their 40th reunion in 2012 and have stayed in touch ever since. "Once a month I send out an email saying we're getting together for a social hour at Joseph's Grill and everyone's welcome," explained Alex Uhler '72.

Toni Bloechl Wilburn has lived in California since she was in high school, but she's always worked hard to keep up her connections to her old classmates and the St. Matt's community. "Going to school at St. Matt's for eight years was the most consistent thing in my life," Toni said. "I have really solid, heartwarming memories. It helped form me, made me feel so secure, and it was a good education — I'm so thankful." For more information about the reunion, contact [tonibloechl@gmail.com](mailto:tonibloechl@gmail.com).

## ST. MATT'S CLASS OF '72 REMEMBERS...

“ I loved cheerleading and playing basketball. I was pretty good at basketball — for a short kid! I still have my red “M” letter! I remember playing volleyball on St. Patrick's Day. We had the Irish team and the non-Irish team. I think we wore green and orange. Being German, I wore orange.



“I loved going into the school attic for supplies. That was such a cool space! It was pretty much off limits, so it was special to go up there. Huge, open, and dusty. I loved having music class. I think we learned to play the recorder in 6th grade. That was fun! I always enjoyed our class trips. My favorite one was in 7th grade when we went to Fort Snelling. We spent the whole day there. It was educational and fun. I visited there last fall when I was in town. Great memories.” — **TONI BLOECHL WILBURN**

“ Sports were a big deal at St. Matt's and Mr. Rowan was the coach. Our basketball team that year was pretty good and we all had a lot of fun. I remember our last game was in a tournament. We lost but we had a good game which was a nice way to end the season. For football there was one game where we ran the same play over and over again because the other team couldn't stop it. It was a runoff tackle play we called 112. I was the quarterback and in the huddle I kept saying, “We're gonna run 112 again.” — **JERRY BANDHOLZ**



“ In 1970 when the cornerstone for the new church was laid, it was a radically new concept to have a square church that wasn't shaped like a cross. And no kneelers. But that was when we got a cafeteria and the school started serving hot lunch. Before that they delivered milk to the classrooms and we ate lunch at our desks. But we got hot lunch for our last two years at St. Matt's. The person who ran the lunch program was a German woman named Hildegaard. They served pizza burgers and hot dogs — we thought it was pretty fancy stuff!” — **ALEX UHLER**



“ When the church burned in '68, all the statuary, including the baptismal font, were taken out of the burned-out church and stored in the bowling alley in the north end of the school. They had to work fast because what was left of the church was scheduled to be demolished after the fire. Consequently, nothing was catalogued and a lot of the items got lost. Things were shuffled to different people with the intent to preserve them, but there was no record. By luck, I came across the family who had the old baptismal font and I asked them if they'd be willing to repatriate it. I talked to Fr. Steve and the family agreed to give it back. It needed some restoration work, but it's a beautiful piece. Solid marble so moving it wasn't easy. It was first installed at St. Matt's in 1916. You can see that date in Roman numerals. Everyone who was baptized at St. Matt's from 1916 to 1968 was baptized in this font.” — **ALEX UHLER**

# St. Mike's Class of 1980 Reunion

September 25, 2022 | Kaposia Park, South St. Paul



St. Mike's class of 1980 held a 40th reunion last September and it was so much fun, they've already reserved space at Kaposia Park for another one next September. "It was wonderful to reconnect with old classmates," said Gloria Deziel. "All St. Mike's students who were part of our class, whether they graduated from St. Mike's or another school, are welcome to come talk, laugh, and eat."

Jason Cade got the ball rolling when he started to converse with former classmates on social media. "I hadn't run into anyone from our class in 40 years, but over time these friend suggestions would pop up and a few of us connected," Jason said "Somebody posted one of our class pictures and somebody else said we should have a reunion."

With 35 students, Mary Beth (Brewer) Moline remembers their class was bigger than most but still a very tight group. "After being together for eight years we became a family and we still consider ourselves a family," Mary Beth said. "I work at a public grade school, and it's a good school, but it only goes from K-4. Being together



Left to right: Paul McEllistrem, Joe Vierling, Mary Beth (Brewer) Moline, Scott Nepstad, Tim Berg, Jason Cade, Kelley (Kunik) Drager, Gloria Deziel, Dan Juckel, and Shawn Edmondson.

all those years is what created our school family. It put a mantle of responsibility on the 7th and 8th graders to be good examples for younger ones. They all go to Mass together and see each other in the hallway. There's a lot to be said for staying together."

## ST. MIKE'S CLASS OF '80 REMEMBERS

Shared by Mary Beth (Brewer) Moline



### CELEBRATING IRISH HERITAGE

"The biggest day of the year was St. Patrick's Day. We would memorize Irish songs, have an assembly — it was a big celebration. Every spring when we were in first or second grade, Sr. Jean Kivel would take us out to the wooded area on the property and have us look for leprechauns. Maybe it was just the wonder of walking through the woods, but we actually convinced ourselves that we saw them."



### HOT DOG DAY MEANT HOT LUNCH ONCE A MONTH

"There was no hot lunch back then, but when we were in 7th grade, the school initiated Hot Dog Day once a month. Parents got together and threw some hot dogs into a crockpot with hot water and served us chips and a dog and a drink. It was warm food! That was a big deal for those of us who lived too far to walk home."



### IF YOU WENT HOME FOR LUNCH

"Some of the kids who went home for lunch would scarf their food down and get back to recess so they could play football or whatever games were being played. They had a special whistle and would whistle to let each other know they were on their way back to school. Peggy Kennedy lived close to school, just four houses away. We knew if we were walking to school and saw her we were late."



### BIG FAMILIES WERE THE NORM

"A lot of us came from big families. I come from a family of 10, McEllistrems had 12, Kuniks had 10, Tim Berg's family had eight. On the block next to the school, families of 10 were very common."

For more information about reunion plans for September, contact [gdeziel28@gmail.com](mailto:gdeziel28@gmail.com).

# St. Matthew's Class of 1972



**Front Row** | Diana Vandenbosch, Theresa Monsour, Debbie Weisman, Debbie Kofoid, Elena Noyola (deceased), Fr. Virgil Brenny, associate, Fr. Eugene Pacholl, pastor, Karen Wazlawik, Sheree St. Martin, Gloria Deeb, Tomi Heinen, Terri Cooper, Michelle (Micky) Joseph

**2nd Row** | Sue Sura, Rose Tonda (deceased), Gail Stellmach, Michele McNaughton, Marge Fretschel, Sue Herzog, Toni Bloechl, Margaret (Peggy) Langevin, Mary Helen Sperl, Nancy Petschauer, Juile Plante, Mary Staples, Sandy Thomson, Stephanie Alterdorfer (deceased), Kathy Vasterling

**3rd Row** | Cheryl Trainor, Joanne Nasseff, Mary Ohmann, Mary Hurley, Barb Raines, Cynthia Meyer, Ellen Burdash, Kathy Ohmann, Susie Kubziszewski, Anne Budziszewski, Sue Seekon, Arlene Plante, Roberta Scherbel, Sue Schmidt

We are looking for St. Matthew's graduation photos for 1973-1985. If you have a class photo for those years, please email Doug Lieser at [dliiser@communityofsaints.org](mailto:dliiser@communityofsaints.org).



**4th Row** | Bob Cunningham, Steve Cruz, Mike Gentle, Rich Willems, Jim Brengman, Alex Uhler, Joe Votel, David Longbehn, Dan Duncanson, Bob Gubash, Joe Riehle, Mike Eastman

**5th Row** | Pat Koehnen, Steve Montez, Mark Patrick, Tim Schlicte (deceased), Marty Casalenda, Peter Fishbach, David Wilberg, Ward Anderson, John Kegler, Kevin Conlin, Jim Bohrer, Tim Steinhoff, David Fox

**Back Row** | Dean Blomgren, Mike Rogers, David Bauer, Jerry Bandholz, Shawn Doyle, Jerry Krueger, Mike Hager, Jim Lasch (deceased), Bill Creamer, Jerry Kelzer, Tom Redding, Robert Miller (deceased), Jesse Hernandez, Thomas Smith

**Not Pictured** | Henry Amon, Alan Bossart, Mark Brunner, Larry Burg, Steve Danmeier, Mike Jack, Dale Kammerer (deceased), John Lardani, Pat Murphy, Pat Regan, Don Schwab, Julie Sussner

# St. Michael Class of 1972



**Front Row** | Steve McEllistrem, Ralph Winzig, Michael Sullivan, Doug Stanke, Duane Stanke, Mike Cates, Judy Wadell, Peggy Mansur, Joan Price

**Middle Row** | Jane Stiles, Karen Witt, Connie Saign, Cindy Brown, Donna Deutsch, Catherine Goers, Robyn Morgenstern, Paula Gramling, Cindy Adams, Joan Kowski, Jean Kennedy, Nancy Gustafson

**Back Row** | Steve Huntress, Mike Hnastchenko, Bill Dierberger, John Blissenbach, Mike Michaud, Tom McCarthy, Joe Kopinski, Ed Sweeney, Joe Cunningham, John Wilm, Joe Ochefske, Peter Galles

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## Brady High School Class of '71 Contributes to COS Tuition Assistance

### 50-Year Reunion Includes Gift to Support Catholic Education

In 1964, Brady High School opened with a freshman class of 304 students, including many students from St. Michael, St. Matthew, St. John Vianney, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. By the time the first class graduated in 1968, enrollment at Brady exceeded 1,100 students.

Last September, Brady's Class of '71 celebrated their 50th reunion at the Mendakota Club in Mendota Heights. They ate, drank, danced, and shared good memories; afterwards, there was some money left over. "We were

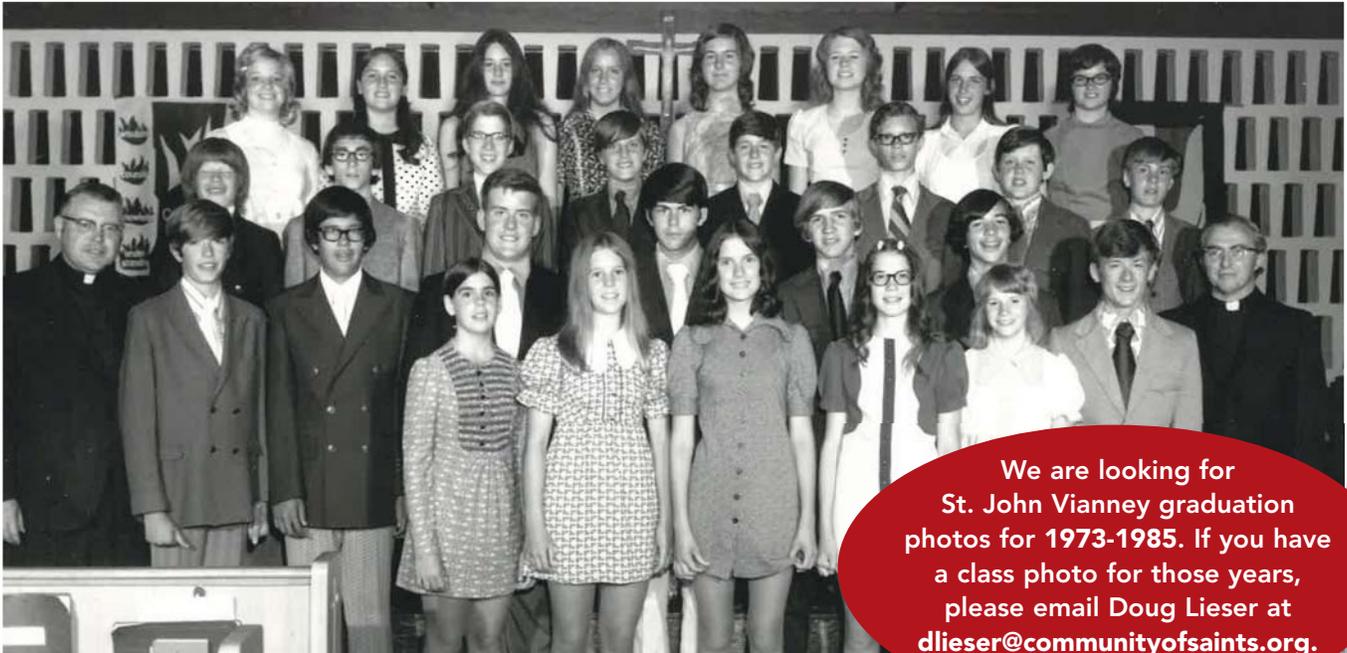


Brady alums who graduated from St. Michael in 1967.

*"Giving the donation to COS reinforced a that we should share what we have with others."*

— Continued on page 9

# St. John Vianney Class of 1972



We are looking for St. John Vianney graduation photos for 1973-1985. If you have a class photo for those years, please email Doug Lieser at [dlieser@communityofsaints.org](mailto:dlieser@communityofsaints.org).

**Front Row** | Rosemary Schaal, Ann Marie Mulcahy Nerka, Julie Lawrence Simones, Lori Ehret McBride, Kimberly Campbell Rothe

**2nd Row** | Father Francis Roach, Michael McDonough, Terry Van Zant, Steven Snow, Michael Motzko, Thomas Kedrowski, Michael Tinucci, Henry Muscial, Father Schoenberger

**3rd Row** | Paul Brenna, Steve Stelzner, William Votel, Ronald Jordan, Mark Minea, Steven Rosenberger, Mark Hoffman, Thomas Galatowitsch

**Back Row** | Joyce Stewart Vogt, Patty Lorence, Cathy Curry, Roxanne Novotny Kronick, Therese Wacker Price, Mary Bergquist Esse, Patty White, Mary Murphy



Brady alums who graduated from St. Matthew's in 1967.

wondering what to do with it and I thought of Community of Saints," reported St. Matt's alum, Patti Kelly, who was on the reunion planning committee. "I just thought we're Catholic. We went to Catholic grade schools, and Catholic high schools, so let's give it to a Catholic school. Everyone agreed."

"Giving the donation to COS reinforced a lesson we all learned at Catholic school, that we should share what we have with others," said Jane Richtman Martin. "Those of us on the committee were grateful that we were able to attend Catholic schools. Not everyone today can afford to do that."

Since their reunion, the Brady alums have been meeting once a month for breakfast. "You never know who's coming," said Patti, "But we reserve a large room and as people come in, we're all excited to see each other — it's awesome!"

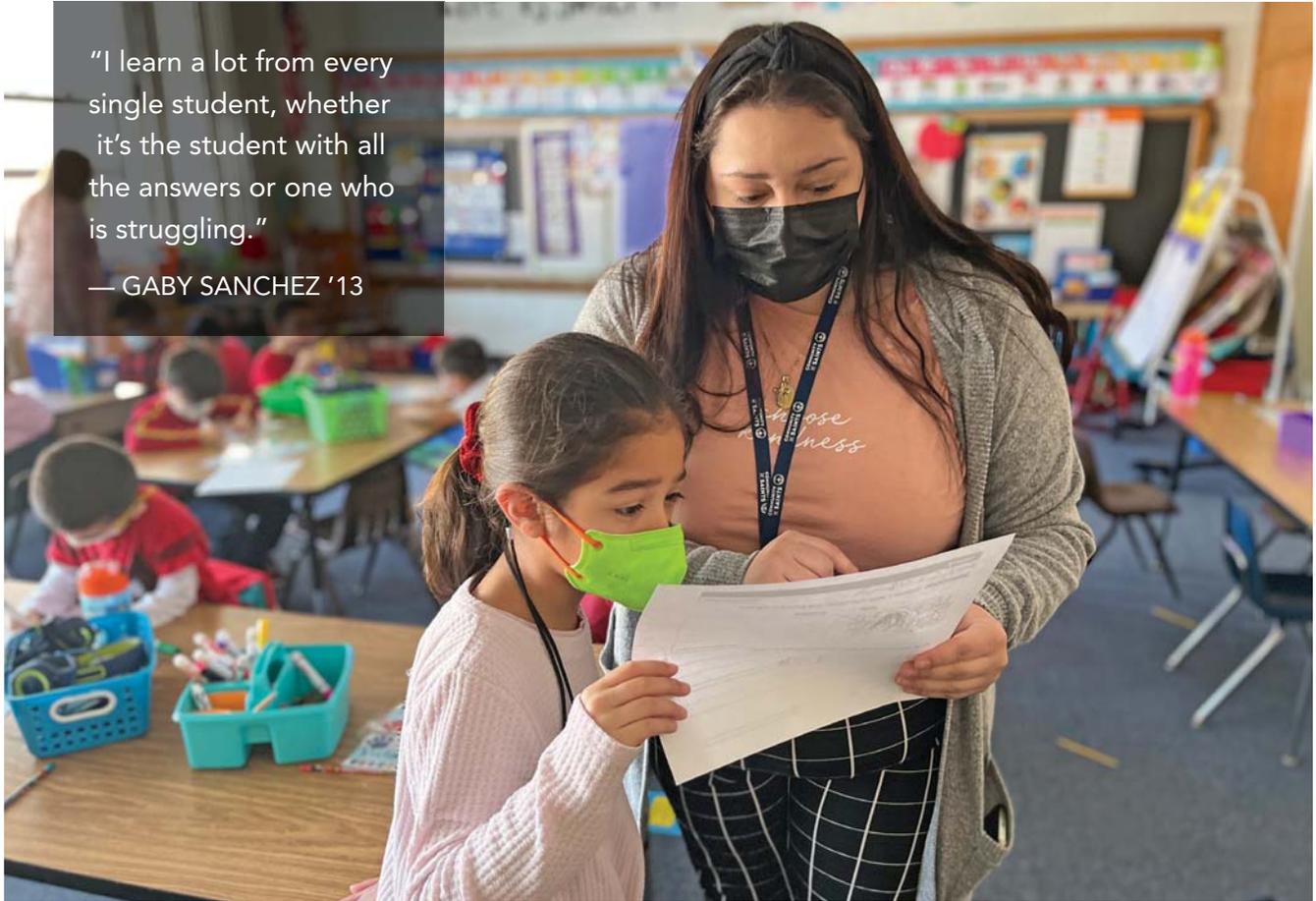
*lesson we all learned at Catholic school,*

— JANE RICHTMAN MARTIN



"I learn a lot from every single student, whether it's the student with all the answers or one who is struggling."

— GABY SANCHEZ '13



## COS Alum Returns as Student-Teacher Helps School Get Through Omicron Surge

In 2013 Gaby Sanchez was a member of the first graduating class at Community of Saints (COS). Five years later she returned to COS as a teacher's aide in kindergarten, an experience that led her to pursue a career in teaching. "My grandma was a teacher. She loved what she did, and I always held that in my heart," said Gaby. "Being in the classroom at COS and seeing as an adult how things are done, helped me make that idea real."

This spring Gaby will graduate with her teaching degree from St. Catherine University. During college she has continued to work at COS, where she is currently completing her student teaching requirement.



**Gaby Sanchez '13 is earning her teaching degree from St. Catherine University.**

In January during the Omicron surge when schools everywhere were short staffed and struggling to find substitutes, Gaby stepped up

and helped keep things running smoothly. "It was J-Term at St. Kate's so I told them if they need me, they should call." COS did call, and Gaby spent one week substituting in 1st grade and another week in 3rd grade. "I absolutely wanted to be there for the students. Things have been hard enough for them."

Gaby is excited about teaching full time next year and wherever she lands, she hopes for a school with the diversity and spirit of COS. "The community here is so welcoming and caring towards each other," said Gaby. "I love all the students here and the time I've spent with them. Watching them grow up is really a great honor."

## A&F&F Welcomes New Committee Members "Sistas" Share Passion for Catholic Education

Denise Hanzal Quinlan and Diane Perkovich Hanzal (St. Michael '69) bring a wealth of experience and energy in helping the Alums & Friends & Families (A&F&F) committee guarantee a Catholic education at Community of Saints (COS) is available to every family, regardless of their ability to pay.

It's no accident that just one month after Denise joined the committee, she recruited her sister-in-law, Diane. The two met at Brady High School in 1970, and after 50 years it's become the kind of friendship where one can easily finish the other's sentence. They officially became sisters in 1975 when Diane married Denise's brother, Frank Hanzal.

*"It's so important for children to know who God is so they can take that knowledge with them for the rest of their journey."*

— DIANE PERKOVICH HANZAL

Denise attended St. James Catholic grade school in St. Paul but moved to the West Side and joined St. Matthew's parish in 1980 after marrying Dan Quinlan (St. Matt's '70). While their three children attended St. Matthew's grade school, Denise worked in public education, first teaching at Humboldt, then as principal at Cherokee Heights, and later as assistant superintendent for St. Paul Public Schools. She eventually instructed student teachers at Hamline University before retiring in 2020 at the start of the pandemic.

Diane, a graduate of St. Mike's school, still lives in the house her father built in 1949, which was an easy walk to St. Mike's, where she and her five older siblings



Diane Perkovich Hanzal and Denise Hanzal Quinlan

went to school. For the past 43 years, Diane and her husband have operated CBL Floors, formerly Carpets by Lindsay. When Diane's own three children attended St. Mike's, she was an active volunteer, despite all of the demands on her as a small business owner.

Diane credits her mom, who died of cancer when she was in high school, for instilling her love of religion. "We learned early that God lived in this house," Diane said. "It's so important for children to know who God is so they can take that knowledge with them for the rest of their journey."

Both women enjoy their work with A&F&F, especially calling people to thank them for their donations. "It's one of the things I really appreciate about the school and this community," said Denise. "They're all about giving."

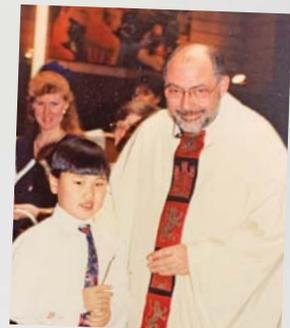


### Join Us in April to Celebrate Fr. Steve Adrian's 80th Birthday

Please help us honor Fr. Steve's service to St. Matthew's community and students at Community of Saints. There will be two opportunities to join the festivities:

**SATURDAY, APRIL 23** after 4:15 p.m. Mass in the back of St. Matthew's Church.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 24** after 10:15 a.m. Mass (until 2:00 p.m.) in St. Matthew's social hall.



**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS  
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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WE'RE HAVING A  
*birthday  
party*  
and you're invited!

See page 11 for details.

