

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

St. Matt's Football Team — 1974



Fifty years ago, St. Matthew's 8th grade football team, led by legendary coach Joe Rowan, won their conference, and played in the city championship. For more memories from the class of '74, go to pp. 10-11.

INSIDE

- » Fr. Steve's Column
Page 2
- » Sister Ann Schoch, SSND, St. Matthew's Principal 1972-77
Page 3
- » Mike Fernandez '74 Remembers OLG School & More
Pages 4-5
- » Classes of 1974
Pages 6-9
- » Memories from St. Matthew's Class of 1974
Pages 10-11
- » School News
Pages 12-13
- » Carlo Franco '09 Elected to School Board
Page 15

COS Graduate Fulfills Wish to Help Homeless People

Editor's Note: Six years ago, we shared the story of 11-year-old Isaac Garcia, then a 6th grade student at COS, whose Christmas wish was to help homeless people in his neighborhood. With his family's help, he started Isaac's Blessing Bags. Now a senior at Cretin-Derham Hall High School, Isaac has expanded his ministry. Here's an update to his story.

In 2017, not long after the Garcia family moved into their new neighborhood, Isaac discovered he lived near a church that hosted a day program serving people who are homeless. Every day Isaac and his 13-year-old brother, Jose, watched as a steady stream of people passed by. Isaac saw children with backpacks and elderly people toting plastic bags. He worried about where they would sleep that night. He wondered how they would stay warm. He thought about why he had a home while others didn't. He decided to do something.

With the support of his family, Isaac met with a staff member at the church, then turned to his COS community and St. Matthew's Parish for help in collecting items homeless people might need, such as warm socks and hats, non-perishable snacks, and personal care items. He took over several rooms in his house to store the donations, and his family helped him assemble everything into gift bags. That Christmas, Isaac and his family brought all the bags to the church where he handed them out.

Afterward, Isaac told his mom he wanted to keep it going. "We didn't want to commit," said his mom, Tara Peron. "But he never let it go. He just knew what he was supposed to do."

— Continued on page 14

MESSAGE FROM **father steve**

Dear Alums, Friends, and Families of COS,

COS is a Catholic school, an academy for evangelization. Administrators, teachers, and staff seek to help students to not only become well-educated young people, but also to grow into the role of significant actors in their communities, fostering the works of mercy and justice.

Pope John Paul II often spoke about the “evangelization of culture” in an increasingly secularized society. He invited people of good will to promote a true civilization of love, founded on the values of brotherhood, justice, and dignity for all. The works of charity and mercy are an essential part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Works of justice have the power to transform our culture and institutions to better reflect the dignity and value of each human being. Taking up this work defines us as disciples of Jesus.

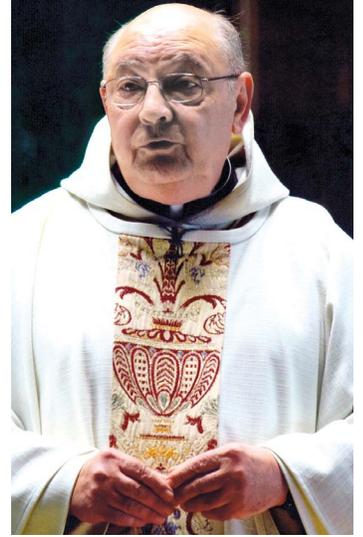
This issue of *The Good News* describes the life and work of two of our alums; one a graduate from St. Matthew’s, and the other from COS. Their stories exemplify how religion is not just an academic class. Much more, the spirit of the Beatitudes pervades the very life of our students. They are challenged to live out their faith daily in concrete ways.

Belief in Jesus is not just an idea; faith is a verb, faith is an action. One does faith. Isaac Garcia and Carlo Franco are but two examples of so many of our graduates who live out their faith in the marketplace.

Your support of COS makes this expression of Christian education possible. COS is your school and the students and graduates of COS bear witness to the trust you have placed in them.

Thank you.

Father Steve Adrian
Canonical Administrator of COS



Scott Steinacker and his wife, Becky, with Audrey (center).

Audrey Brucker Makes \$24K Estate Gift to COS Tuition Assistance

A classy lady — that’s how Scott Steinacker remembers his good friend, Audrey Brucker. Scott got to know Audrey after his company took over the management of her Inver Grove Heights condo. “She would always have a *Honey-Do* list for me.” Scott said. “She was a delightful person. I miss her phone calls.”

Over time as Scott and Audrey’s friendship grew, he learned about some of the challenges she’d faced in life, but none of them ever held her back. “She was a very intelligent woman who made a career in the construction industry back when it was a man’s land,” Scott said. “She was a real trailblazer who lived life to the fullest.”

Scott said Audrey didn’t talk about her Catholic faith much, but he isn’t surprised by her generosity. In addition to COS, she made estate gifts to Sisters of Charity in Iowa and the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Audrey never had children of her own, but her gift ensures that many children will have the benefit of a Catholic education at COS. Through them, Audrey’s legacy lives on.



Audrey Marie Brucker
1938 – 2022



For information on how you can support COS in your estate plan, contact Bridget Kramer, Principal, at 651-457-2510.



Sister Ann Schoch, SSND

ST. MATTHEW'S PRINCIPAL 1972 – 1977

Editor's Note: Sister Ann Schoch, School Sister of Notre Dame, started teaching at St. Matthew's in 1969, became principal in 1972, and left in 1977 to join a school in Kenya. During her years at St. Matthew's, Sister Ann formed close bonds with many members of the school community and remains in contact with some of her former students today. Still working at age 85, Sister Ann shared highlights from a remarkable career that has taken her around the world. Below is an excerpt from our conversation.

Coming to St. Matthew's

I was teaching in Forsyth, Montana, when our Province Leadership reassigned me to St. Matthew's. I was not ready to leave the beautiful hills and mountains for the asphalt jungle — but how I learned to love it. I came to appreciate St. Matthew's because of all the good people — wonderful students, and parents who cared about their children so much. St. Matthew's had a wonderful staff — dedicated, caring, innovative, creative, and a lot of fun.

I was assigned to 1st grade, but at the end of the school year, I asked to teach older students. There was an opening in 5th grade, but I was told the class had some unruly students. My response — I'll take them. This class graduated in 1974. I have fond memories of them — and there were no catastrophes!

Teaching in Kenya

After my two years as a teacher, I served as principal until 1977. Then I took a big leap with a move to Kenya. Here, SSND had a school in Nyabururu to help Kenyan Sisters finish their high school. This was an opportunity for them to go to a university and return to educate their own people. After five years, I taught and administered at a girls' high school. It was a boarding school with no electricity or running water. Forty-eight

girls were packed in a classroom. Kenyans all wanted an education. We had no books, so the students had to copy the teachers' notes from the blackboard. We never had to supervise a classroom while they were studying.

World Experiences

After 13 years in Kenya, I returned to the States and took a sabbatical in Boston. A year later I ended up as principal at a school in North Dakota where I grew up. Being with children was a great way to enter back into my culture, as it was harder for me to return to the States than it was to leave it.

After serving on the SSND leadership team in Mankato for eight years, I was invited to be the personal secretary to our General Superior at our headquarters in Rome. I learned a lot about my congregation. At that time, we served in 37 countries. Given my ministries, I have been on five continents.

From Rome, I moved to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, North Dakota, where I offered pastoral care to the elders. In 2014, I came to Billings, Montana, to continue ministry to Native Americans in our two hospitals and several nursing homes. As the only SSND working in Montana, I live with an Ursuline Sister.

Eventually when I retire, I will move to Shakopee, Minnesota. We sold our mother house in Mankato, and our sisters are now a part of the Benedictine Living Community, sharing life with lay people. Every summer, my visit to Minnesota includes a stop in St. Paul, to visit friends from my St. Matthew's days.

Choosing Religious Life

I was taught by SSND in both grade and high school, where my vocation to religious life began. It was a struggle as I was also interested in being an airline stewardess. Later, when I worked in Africa and Italy, and traveled frequently, I saw what it was like to be a stewardess. Clearly, I made a great choice! My life has been filled with blessings.



Sister Ann Schoch, SSND



In 2023, Sister Ann (third from right) served as a tour guide in Rome for former students Terry Grundtner Lannon '74 (third from left) and John Maloney '74 (second from left). "Sister Ann was always very popular," said John. "My wife, Maureen, and I consider her a good friend."

Mike Fernandez '74 Shares Memories of Family and Our Lady of Guadalupe School

Editor's Note: I called Mike Fernandez because he was a member of St. Matthew's class of '74 who was willing to share a few memories. As we spoke, he told me about first going to school at Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLG), why his family switched to St. Matthew's, and how his family came to live on the West Side in the first place. It reminded me how rich and entwined the history of the West Side is. Here are a few of Mike's stories.

My dad was born in Monterrey, Mexico. In the 1950s, the U.S. military ran recruitment ads in Mexico. If you agreed to serve in the military for four years you would receive U.S. citizenship. My father, Angel Fernandez, signed up. It would have been around 1957-58. He didn't speak a lick of English, but he joined the Air Force and went on to serve for four years (*top photo*). At one point he was stationed at Fort Snelling. That's when he met my mom.

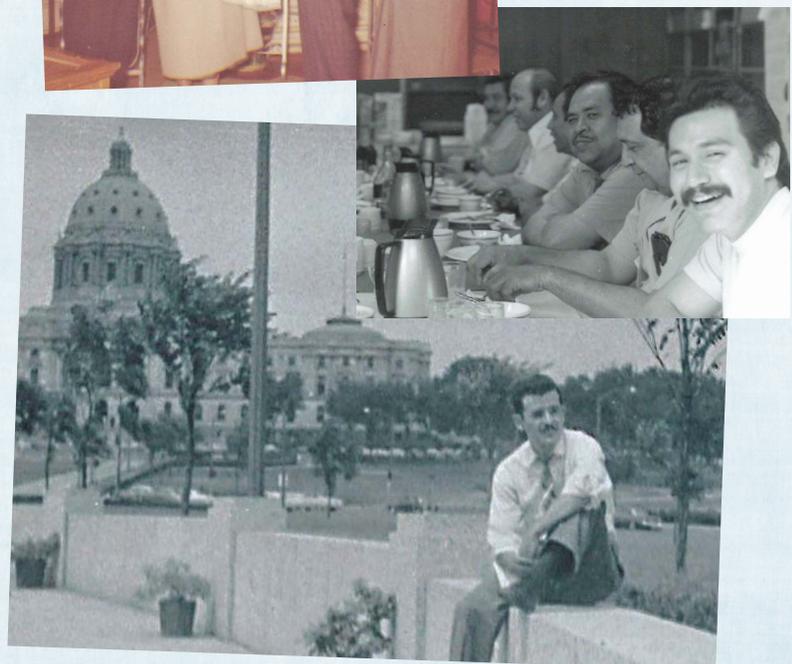
My mom was born in Michigan. Her parents came from Mexico and were migrant farm workers in the 1940s. They had two children by the time my mom was born. As migrant workers, my mom's family moved around a lot, but as farm equipment improved, there was less need for migrant workers. In the 50s they decided to settle on the lower West Side, where there was a large Mexican community.

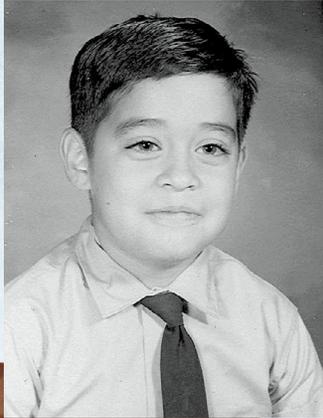


My parents married while my dad was stationed here. The wedding was at OLG and Father Ward married them. My dad was stationed here long enough for me to be born and baptized. My Godparents were Guillermo and Gloria Frias (*photo at right — couple holding baby*), who first started Boca Chica Restaurant and Taco House. Not long after, we moved to a base in San Antonio, but as soon as my dad's four years of service were up, we moved back to the West Side.



My dad was really good at math and he was a fast typist — 160 words per minute on a manual typewriter. He got a job as an accountant with the State of Minnesota (*bottom photo*). A lot of people on the West Side knew my dad. He did a lot of public speaking, and a lot of emceeing. Father Albert Wolski replaced Father Ward as pastor at OLG, and when he got the idea to start a Mexican radio program, he approached my dad. The show was called *La Voz Minnesota*, and it was the first of its kind here in the state. OLG sponsored the program and paid for one hour of airtime a week. My father was the DJ.





I grew up on the West Side on Colorado Street, two blocks away from Captain Ken's Fire House beans. Our family were members of OLG. I went to Roosevelt for kindergarten, but after that I went to OLG for 1st – 4th grades.



When I started at OLG, the school went up to 8th grade. OLG was great. Every day they served hot lunch and hot breakfast. It was a dime for breakfast and 15 cents for lunch — so you could get breakfast and lunch for a quarter. I remember for breakfast they would serve homemade donuts — not healthy but delicious!



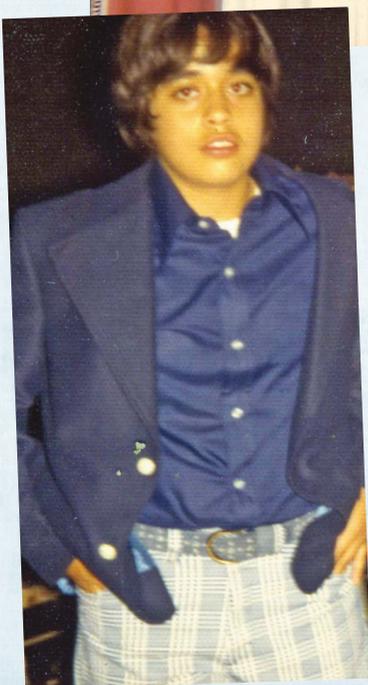
OLG had Mass every morning at 6:30 a.m. and my dad would drop us off. Normally, you had to be in 5th or 6th grade to be an altar boy, but me and my friend, Jesse Morales, were there every day, so we started being altar boys in 2nd grade.



Around the time public schools started busing students to desegregate them, some Catholic schools tried to do something similar. The initiative was called Project Discovery, and OLG was one of four Catholic grade schools to participate. Each school taught two grades and students would get bused from school to school, depending on their grade. First and 2nd grades were taught at OLG, Cathedral School hosted 3rd and 4th grades, St. Stan's had 5th and 6th grades, and 7th and 8th grades were at St. Peter Claver.

A lot of families, including mine, didn't like the idea of moving their kids around. They didn't want their kids riding on a bus for 45 minutes a day.

My family opted out. We continued to go to OLG for church, but for schooling we started going to St. Matthew's. Our family wasn't the only one. A bunch of families ended up at St. Matthew's after that. The busing only lasted a few years and then it fell apart. OLG school never came back from that. They closed a few years later.



Since 1988, Mike Fernandez has been the pastor of Calvary Chapel Twin Cities, which he founded with his wife, Lynn. Prior to that, Mike followed in his father's footsteps by serving in the military, as a member of the Marine Corp from 1979 – 1983.

St. Michael Class of 1974



Front Row | Betty Ann Jones, Renata Winzig, Mary Banazewski, Julie Geisler, Sandy Williams, Susan Dierberger, Patty Kelly, Bob Johnson

2nd Row | Tom McEllistrem, Mark Kinsel, Richard Karas, Paul Galles, Joe Carroll, Bill Burke, Joe Adams, Mike Schendel, Mark Thomas, Paul Cushing

3rd Row | Kathy Seery, Theresa Zaspel Weiland, Bernadette Walter, Debra Burgy Hendrickson, Penny Riebe Kettler, Jan Blechinger Smith, Judy Schultz, Mary Bann Bade, Frances Riehm, Sandy Siedel, Barbara Ricci, Susan Marthaler Weyandt, Helen Snyder Zilka

Top Row | Tim Blaeser, Julie Blechinger, Laurie Quehl, Debbie Karas, Camille Mansur, Paul Breister, Peter Mansur, Bill Kunik, Chris Jacobs, Brian Kraft



ST. MICHAEL CLASS OF '73

St. Michael class of 1973 had a great turnout for their first-ever reunion last October. Twenty-five alums along with two former teachers gathered to celebrate 50 years since their graduation.

St. John Vianney Class of 1974



Bottom Row | Joe Ecker, MaryBeth Curry, Marilee Votel, Pam Campbell, Rick Mikacevich, Nancy Wacker, Pat Lannon, Liz White, Jim Jordan, Steve Tinucci

2nd Row | Father Roach, Beth Bretoi, Ann Miller, Teresa McDonough (deceased), Phil Fahey, Peter Mohrbacher, Maryann Musial, Steve Ehret, Christine Loder, Lynn Friesen

Top Row | Kathy Mulcahy, Laura Zerba, Dave Galatowitsch, Kevin Haseltine, Tom Engelmeier, Jenny Czech, Joan Motzko, Nancy Bergman

CELEBRATES 50-YEAR REUNION

Special thanks to the reunion team: Mike Bann, Michele McEllistrem-Brin, Chuck (Bluhm) Dosh, Deb Burgy-Hendrickson (chairperson), Tim Quigley, Kathy Seery, Sheila Deziel-Steiner, and John Wadell.

On behalf of A&F&F, a big thanks to St. Michael's class of '73 for its contribution to the tuition assistance fund for students at Community of Saints.

50
YEAR REUNION

St. Matthew's Class of 1974



Rev. Pacholl, Pastor



Rev. Vavra, Asst. Pastor



Sister Ann Schoch, Prin.



Sister Anne Becker



Sister Loretta



Mrs. Baetz



Mrs. Fox



Akin, G.



Andersen, S.



Bagley, D.



Blakeslee, K.



Buse, J.



Costello, T.



Cubus, J.



Cullen, M.

ST. MATTHEW SCHOOL
St. Paul, Minnesota
Class of 1974



Fernandez, M.



Folimer, A.



Folsom, C.



Gangl, T.



Gentle, D.



Gilliland, L.



Gubash, C.



Haverland, L.



Hernandez, G.



Hill, D.



Horst, M.



Jahnke, J.



Josephs, T.



LaFontaine, H.



Lancette, A.



Letourneau, J.



Maloney, J.



McNamara, M.



Meyr, T.



Miller, M.



Norton, L.



Odegaard, K.



Paviak, R.



Schmidt, C.



Schmidt, C.



Schmidt, R.



Schmitt, S.



Schwartz, M.



Smith, M.



St. Martin, M.



Todora, D.



Tonda, B.



Tosney, A.



Traynor, J.



Uhler, R.



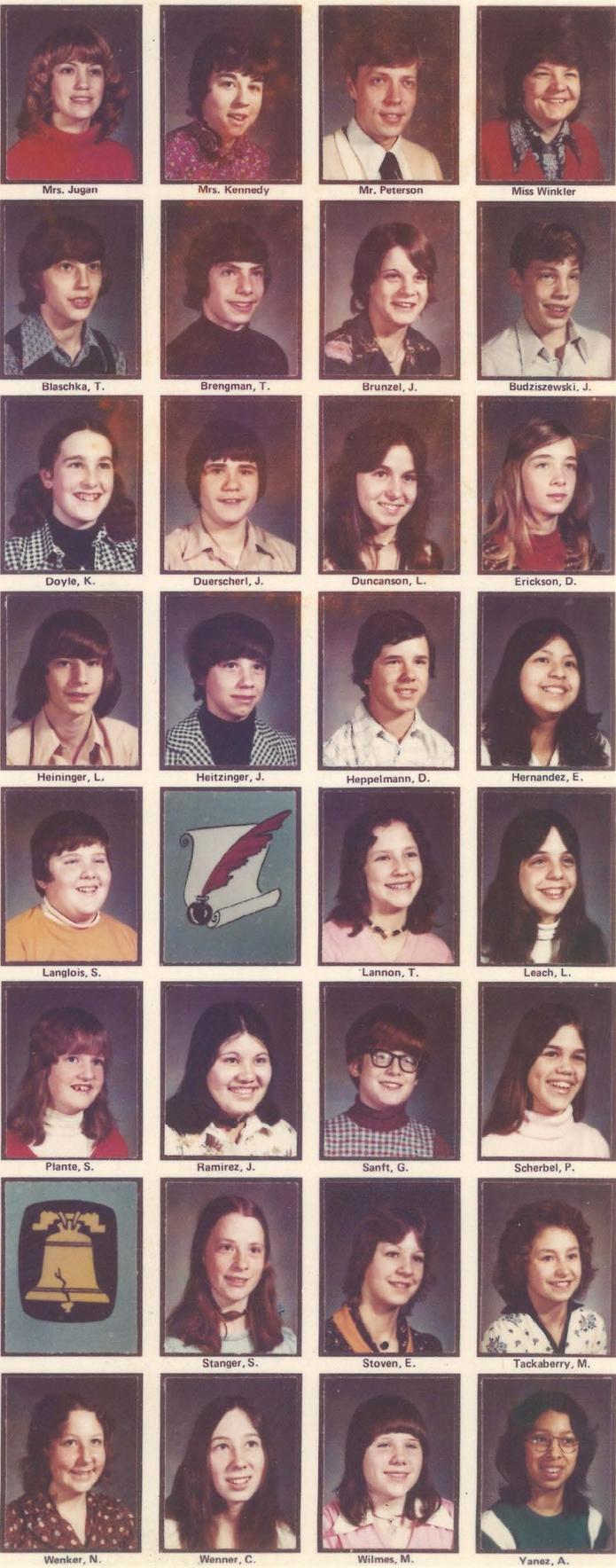
Verduzco, R.



Votel, K.



Wanger, C.



Top Row | Rev. Eugene Pacholl, Rev. Clarence Vavra, Sister Ann Schoch, Sister Anne Becker, Sister Loretta, Mrs. Lillian Baetz, Mrs. Bernice Fox, Mrs. Jugan, Mrs. Kathleen Kennedy, Mr. Peterson, Miss Karen Winkler

2nd Row | George Akin, Steven Andersen, Debra Bagley, Kristin Blakeslee Jarocki, Thomas Blaschka, Timothy Brengman, Jeanne Brunzel Gravem, John Budziszewski

3rd Row | Joseph Buse, Thomas Costello, Jerome Cubus (deceased), Mary Cullen, Kathy Doyle, Joe Duerscherl, Laurie Duncanson, Denise Erickson

4th Row | Mike Fernandez, Anita Follmer Boggess, Carl Folsom, Timothy Gangl, Debra Gentle, Laura Gilliland, Christine Gubash, Lisa Haverland, Leonard Heininger, Joseph Heitzinger, David Heppelmann, Elizabeth Hernandez

5th Row | George Hernandez, David Hill, M. Kelle Horst, Joyce Jahnke, Teresa Josephs, Harlen LaFontaine, Andrea Lancette McCarthy, Steven Langlois, Terry Lannon Grundtner, Laurie Leach Jarvis

6th Row | Jeffrey Letourneau, John Maloney, Margaret McNamara, Timothy Meyer, Mary Ann Miller Bloch, Lisa Norton (deceased), Kathryn Odegard, Robert Pavlak, Sue Plante, Jessica Ramirez, Gregory Sanft, Patricia Scherbel

7th Row | Cary Schmidt, Craig Schmidt, Robert Schmidt, Sandra Schmitt, Mark Schwartz, Mary Lou Lagerstrom Smith, Michael St. Martin, Susan Stanger, Elizabeth Stoven Werneke, Maureen Tackaberry Hare

Bottom Row | Don Todora, Brenda Tonda Armstrong, Anne Tosney, Joseph Traynor, Robert Uhler, Roger Verduzco, Kim Votel Garcia, Christine Wanger, Nancy Wenker, Cynthia Wenner, Maribeth Wilmes Rice, Amanda Yanez

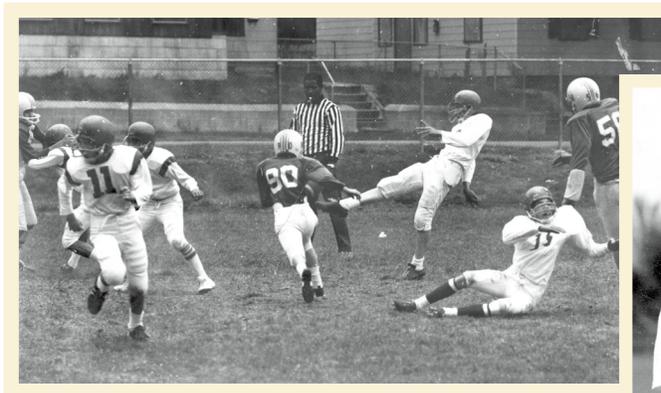
Memories

FROM ST. MATTHEW'S CLASS OF 1974



STEVE ANDERSEN '74

I remember one time, Bobby Pavlak and I went to Mrs. Fox's house on a Sunday afternoon to work on something — I think it was an art project. It wasn't unusual back then to be at a teachers' home. They were part of the community, so you got to know them as nice people who were interested in our well-being.



We played football for Joe Rowan. He was a legend in many ways and taught us how to play. I ended up earning a college scholarship and I attribute that to things that I learned from Coach Rowan. After Cretin High School, I went to Idaho State University and played in the Big Sky Conference where I made all conference. In 1981 our team played in the Pioneer Bowl and beat Eastern Kentucky to win the Division 1-AA National Championship. That's where football ended for me.

Steve Andersen credits Coach Rowan for the football scholarship he received to attend Idaho State.

The culture of the community worked its way through me. Growing up, I met and became friends with people from different cultures. I appreciate that experience. It had an impact on what I did in life and throughout all the chapters of my life.

8TH GRADE CLASS PLAY

In 1974, St. Matthew's eighth graders staged a performance of *The Armchair Detective*. Mike Fernandez (far left) in the role of detective, is shown here with classmate Laurie Duncanson, elaborately costumed in a voluminous pink satin dress.





JOHN MALONEY '74

Growing up on the West Side, our neighborhood was thick with kids. Probably 25 boys in a block or two. I see a lot of them still.



We'd sign up to be altar boys in 6th or 7th grade, and in 8th grade, you could be picked to serve for a funeral. It got you out of school, which was kind of fun. Father Pacholl was the pastor then and he was a great priest — pretty colorful. At funerals, the altar boy would light the incense that the priest walks around with. I remember during one funeral service, the incense started on fire. You could see a flame coming out and I heard Father Pacholl swearing under his breath as he tried to put it out. I just looked up to the heavens and thought — that's not me, God.

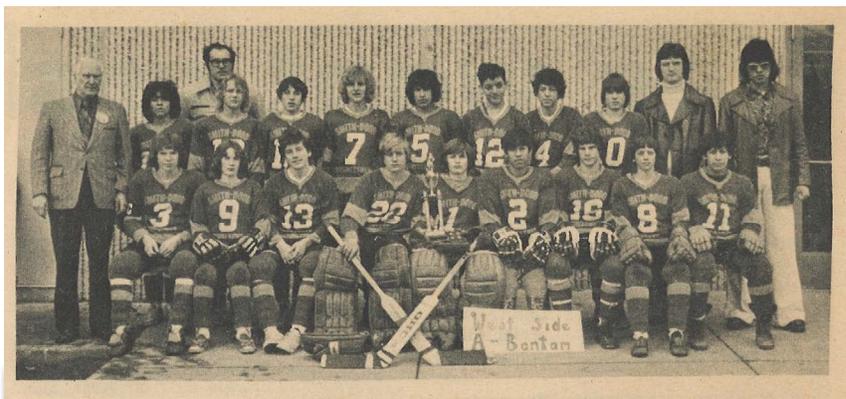
In 2nd grade, we prepared to receive our First Communion. We practiced every day at the old church. One week before the ceremony, the church burned down. We wound up at the old St. Michael Church. It was quite an ordeal for a bunch of 2nd graders.



MIKE ST. MARTIN '74

I played West Side youth hockey while attending St. Matthew's School. We practiced and played many of our games at the West Side Hockey Arena, which was one of several small arenas that the city of St. Paul built back in the early 70s. We had a number of Hispanic members on our team, and one of our coaches was also Hispanic. This type of diversity in hockey was not that common back then, but growing up on the West Side, you just took it for granted.

I remember back in 8th grade we had a game in Elk River, and some kid on the other team made a racial comment. The hair on the back of everyone's neck went up and a brawl broke out. Eventually cooler heads prevailed, and we finished the game.



I distinctly remember Mrs. Baetz — she was awesome! She was little, like 4'10" and 90 lbs. She taught math and she coached girls' softball. She kept a baseball bat in her classroom, and she'd say "You guys screw around I'll knock your head off." Everyone laughed but no one messed with her. She was tough as nails.



Research shows that to close the achievement gap, what happens outside of school is just as important as what goes on in the classroom. COS is always looking for ways to help families who might need additional support.

Every Meal Fills in Food Gaps



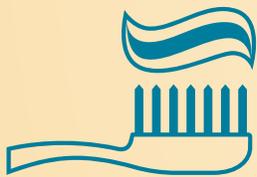
The rising costs of groceries has increased food insecurity for families who depend on schools to help meet the nutritional needs of their children. To fill the food gaps some children face on weekends, COS partners with Every Meal, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting child hunger by giving families access to high-quality food on weekends, extended breaks, and over the summer.

This year over 30 COS families signed up to receive a free bag of food each week. There are no qualifications or requirements to participate, and each family's privacy is respected. Families may choose from five options that include Latino, Southeast Asian, and East African dietary preferences. Each bag contains 4-5 pounds of nutritious, non-perishable food, including a variety of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and grains.

"The cost of living has risen dramatically, which is especially hard on low-income families," explained COS City Connects Coordinator, Chris Benefield. "For families who are financially stretched, Every Meal helps by providing the basics. That way families can spend their money on food items they might not have been able to afford, such as fresh fruits and vegetables."

Ready, Set, Smile — Free Dental Clinic Comes to COS

The nonprofit Ready, Set, Smile was founded on the belief that every child should have access to basic dental care and the opportunity to be free of dental diseases. This year, the organization added COS to its list of school partners.



COS students whose families give permission receive preventative dental services and procedures to control dental decay. Treatments include toothbrush cleanings and scaling, sealants, fluoride application, and oral hygiene instruction.

For students who need additional dental care, such as filling cavities, the organization works with families to make sure they get the treatment they need at low, or no cost.

"We have students who have never seen a dentist," said COS principal, Bridget Kramer.

"Even with dental insurance, the cost is more than some families can afford. This is a great way for students to learn about oral hygiene and for families to have access to dental services that would otherwise be unattainable."

Your Support Makes It Possible — Thank You!

More than 90% of students attending COS receive tuition assistance. Your support makes that assistance possible. A&F&F has been providing this assistance for 17 years. This Spring, cumulative donations will surpass \$4M. We thank each and every donor, from the first contributions given in 2007 through the most recent ones in 2024.

IT'S EASY TO GIVE! Just use the enclosed envelope or donate online at communityofsaints.org/give

“Why I Love My Catholic School!”

“I love COS because the teachers, the staff, and the students here are AMAZING! You can learn a lot from the teachers here because the opportunities to learn are endless.”

— BRIELLE



“I love my Catholic school because the people here bring so much joy! All the people here are generous and help out others.”

— GENESIS

“I love COS because they teach us about God and everyone is so nice.”

— MELANIE

“I love my Catholic school because it has the best staff and people. The teachers help me do my best work and people are so welcoming. I have been here for 11 years and I know everyone here.

It is a great community.”

— SELENA



“When we learn math, it makes me want to learn more. And when someone is sad, I can help them be happy.”

— KASSANDRA

“I like my Catholic school because my teachers are very helpful and kind. I know they want me to succeed in life and want me to have a bright future. They make learning in the classroom fun and easy.”

— XITLALY



“I love my Catholic school because it’s a place I feel safe and it’s a place where I found my best friends and I have some great teachers.”

— MIHYANNA



COS Graduate Fulfills Wish to Help Homeless People, *continued from page 1*

Now Isaac works year round to gather and distribute items people living on the streets might need, and he's formed a club at CDH to help. He and his classmates regularly visit the Dorothy Day Center in St. Paul, and Peace House in Minneapolis to hand out donations.

"I told him he's quite an amazing person to do this work," said CDH faculty member, Rob Peick. "It's important in this world to do something for people who don't have anything."

Isaac also partners with St. Matthew's Parish to collect donations during Advent. "People see this young person reaching out to those in need, and they see the future of our parish," said volunteer coordinator, Mary Leibl.

Two years ago, Isaac's mom filed paperwork to establish Isaac's Blessing Bags as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. "Isaac's still a minor, so he's listed as an advisor, but he works with a lot of the organizations, and behind the scenes, we're like his employees," Tara said. "He tells us what to do and we do it."

After six years, Isaac has observed that the number of people who are homeless continues to grow, but instead of getting discouraged, he has focused on what he can do. He's learned one of the most important things is to listen. "There have been so many times people tell me things — difficult things about their lives," Isaac said. "People need a chance to speak and be heard. Being able to do that for them gives me great satisfaction and gives them a sense of hope."

Next year Isaac will attend the University of St. Thomas where he plans to study business and journalism. "So much of what's on the news is negative," Isaac said. "I'm interested in sharing positive stories."

Isaac was recently featured on just such a program when his work caught the attention of a Canadian TV program called *Warrior Up*. The documentary series shares the inspiring stories of Indigenous youth making positive change in their communities. Isaac, who has tribal affiliation with Lower Sioux Dakota and White Earth Ojibwe, is the first American to be featured on the program.

When Isaac started his ministry his mother assumed it would be for just one Christmas. "We thought, we'll give it our all since it's a one-time thing," Tara said. Now, six years later, she's not putting any limits on what either of her sons could achieve. "We're a family about faith," Tara said. "Since the kids were young, we've told them, God will put things in your heart. You do your part and good things will happen."



Isaac, who continued to collect and distribute donations during COVID, has received strong support for his ministry from family and friends.



Carlo Franco '09 Wins Seat on St. Paul School Board

St. Matthew's Alum Advocates for Youth and West Side Point of View

What led you to run for a seat on St. Paul's School Board?

There hadn't been representation on the school board from the West Side in about 20 years, so there was a huge gap there. Gilbert de la O was the first Latino elected to the school board, and we haven't had another Latino elected since, which is another gap in representation. Those were big reasons, but also, it's where my heart is. I've worked with youth in the community for my entire adult life, and I believe every single young person in the community should have the option of a high-quality school in their neighborhood. I want to amplify the voices of young people in St. Paul and I'm not afraid to shake the tree.



"I've worked with youth in community for my entire adult life, and I believe every single young person in community should have the option of a high quality school in their neighborhood."

— CARLO FRANCO '09

What do you hope to achieve?

I want to re-engage communities about what out-of-school activities look like. Every neighborhood should have thriving after-school programs that people can trust and access. Whether we're talking about rec centers, libraries, or other youth programming, we need to have conversations as a whole community about what the extension of our school day looks like. As a city, St. Paul needs to innovate how we support all of our students, and public schools should be a huge part of that discussion.

What are some of the challenges?

When a family has their basic needs met — then kids can come to school ready to learn and thrive. That means addressing issues like food insecurity, housing affordability, and safe communities. St. Paul has a large immigrant population and we have over 100 languages spoken in our schools. We also need to make sure our newest refugees have support to help them get accustomed to our school system and living in our country.

In addition to serving on the school board, what is your full-time job?

I manage a youth employment and training program for the City of St. Paul called Right Track. We work with students ages 14–21 who have some

kind of barrier to employment. It may be based on income, being homeless, having English as a second language, or being behind a grade level. A majority of St. Paul students in that age range qualify for the program. We have 900 summer internships and we match students with jobs. We have internships at rec centers, libraries, the mayor's office, as well as many businesses and non-profits, and we try to line students up with jobs that match their interests.

How did you get interested in working with youth?

Growing up on the West Side shaped my value system. It was both my family, and the larger community. I grew up with the village mentality, where we're all connected, and we all try to take care of each other. That's what led me to a career in public service. What we do matters. How adults show up matters. The West Side Boosters played a huge part in shaping me. I was president of the Boosters for four years and I'm still involved today. Then there was the emphasis on education. Going to St. Matthew's from K-8, I was expected to perform at a high level. I needed to make sure my grades looked right. If my grades were not right, I would not be able to participate in other things.

What keeps you motivated?

What innately fuels me is making sure our young people are taken care of as a future resource. People I've been connected with on the West Side — we're doers — we're constantly filling our calendars, advocating for our community, and making sure programs are running. We don't always feel like our space is in policy and governance, and often the people who make policies are disconnected from what it's like in the community. As someone who is connected on the ground, in the community — I'd like to put some policies and governance in place that can actually move the needle. My hope is to make progress, and I hope people hold me accountable.

The Good News is published
quarterly by



Editor: Maggie Lee

COS Principal: Bridget Kramer
Email: BKramer@communityofsaints.org

COS Phone: 651-457-2510

Web: www.communityofsaints.org

“Why I Love My Catholic School!”

During Catholic Schools Week, COS students shared what they love about their school. To see more responses, go to page 13.

“I love when Father Steve teaches us when we go to Mass.”
— ANGEL

“The reason I love my school is because it gives me a great education. It also allows me to develop my faith as a young adult. This will help me in high school and in life.”
— SIMON

“I love my Catholic school because my teacher loves me and my friends are so kind.”
— MAYA

