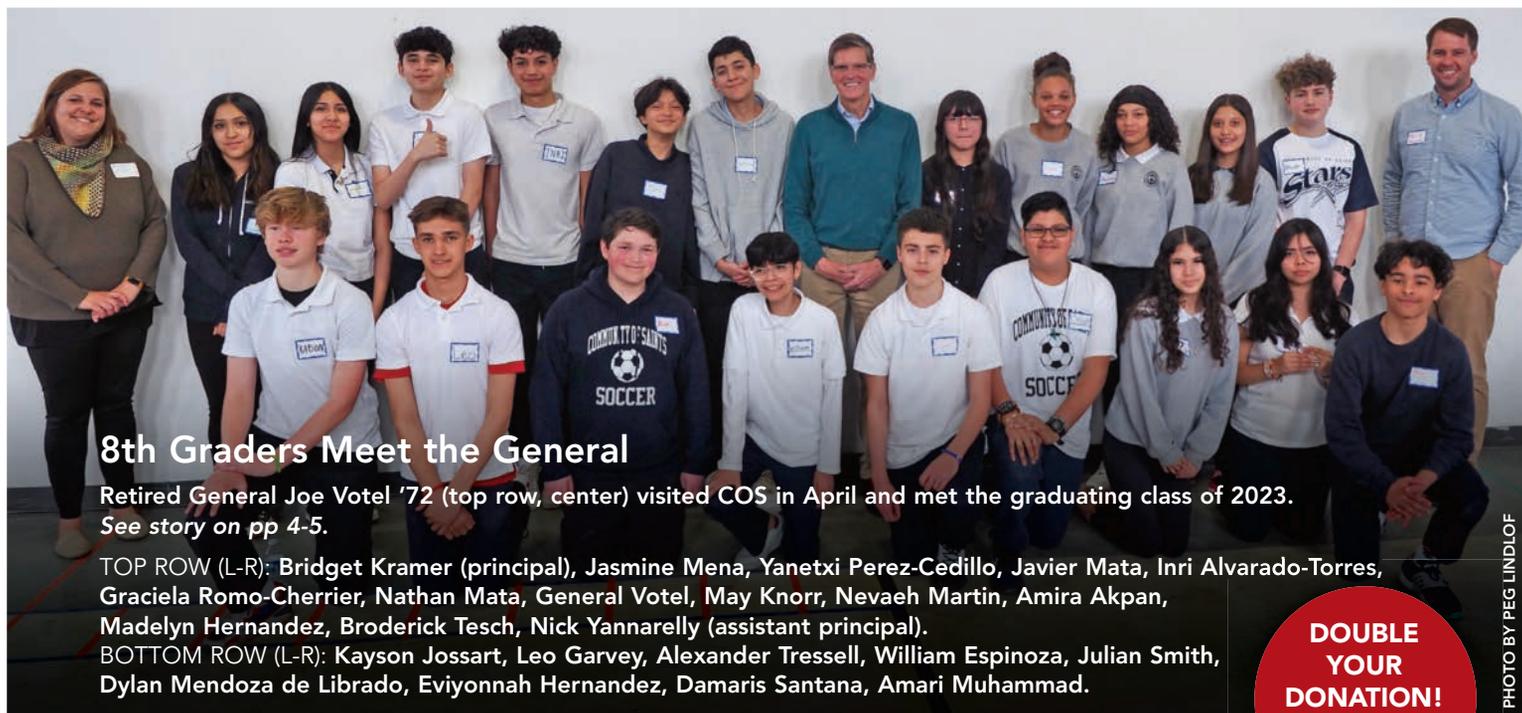


THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ALUMS & FRIENDS & FAMILIES

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



8th Graders Meet the General

Retired General Joe Votel '72 (top row, center) visited COS in April and met the graduating class of 2023. See story on pp 4-5.

TOP ROW (L-R): Bridget Kramer (principal), Jasmine Mena, Yanetxi Perez-Cedillo, Javier Mata, Inri Alvarado-Torres, Graciela Romo-Cherrier, Nathan Mata, General Votel, May Knorr, Nevaeh Martin, Amira Akpan, Madelyn Hernandez, Broderick Tesch, Nick Yannarely (assistant principal).
 BOTTOM ROW (L-R): Kayson Jossart, Leo Garvey, Alexander Tressell, William Espinoza, Julian Smith, Dylan Mendoza de Librado, Eviyannah Hernandez, Damaris Santana, Amari Muhammad.

PHOTO BY PEG LINDLOF

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!
 Learn more on page 2.

COS Student Wins Flaherty Family Scholarship Amari Muhammad will attend Cretin-Derham Hall High School

“I’m just really curious. I love to learn.” Those are the words of 8th grade graduate Amari Muhammad, the latest Community of Saints (COS) student to receive a Flaherty Family Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to high-achieving students with economic need and will cover the cost of tuition at Cretin Derham Hall High School (CDH) for four years. Amari will also be eligible for continued support through college and graduate school.

At the beginning of the year, Amari had planned to attend Simley High School because of its championship-winning football program. “But then I toured CDH and I just loved it,” he said. “I thought — I have to go there.”

Amari’s mom, Gloria Romo, loved her son’s enthusiasm for CDH, but as a single parent of three, she didn’t know if she could swing the tuition. “I want Amari

to have the same opportunities as a kid from a two-parent household, but I didn’t know if I could afford it,” Romo said. “When we got the email from the Flaherty Family Foundation, I thought, this is the answer to my prayers.”

“I Was Struggling, but I Overcame It”

Just a few years ago, the idea of Amari winning an elite scholarship would have seemed like a longshot. “There was a time when Amari was getting into trouble at school daily,” his mom said. “He was constantly, and I thought he was on the verge of getting kicked out.”

“Amari had a hard time managing his emotions, so the school worked with him on that,” explained COS counselor, JoEllen Flak. “He had a lot of

— Continued on page 6

UPCOMING REUNIONS — SEE PAGE 3.

MESSAGE FROM **father steve**

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

Each time a teacher comes to school it's an act of faith that what they do makes a difference. That's why people become teachers; they want to make a difference.

Teachers are animators, stimulators; most of all, teachers are encouragers. The teacher's prayer is found in the 50th chapter of the Prophet Isaiah:

"The Lord has given me the tongue of a teacher; that I may know how to encourage the weary with a word."

You see, teachers are people who change lives and save lives.

Even if we are not classroom teachers we can be the encouraging word that awakens in the mind and heart of a student a renewed sense of their worth; you can be the one that opens the eyes of a young person to see what yet can be.

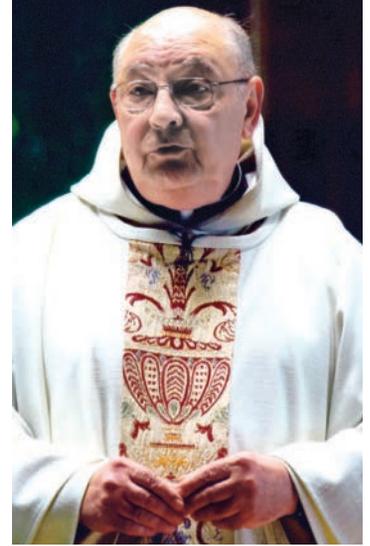
This issue features an alum of Saint Matthew's, General Joseph Votel, who has "the tongue of a teacher; one who knows how to encourage the weary with a word." He stimulated and encouraged our 8th graders to focus on making a difference, seeking a way they can contribute to their school, their neighborhood, their state and nation; to see that they can make a significant impact on their world.

This issue also tells the story of the impact COS teachers and staff have had on three 8th grade graduates: Amari Muhammad, May Knorr, and Nevaeh Martin. Such stories of the power of COS can be told over and over again.

This issue also has short reflections by 8th grade graduates after hearing the encouraging presentation of General Votel. I find the sentiments in those reflections affirming of the work you and I do. We make Catholic education possible for so many families who otherwise would not have the opportunity.

Each time you and I make a gift, we make an investment. We make an act of faith that what we do makes a difference. This issue tells so many stories about the fruits of our investment. Don't sell yourself short. You do make a difference.

Stephen Adrian
Canonical Administrator of COS



DOUBLE YOUR DONATION!

All donations given BEFORE JUNE 30TH will be matched dollar-for-dollar through a generous \$50,000 matching gift from Roy & JoAnn Ferber and Mary Cullen McKeown & Tom McKeown.

Please use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.communityofsaints.org/give.

Donor Finds Estate Planning is Another Way to Give

A native of St. Paul and St. Catherine University graduate, Mary Ann Ogden held a variety of jobs in nursing and public health in St. Paul and Ramsey County during a career that lasted 35 years; but it was a 1980 trip to Southeast Asia that changed her outlook on life. Ogden spent four months as a volunteer at refugee camps in Thailand set up for Cambodians fleeing the Pol Pot regime, and another month traveling the region with a friend. "Seeing how people lived, I was overwhelmed by how much Americans have in comparison," said Ogden. "I became a bit of a minimalist after that."

Ogden never thought about making a will until she got married at age 52. "I don't have that many assets," she said. "But I wanted to be sure that part of what I had went to the organizations I support."

Community of Saints (COS) is one of Ogden's designated beneficiaries. "I like that the school serves a diverse community and helps families with limited resources," Ogden said. "Public schools are important, but we need Catholic schools, too, where kids are grounded in faith. That's good for kids."



"I like that the school serves a diverse community and helps families with limited resources."

— MARY ANN OGDEN

For information on how you can support COS in your estate plan, contact Doug Lieser, Director of Advancement, at 651-457-2510.

COS Counselor Retires after 40 Years

JoEllen Flak Discusses Youth Mental Health and COS Superpower



JoEllen Flak

Early in her career, JoEllen Flak was hired by Catholic Charities to start the School Based Counseling Program. In 1992, she became a counselor at St. Matthew’s School and when Community of Saints (COS) opened in 2012, she was one of the original staff. As she steps away from her duties, she shares a few thoughts about her work, her students, and what makes COS special.

What kinds of challenges bring a student to your office?

For students at COS, it runs the gamut. Some students face the same challenges that children in wealthier areas face, such as developmental problems, mental illness in their families, alcoholism, drug abuse, emotional abuse, and so on. Since many of our students live in poverty, that brings additional challenges. Some students experience temporary homelessness, exposure to violence, or they may have family members in jail. The deportation of a family member can upend students’ lives, and the emotional loss may be compounded by the loss of income necessary for the family to survive.

We often hear about a mental health crisis in young people — do you think young people have more challenges today, or are we just more aware of them?

I think young people have more challenges and, hopefully we are more aware. Surviving a worldwide pandemic was hard on everyone, especially young people. Some lost family members, others experienced fear, anxiety, loss of income, and loss of social support. All this interrupted the average education and development of children. Social skills took a real hit and students had to relearn how to be at school. On top of that, the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police wounded our whole community. And of course, there’s social media and the internet. Children have exposure to so much information so quickly. Some content they are not developmentally prepared for. When

young people post or text things without any empathy, it creates a lot of harm and social mistrust. More than ever it’s important that we teach critical thinking skills, and help children act from a moral core.

How would you describe the culture at COS and how does it factor into your work with students?

At COS, our superpower is Love. God is Love and Love is everywhere in our school. Love creates and nurtures life. Love gives us patience. It motivates us to help one another celebrate and enjoy our school community. When I ask teachers to make accommodations for a student in distress, I NEVER get push back. A frequent response is, “Oh, I just love that kid,” and we go on together to make a plan for support. Our staff loves and enjoys our students.

What’s kept you motivated over the years?

I am motivated by working with a great school community. I have worked intimately with schools for 40 years now, so I know what makes a great school. Excellent, dedicated leadership is the foundation of everything, and we are blessed with that leadership in principal Bridget Kramer and Father Steve Adrian. We have families who partner in our work. Volunteers and donors who have a passion for the mission. I am especially inspired and motivated by the bravery of the students I work with, who face overwhelming circumstances and pull through. I know the world will be a better place because they are in it.



UPCOMING REUNIONS — SPREAD THE WORD

ST. MATTHEW’S CLASS OF 1973

Sat., Oct. 14, 2023 | 4 pm
Gallagher’s Bar & Grill in West St. Paul
Potluck | cash bar | casual attire
For more information or to RSVP:
Pam Mosberger Kaasa at
pamscreativesalsa@yahoo.com or
651-494-8550.

ST. MICHAEL CLASS OF 1973

Sat., Oct. 21, 2023 | 4 pm
Evolve, 260 Wentworth Ave. E.,
West St. Paul
Contact:
StMikesReunion73@gmail.com
For names of missing alums go
to www.communityofsaints.org/reunions.

ST. MICHAEL CLASSES OF 1962-1970

Wed., Sept. 13, 2023 | 6-10 pm
BLVD Tavern, 433 Mendota Rd. E.,
West St. Paul
Contact:
Diane (Perkovich) Hanzal at
dianemyra@hotmail.com or
651-270-1346.

GENERAL JOE VOTEL (RET.) ADDRESSES
COS MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

“What type of impact do you want to make in our world?”

Joe Votel '72 achieved the rank of four star general and was appointed by President Obama to be Commander of U.S Central Command, one of the highest positions in the military. In his address to students, he challenged them to think about their future and how they might make a difference in the world. Following his presentation, members of the 8th grade class had a chance to talk with him. Later they reflected on the relationship between service, faith, and leadership. We have shared some of the students' reflections here along with excerpts from Votel's address. To see his entire presentation, go to the COS home page — www.communityofsaints.org.



Joe Votel and Sean Doyle have been good friends since they were classmates at St. Matthew's.

“All of you are going to have an opportunity in the future to make some decisions about what you're going to do. I hope you will choose to do something that involves serving your communities, serving your fellow citizens, or maybe even serving your nation in whatever way that might be done. Service comes in a whole bunch of different forms. You can serve in law enforcement or services, you can be a teacher, you can be a volunteer in an organization that helps people move forward. This idea of service, is really an important one.” — JOE VOTEL

“General Votel motivated me to think about how I should be prepared for high school, and how the journey will be hard, but it can lead you to something good. My dream is either to be an immigration lawyer who helps families or a nurse.” — DAMARIS

“Some ways that General Votel inspired me was to never forget where you came from and who helped you along the way. Another way he inspired me was to help people who are in need. Something I want to accomplish is to get a good paying job to provide for my family.” — KAYSON

“I was an Army Ranger and a paratrooper. You guys know what paratroopers do? Jump out of airplanes. Crazy stuff, huh? It's actually pretty fun. It gave me a great opportunity to serve the nation. And through my service in the military, I not only got to meet people across our own country who had different experiences and brought different ideas to our work, but I also got to meet a lot of people in other parts of the world.” — JOE VOTEL



Following his presentation, Votel talked with COS 8th grade students at a reception.

PHOTOS BY PEG LINDLOF

“ I think one of the biggest accomplishments that I’m most proud of is being a dad. I have two boys who are both adults now. I think one of the most important things is having a family of my own and seeing my own kids move forward and do well in their lives.” — JOE VOTEL

“ St. Matthew’s and Cretin were really great institutions. They not only prepared me academically and athletically but also spiritually. I had people like Coach Rowan or teachers like Mrs. Baetz, Sister Carol Anne, and others who taught us that values are important in life. As a very senior military , I was involved in a lot of things, and it was always important to not forget my values — because those things really do matter.” — JOE VOTEL

“I thought General Votel’s speech was very inspirational and it motivated me to keep living up to my dreams. One day I want to work with animals and maybe become an animal doctor or even a marine biologist. I will make sure to work very hard for this dream.” — GRACIELA

“I think understanding other people can help you be a better leader. You have to be positive about everything. Thinking about my future, a dream I want to accomplish is to become a nurse.” — MADELYN

“ The success that you are able to achieve isn’t done solely by you. Lots of other people help you. In my case, my family was a big part of what inspired me, but also what inspired me was having the same experience that you’re having right here of going to a great school.” — JOE VOTEL

“General Votel’s Catholic faith inspired him by pushing him to help others and to lead. I was going to go into the military already, because my grandpa served and he has encouraged me, as well. General Votel made me happy that I am going to be able to serve like him.” — LEO

“General Votel shows that a person’s faith can inspire them to be kind and loving. He motivated me to be a leader at Cretin-Derham Hall. He also made me want to join the JROTC at CDH even more. After JROTC, I hope to serve in the Air Force.” — BRODY

Students got to try on Votel’s West Point cadet uniform, and the uniform he wore in his final position, Commander of U.S. Central Command.



COS Student Wins Flaherty Family Scholarship to Attend CDH, *continued from page 1*

adults around him who help him. He has an amazing mom, and all the teachers could see his potential.”

Amari recalls those days, too. “In fourth grade, I was getting into it but by fifth grade I’d gotten a lot better,” Amari said. “I was struggling, but I overcame it.”

Looking back, his mom is glad he learned such an important lesson at a young age. “Amari’s very poised now. He gets upset but he knows how to control himself and he doesn’t let other people get in his head,” Romo said. “The school has played a huge role in helping him get himself together.”

Education First — Sports Second

Ask Amari about his goals and he’s ready with a list: become a chess master, play in the NFL, start a business, maybe start an organization that helps young people on the West Side. He brims with enthusiasm for his schoolwork. “Science is probably my favorite class right now, although I’m better at math.”

“Amari approaches everything as a challenge,” said COS middle school Science teacher Audrey Moorhouse. “All of our 8th graders see themselves

as change-makers, and I think Amari recognizes that Science is an important tool for change.”

Amari is also a talented athlete and helped lead his West Side Boosters football team to a state championship last year. While he looks forward to participating in athletics at CDH, he’s clear about his priorities. “I choose education over football,” he stated. “Back in 5th grade I started thinking about college and it was all about playing football, but now I want to go to college so I can keep going with my education.”

“It’s the Love They Give You”

Middle school teacher John Capistrant looks forward to hearing about Amari’s future success. “He knows what he wants to accomplish and always strives for excellence,” said Capistrant. “Amari’s capable of doing anything he sets out to do.”

Amari is quick to give credit to his teachers for all their support and discipline over the years. “It’s the love that they give you,” Amari said simply. “It helps so much. For some kids, their teachers are like their parents. The discipline here is love.”

As Amari looks ahead to high school and beyond, he counts his blessings. “My faith has really helped me, and I feel like God has helped me personally,” Amari said. “He’s blessed me with going to school here.”



Amari with his mom, Gloria Romo, during his football team’s championship season.

Most Likely to Never Give Up

Another eighth grade graduate we’d like to recognize is Nevaeh Martin, who will be attending Two Rivers High School next year. Nevaeh’s middle school teachers describe her as clever and creative, someone who brings joy to the classroom, and a natural leader who motivates others in positive ways.

Nevaeh had to clear some pretty big hurdles to earn those accolades. Her first year of middle school coincided with the first year of COVID, a time when all schools, including COS, were grappling with how to teach safely. It made for a rough start, as she is the first to admit. “I struggled a lot in sixth grade with distance learning, and I didn’t do homework



Nevaeh Martin

COS Graduate Heads to Vis

May Knorr will be the graduate of Community of Saints (COS) to attend high school at Visitation School. What really caught May's interest was Visitation's Robotics Club. May is an enthusiastic member of the COS STEM Club where she's been learning to build and program small robots. When she saw what students at Vis were doing, she was impressed. "They're building these huge robots and taking them to competitions," said May. "Competing will be extra pressure but I think it'll also be more fun."

COS middle school teachers describe May as a dedicated student who is not afraid of a challenge. "In STEM Club, it's been fun to watch her think outside the box," said Science teacher Audrey Moorhouse. "Some students get frustrated because they want the one right answer but May gets excited by the possibilities of all the different answers."

While May loves STEM Club and Science, it's hardly her only interest. She also loves singing in choir and writing poetry. "She is one of the strongest readers I've ever had," said English Language Arts teacher John Capistrant. "May's thorough analysis of the stories we've read in class have enriched the classroom conversation immensely. We'll miss her at COS, but she will thrive at Visitation."

Tuition Assistance Made It Possible

May has been a student at COS since kindergarten after her mother, Ashley Daggy, learned about the school from family members who had sent their own children there. Daggy says the tuition assistance is what made it

possible for May to attend. "We were looking for an alternative to the public schools," she said. "But we wouldn't have been able to afford COS without the help."

Tuition at Vis seemed even more daunting until Daggy learned about the school's generous assistance that puts the school within reach of families at all income levels.



May Knorr

A Quiet Leader

In talking about May, her teachers describe a reserved, dedicated student, with kindness and compassion. "She is a quiet leader who doesn't feel the need to do what everyone else is doing," observes Moorhouse. "She does her own thing and makes good choices."

May knows it may not be easy to go to a school where she won't know anyone, but she also knows there will be many other new students, just like her. She told a story about when she was in sixth grade and her closest friend moved away. "That was hard for me, because everybody had their friend groups," she said. "Then I started talking to other people, and it gave me more

Other people can be really nice, and you never know what someone is like until you talk with them."

because it was hard," Nevaeh said. "I was the type of person who didn't always understand right away, and it was harder to ask questions when we weren't in person."

Instead of getting discouraged, she went to work and set about trying to be the best student she could be. "In seventh grade I still struggled in the beginning, but then it became a daily thing where I would do my work and it became less of a struggle," Nevaeh said. Now she loves learning and says her favorite classes are English Language Arts and Science. "I love doing the experiments."

Science teacher Audrey Moorhouse says students like Nevaeh are what she enjoys so much about middle school — the chance to work with students for three years and watch them grow into amazing people. "As a sixth grader, Nevaeh didn't know if she could do it," said Moorhouse. "As an 8th grader, she knows that if she sets her mind to it, she can do anything. Watching her confidence grow has been a privilege and an honor."

Nevaeh is both nervous and excited about attending Two Rivers High School next year, where she hopes to earn a spot on either the Varsity or JV volleyball team. She realizes high school classes will bring more challenges, but fortified by her experience at COS, she also knows what she needs to do. "Whenever I was struggling, my teachers would encourage me to try harder and never give up."

**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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Congratulations!

COS Principal Receives Leadership Award

Principal Bridget Kramer received a 2023 Leadership Award from Minndependent, the largest state-wide organization serving private and independent schools. "It would be a challenge to find a better leader," said Minndependent's president, Tim Benz. The award recognizes Principal Kramer for instilling passion in her staff and promoting innovation. "Bridget's a rock star," adds Benz. "She's a really strong mission-driven leader."



PHOTOS BY JEANNINE MARIE PHOTOGRAPHY