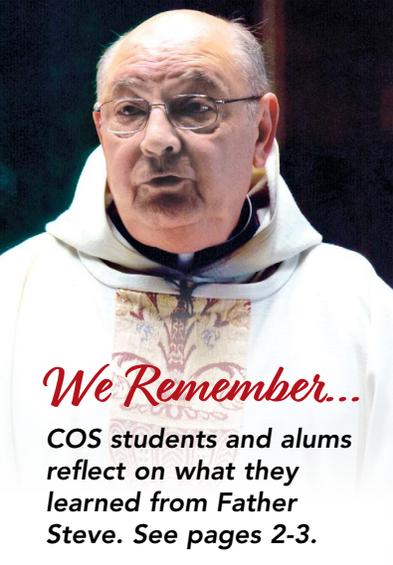


Providing tuition assistance to students at Community of Saints Regional Catholic School



*We Remember...*

COS students and alums reflect on what they learned from Father Steve. See pages 2-3.

## A Ministry That Changed Lives FATHER STEVE ADRIAN (1942-2024)

**Editor's Note:** *Father Steve Adrian helped launch Alums & Friends & Families (AFF) in 2007 because he wanted all young people to have equal access to the transformative power of Catholic education. His work on behalf of AFF was part of his greater commitment to live out the Gospel by welcoming all and providing for those in need. Over the years, his ministry changed the lives of countless people. To honor Father Steve, we want to share just one of those stories.*

Julian Espinosa, age 30, works in the advertising industry in Brooklyn, New York, where he lives with his new wife, his high school sweetheart from Cretin-Derham Hall (CDH). His younger sister is a junior at Winona State, and his parents both have jobs and own a home in Mac-Groveland. As first generation immigrants, they've done well, but it's a far cry from how their life in the U.S. began.

### Looking for Something Better

Julian's father had been a successful entrepreneur in Colombia until a trusted business partner swindled him, leaving him with next to nothing in a country that offered little recourse. Julian's father wanted something better for his family, so he moved them to Florida. Even though both parents had gone to college, neither spoke English and opportunities there looked dim.

A family connection said they would qualify for refugee status in Canada and offered help if they came to Winnipeg. Julian's family spent four days driving from Florida to the border. As the only one who could read the map written in English, 12-year-old Julian navigated.

The trip was a fiasco. The family had visas, but in the small North Dakota border town, they stuck out and were quickly arrested. Julian had to translate for both his parents and the police. After their release, the Canadians said they weren't eligible for refugee status because they'd entered from the U.S. instead of coming directly from Colombia. Forced to return to the U.S., they



Julian Espinosa (top row, center) pictured with Father Steve (top row, far right) at 8th grade graduation for St. Matthew's School in 2010.

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*"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." — FATHER STEPHEN ADRIAN, 1942–2024*

Father Steve often expressed gratitude for his many blessings, and high among them were all the people who supported tuition assistance at Community of Saints (COS). On these pages, COS students and recent alums express their gratitude for Father Steve by sharing what he taught them and remembering his kindness, acceptance, and generous spirit.

**JENNA, 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"Father Steve wanted me to know that God loves everyone and forgives our sins...that Jesus is with us every step of the way. Father Steve is the perfect example of our school — kind, accepting, and loving."

**BELLA, 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"One memory I have of Father Steve was when I went to Confession. He was a really good listener and gave me some advice on how to do better on what I was confessing about. Father Steve always wanted everyone to know that God will always love you and believe in you."

**KAILY, 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"What I remember most about Father Steve was his love and gentleness towards everyone around him. When I was ashamed and afraid to come up to Confession, each time, without fail, Father Steve would lovingly welcome and invite me to confess to him and seek forgiveness without any judgment."

**NEELIA, 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"Something I learned from Father Steve is that you have to work hard to reach your goals. He would say that at Mass. He took Mass seriously, but once he made a joke at Mass and everyone laughed."

**ALAYLAH, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"A memory that I will forever cherish in my heart is the time I lost my grandpa, Father Steve dropped everything to help, just to relieve my mom after she found out our original priest could not make it. Even though he saw so much in life from good to bad, he still forgave and that's what makes him my hero."

**ALEX, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"Father Steve wanted us to know that God loves us all and he wanted us to know that God will always forgive and be with us no matter what we have done or think."

**JAMES, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"An important lesson I learned from Father Steve was that you can grow your faith in many ways, it doesn't have to be reading the Bible from cover to back every week, you can just talk to God everyday, go to Mass each week, try to follow the footsteps of God, and try to show the kindness of God. Father Steve wanted me to know that God has a plan for me. He wanted me to know that I am not just on Earth just to be on Earth, I have a goal that God wants me to reach before I can celebrate with him in eternal life."

**MAX, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"At the end of Mass, Father Steve would always greet me and my family and tell us how much it meant to him that we were there. That meant a lot to my family. We always thanked him and told him how much he meant to us. My mom especially appreciated him. She was the one who got us out the door and to church."

**PRISCILA, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"Father Steve wanted us to know about God, that He would always be there for us and that we can always turn to Him because He loves us. When I was younger, I was never able to fully pay attention to the things they talked about in church, but Father Steve changed that. I would listen to him talking in church all the time and I enjoyed it and wanted to continue growing my faith."

**SARON, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"I met Father Steve when I first came to this school when I was in 2nd grade. I didn't really know him except when we went to Mass, but I felt like I knew him because I've been at this school for so long. He would always have a smile on his face every time I saw him which brightened my day and made me smile. He helped me see that God will provide even when it doesn't seem like it. He has really helped me through life in school and my relationship with God."

**SAVANNAH, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"One of my favorite memories with Father Steve is when I received my First Communion and I had to do Confession with him. I remember being so scared and nervous that he would judge me and honestly, I was a little bit scared of him. But when I walked in, he gave me a huge smile and told me that he would never be mad or judge me for my sins. He told me that I'm not telling him my sins, I'm telling God. That really made me feel more calm and less nervous, and because of that I am able to go to Confession easily and without stress. If I could tell Father Steve something right now, I would say 'Thank you,' for all the hard work he put into this school and church."

**VICTORIA, 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

"I think one of the most important lessons I learned from Father Steve was to take life easy. His words always seemed so calm and meaningful. I began to learn that a lot of things weren't important enough to stress over. A part of me started to finally know that I should live life as it is and only fix what I can."

**JOSE JR. '17**

"I feel like everyone respected Father Steve and loved him in some way, especially me. Because of him being such a great priest, I feel like I owe it to him to give back and do more for the church. He was a role model, not just for church or faith, but for how to be a person in general. No matter who you were, you felt like you could attend St. Matt's Church. You felt like you are a part of this, like you are supposed to be here. He made it a very accepting and open space for everybody."

**AMANDA '13**

"My mind was blown when I found out that Father Steve had memorized all of the gospels. The way he always walked around the lectern — I didn't realize that wasn't normal until I started going to other churches. He would walk around and talk to us, not at us. He spoke to us in a way that we were able to understand, but it never felt like he was talking down to us. Another thing that's stuck with me — he let us know, come as you are, no matter where you're at in your faith journey, this is a safe place and you are welcome."

**ALEJANDRA '14**

"I went to COS in eighth grade and did my Confirmation at St. Matt's that same year. I grew up Catholic, but I think going to COS was really when my faith was shaped and formed. I remember Father Steve being just a really good guy. He loved educating children, and I always felt that innocent, child-like faith there. That was one of my best years for school."

**BRIDGET KRAMER,  
COS PRINCIPAL**

Countless people, including me, have been inspired and touched by Father Steve. He embraced everyone with love and dignity, just as Jesus did. His passion for Catholic education and making it accessible to all is why COS exists today. We are committed to ensuring his legacy lives on and continues to drive our school's mission and vision forward.



**A Ministry That Changed Lives,**  
*continued from page 1*

were arrested again and accused of being drug dealers. Their car was searched and their passports confiscated.

The family drove to Minneapolis after Catholic Charities offered help. They were in legal jeopardy, had no money, didn't know anyone in Minnesota, and it was January. Things looked bleak.

**Finding a Community and Building a Life**

"St. Matthew's changed my life forever," said Julian. "That community is why I have the life I have now. I would say the same for my parents."

With Catholic Charities help, the Espinosa's moved into an apartment on the West Side run by Casa Guadalupana. Casa was one of many West Side organizations Father Steve championed. Other partners included Loaves & Fishes, which serves weekday dinners at St. Matthew's Social Hall, and St. Mary's Health Clinic, which offers free health care once a week at the parish center. Together they provided a network of basic supports to families in need at no charge.

As soon as Julian's family got settled, they toured St. Matthew's School. "My middle name is 'Matthew' so my mom took that as a sign," Julian said. "She fell in love with the school. Even though my parents didn't speak English, we felt welcomed."

Julian joined Mrs. Volkenant's 5th grade class. Despite all the turmoil and uncertainty about his future, Julian's teacher made him feel at home. "She used to read Harry Potter books to us, and I thought, this is awesome. She was hard, but great."

Julian joined the school basketball team and quickly made friends. He became best friends with classmate Nick Reding, whose family took Julian under their wing. "After that, pretty much anything Nick did, I did, and the Redings drove me."

Julian's family stayed at Casa House for over a year while their case worked its way through the courts. It took almost three years to get legal status. During that time, Julian's parents became committed members of the parish and active volunteers.

"Father Steve's sermons and the way he did Mass was like nothing we'd ever seen," Julian said. "In Colombia, my uncle is an archbishop, and we have another bishop in the family, so we've gone to many churches, but my mom was amazed at the way Father Steve did church. She didn't understand English, but she still wanted to go and hear him."

Julian followed his friend, Nick, to CDH; after graduating, he attended Inver Hills Community College, before earning a degree from Iowa State. He credits



(ABOVE) Julian celebrates his Confirmation with his father, Fabio Espinosa, mother, Fany Sanchez, sister, Laura Espinosa, and his sponsor, Norma Decker.



(LEFT) Nick Reding and Julian celebrate graduation from Cretin-Derham Hall High School in 2014.

teachers at St. Matthew's and CDH for his success, along with the support of many friends and families.

**Tuition Assistance Opened Up "Endless Possibilities"**

AFF began raising money for tuition assistance just a few months after Julian came to St. Matthew's. Before then, Father Steve had offered informal help to families like Julian's. AFF's mission was to make assistance broader and sustainable, so tuition would never be a barrier for any family seeking a Catholic education.

Julian knows first-hand how life changing that kind of help is. "Having access to a great education and being able to take the stress of affording tuition away is amazing," Julian said. "It opens up endless possibilities. That's the reason I am where I am today."

Julian is proud of what his family has accomplished and he's grateful for all the support from the St. Matthew's community. "They took us in as one of their own," he said. "We never doubted — this our neighborhood, this is our community, this is our church."

**Julian and Amber began dating as students at CDH. They got married this past January.**



# Liz (Richardson) French '61

Loyalty Circle members have been critical to our mission of removing tuition as a barrier to families who want to send their children to COS. Membership is based on any one of the following: having given for 10 years or more, cumulative gifts of \$25,000 or more, or inclusion of COS in your estate plan. We would like to thank Liz and all the members of our Loyalty Circle for their consistent and generous support.

Liz French has contributed to AFF's tuition assistance fund every year since 2007 for a simple reason. "Catholic education is important to me," she said. "Especially at the grade school level when children are just starting their education." Liz's firm belief is rooted in her own experience. "St. Matthew's School gave me the foundation to do really well in high school and college."

It's fair to say that Liz also did really well in her career. After Humboldt High School, Liz worked briefly for an insurance company before landing in the accounting department at Ramsey County Human Services. She was in her 30's when she enrolled at the University of Minnesota. For eight years she took classes while working full-time and raising her teenage son. She eventually graduated with High Distinction, an honor recognizing students with a GPA of 3.90 or higher.

### Pioneered New Technology

After college, Liz kept working for the county and in the late 1980s she went on to pioneer the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT). At the time, Ramsey County faced a dilemma, as yet another bank refused to provide a welfare account for the county. That left people who received welfare assistance with nowhere to cash their checks.

Liz championed the effort to implement EBT, which was little more than a concept. But Liz believed it would work, so she convinced her colleagues to get on board, and led the effort to launch the new technology. Her work paved the way for EBT to be implemented throughout the country.

After leaving her job with Ramsey County, Liz's career took her to every state and territory in the U.S. except Guam. She retired from her last position with J.P. Morgan in 2013.

Liz credits her mom for her work ethic, faith, and resilience. Liz's father died from a genetic heart condition at the age of 29, when Liz was 10 months old and her mom was pregnant with her brother. "My mother had a hard life, but she never complained," said Liz. "She did what she had to do, sometimes working multiple jobs. She was an amazing woman."

### Updates Estate Plan to Include COS

Recently Liz updated her estate plan to include COS. It's something she can do now to ensure the school is available for future generations. "I'm always impressed with the students I meet, and how the older students look after the younger ones." Liz said. "COS does a really great job educating their students."



Liz in 2011 with son, Rob, and grandson, Taylor. Rob died in 2017 from the same genetic heart condition that claimed Liz's father at age 29.



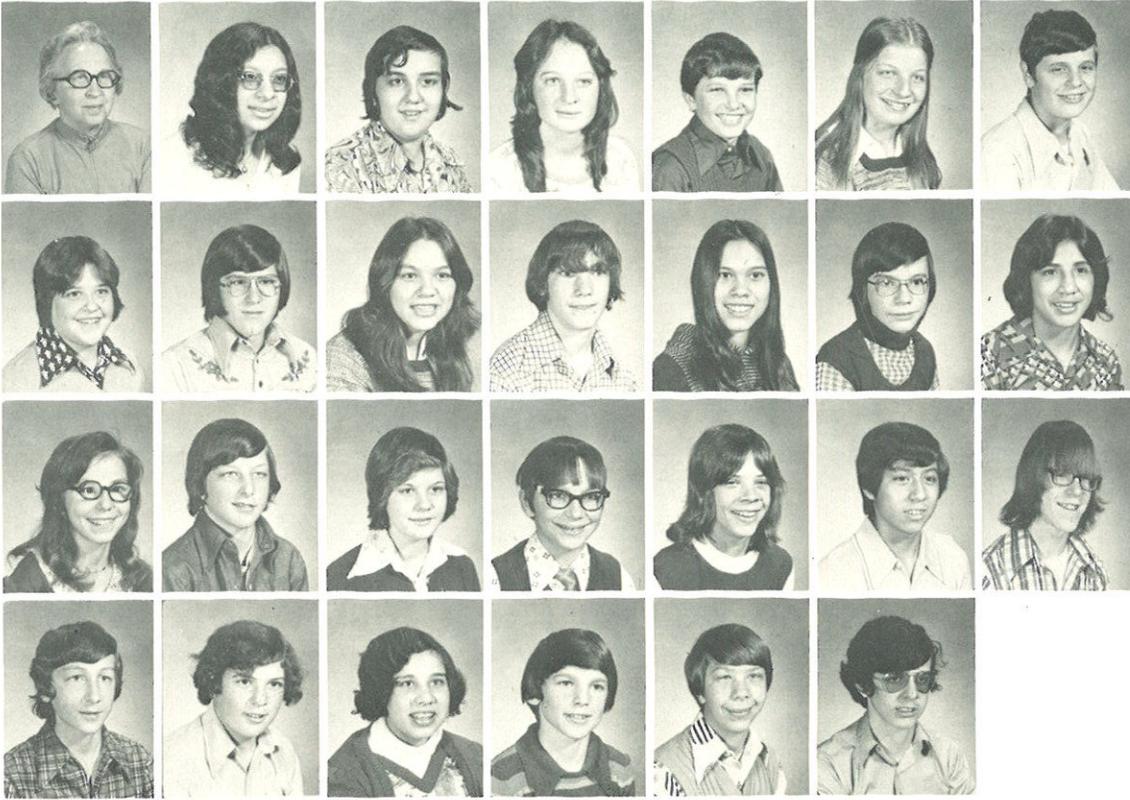
Liz's roots at St. Matthew's run deep. Her maternal grandparents were married at St. Matthew's in 1896, not long after her grandfather immigrated from Germany. Her grandparents (front row, center) went on to have 10 children, who all attended St. Matthew's School. This photo was taken in 1946 on the steps of the church to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Liz's mother, Beatrice (Babe) is in the front row, second from the left.



If you have questions or would like to learn more about including COS in your estate plan, contact Natalie Hartung by calling 651-457-2510 or email [NHartung@communityofsaints.org](mailto:NHartung@communityofsaints.org).

# St. Matthew's Class of 1975

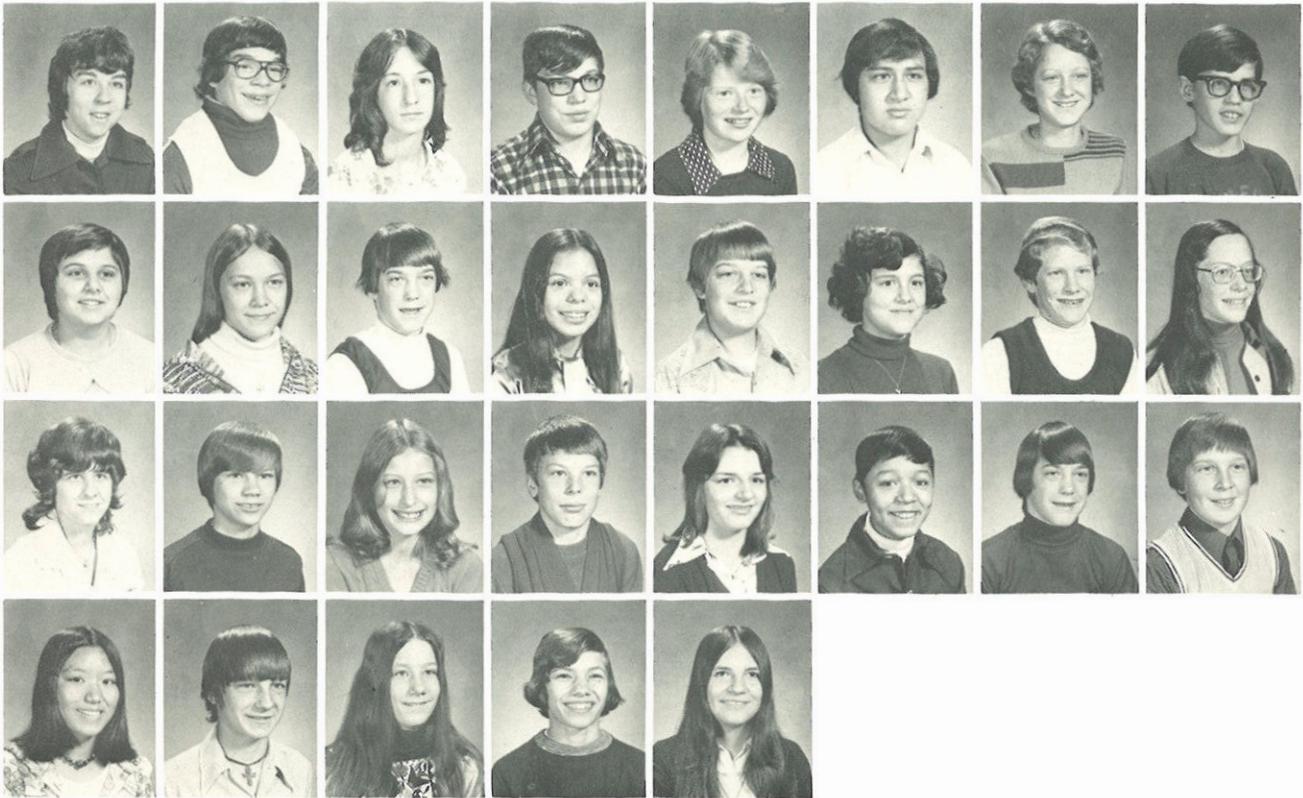
## MRS. BAETZ'S CLASS



## MRS. FOX'S CLASS



## MS. KENNEDY'S CLASS



## MRS. BAETZ'S CLASS

**Top Row** | Mrs. Baetz, Glorina Saucedo, Jim Karas, Kathi Hurley, Kevin Boehmer, Patty Topritzhofer, Bob Krueger

**2nd Row** | Maureen Traynor, Don Schueller, Eve Ackerman, Mike Ohmann, Eva Steinhauer, Tom Rolowicz, Chris Delao

**3rd Row** | Theresa Buse, Mike Ostrowski, Julie Wilmes, Mike Nehring, Tom Todora, Gilbert Hernandez, Bryon Kubiszewski

**Bottom Row** | Jeff Wenker, Tom Adams (*deceased*), Patsy Raines, Mike O'Donnell, Pat Jaskowiak, Joe St. Sauver

## MRS. FOX'S CLASS

**Top Row** | Mrs. Fox, Ed Frias, Terri Marquardt Glass, Bob Potzmann, Bernadette Monsour, Ann Cybyske, Tom Sura

**2nd Row** | Keith Goldberg, Sandy Joseph, Manfred Krug, Mary Clancy, *Unknown*, Tom Einberger, Donna Gross

**3rd Row** | Ann Steinhoff, Tom Kane, Debbie Rosenberger, Tony Renteria, Anita Ruiz, Sheila Anderson, Denise Lerczak

**Bottom Row** | Jim Stanger, Tim Patton, Suzie Yanez, John Morgan, Jim Tietz, Phil Mauricio

## MS. KENNEDY'S CLASS

**Top Row** | Ms. Kennedy, Jim Staples, Donna Benolken, Paul Budziszewski, Pam Swenson, Mark Cruz, Mary Schmidt Fitzpatrick, Stan Cunningham

**2nd Row** | Janice Mike Casillas, Mary Jo Fretschel Tardiff, Scott Herzog (*7th grade*), Juliana Hernandez-Friske, Tom Kegler, Dane Helsper, Tom Doyle (*deceased*), Teresa Redding

**3rd Row** | Sue Kuntze, Tim Hughes, Julie Blaschka Hill, Steve Bade, Christine Califano, Bob Munoz (*deceased*), Scott Herzog, Dave Poemann

**Bottom Row** | Ann Votel, Pat Quinlan, Colleen Wenzel, Gene Ziemann, Ann Renteria

## St. Michael Class of 1975



**Bottom Row** | Michelle Deziel Raethke, Bruce Casanova, Tom Trevis, Jean Kivel, Lisa Snyder Rawson, Kathy Kennedy, Chris LeMire, Waldo Lopez

**2nd Row** | Monica Bryant, Tara Kunik Kaup, Rich Roubik, Roland Fuentes, Chuck Shields, Steve Bueno, Jeff Roloff, Jeff Schmitt, Mark Tessmer, Al Rumpza, Tom Cushing, Scott Valentine

**3rd Row** | Fran Dierberger, Paul Price, Celeste Winzig, Chris Ambrose, Paul Witt, Laurie Casanova, Vickie Gramling, Dan Elliott, Judy Marthaler, Mary Anne Kluck, Mark Berg, Maggie Kowski

**4th Row** | Mary Sullivan (*deceased*), Carole Plant, Scott Huntress, Patty Karas, Mary Thomas, Kevin Snaza, Don Christner, Dave Trcka, Teresa Kelly (*deceased*), Tom Delougherty, Greg Ricci, Carla LaManna Einberger

**Top Row** | Mary Green, Nancy Roeller, Roxanne Studeman Nowicki, Carlo LaManna, Dave Tourville, Joe Garcia, Pete Glewwe, Tim Cunningham, Peter Blissenbach, Mike Regnier, Barb Seery, Ann Volk Osendorf, Bonnie Walter

### 50-YEAR REUNION LEADS TO ANNUAL GATHERING

#### St. Michael Class of '73

Two years ago, members of the class of '73 celebrated their 50-year reunion — their first since graduating. Now, they're meeting annually with the next gathering scheduled for this summer. For more information go to Facebook: [St. Mike's Class of 1973](#), or email [StMikesReunion73@gmail.com](mailto:StMikesReunion73@gmail.com).



Last summer, members of St. Michael class of '73 enjoyed a casual night out at St. Paul Brewing.



## St. Matthew's Class of 1974 Reunion

Members of the class of '74 held their first ever reunion on November 30, 2024. Alums were invited to attend Saturday 4:15 p.m. Mass at St. Matthew's, followed by a tour of the school, and then over to Joseph's Grill for drinks and appetizers. About 25 alums attended and they were joined by Sister Ann Schoch, St. Matthew's principal in 1974, who traveled from Montana to be there. Plans are in the works to get together again. For more information, checkout their Facebook page: [St Matthews Class of 1974](#).



### PLANNING A CLASS REUNION?

We want to hear about it. Email [NHartung@communityofsaints.org](mailto:NHartung@communityofsaints.org).



## ST. MATTHEW'S CLASS OF 1957

The first issue of *The Good News*, published in July 2007, featured the 50-year reunion of St. Matthew's class of '57 (at right). Nearly 18 years later, '57 alums still meet up three times a year for breakfast at Joseph's Grill. The group size varies, but not the schedule. They just met on March 1 and will get together again on June 28.



In 2007, the class of '57 celebrated their 50-year reunion.

# Refurbished Library Gets Kids Excited to Read

## Teacher's Aide Takes on Challenge to Update Library

Walk into the library at Community of Saints (COS) and you won't want to leave. The space is warm and welcoming. Colorful books are displayed in a captivating way that encourages browsing. Comfy seating is scattered about the room, inviting students to plopp down and dig into a new title.

Creating a space that gets kids excited about reading has been a passion project for Erin Lamkin since she joined the COS staff as a part-time teacher's aide in 2021. Lamkin taught in public schools for eight years, then spent six years at home raising her twins. As she returned to work, she was looking for something different. "I always wanted to teach at a Catholic school," said Lamkin.

### Finding a Need in the Library

After beginning her job as a teacher's aide, Lamkin remembered something she'd learned from her parents — find where there's a need and help. She noticed a big need in the library. "Volunteers had been helping with the library, but they retired years ago," Lamkin said. "It's a beautiful space but with no one to keep it up, it wasn't being used."

With Principal Kramer's approval, Lamkin began spending 90 minutes a day in the library. She discovered a glut of old books from the school libraries of St. John Vianney, St. Michael, and St. Matthew. About a third of the collection was either outdated or not suitable for elementary-age students. "It took a year to get the



Updating the COS library has been a passion project for Erin Lamkin. She's received strong support from teachers and staff who are using the library more than ever.

library organized enough so that teachers could bring their classes."

As Lamkin organized and barcoded books for check-out, she noticed something else. "The majority of books did not reflect the diversity of our students," said Lamkin. "I wanted to see that diversity infused throughout the library, so students see themselves in the books."

### COVID Grant Funds Wish List

A big opportunity came when COS qualified for a special COVID grant from the federal government. There were strict rules for how funds could be spent, but one of the approved uses was for books. Lamkin got to work assembling a wish list for both fiction and nonfiction. "I knew where there were gaps in our collection, and I had a pretty good understanding of what students were excited about from talking to them and seeing what they were reading."

COS used funding from a federal grant to buy new books and furniture to create a space that gets students excited about reading.



PHOTO BY JEANNINE OF BLOCK PORTRAIT STUDIOS



**“I wanted to see that diversity infused throughout the library, so students see themselves in the books.”**

— ERIN LAMKIN, COS TEACHER'S AIDE

One of the gaps Lamkin filled was books in Spanish for English Language Learners (ELL). “For our students who speak Spanish at home, we want to encourage and support them to stay strong in both languages because being bilingual is a huge asset,” she explained. “We also want them to be able to bring books home so they can experience the fun and enjoyment of reading stories together with their family.”

### **“I Found Books About Me!”**

Another topic where the collection fell short were books about Native Americans. The few books they had were scattered throughout the library. Lamkin ordered a lot more, both fiction and nonfiction, then arranged them on shelves together so they'd be easy to find. She still remembers how excited a first grade student was to discover them. “I'll never forget,” said Lamkin. “He said ‘I found books about me!’ I asked him what books? And he answered, ‘I'm Native American.’ He's in third grade now and every week he checks out different books about Native Americans. Seeing that is all I need.”

Lamkin has also stocked the library with books to help students explore and grow their faith. “One of the coolest things at COS is how much we promote saints,” she said. “Reading stories about saints helps us see where God might be working in our lives. It sparks a connection, that we're all called to serve the Lord.”

Over the last three years, Lamkin estimates she has barcoded over 2,500 books and has around 4,000 new titles to go. As far as she's concerned, the sky is the limit. “One of my favorite quotes is — there's no such thing as too many books.”

Now when classes visit, Lamkin loves watching as students explore every section of the library. “When they leave, every kid has two or three books they can't wait to read,” she said. “The library sparks an excitement for learning, and kids are just loving it.”



## **COS Pre-K VISITS ELDERS**

Once a month, COS preschoolers visit Suite Living Senior Care in West St. Paul to build intergenerational relationships. Research shows these relationships help elders overcome loneliness while helping preschoolers reinforce their social skills and develop empathy.



**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS  
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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## Remembering Father Steve...

COS students and recent alums share their memories about Father Steve and what they learned from him. See page 2 for more reflections.

### MAILA, 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

"When I was getting my First Communion, I wasn't accepted by a certain church because I hadn't attended their Masses enough or gone to their Sunday school program. Father Steve accepted me as well as my friends at St. Matt's, even though we were not regular parishioners. He believed, regardless of who you were or what your story is, you always had a chance to turn to God."

### JOHN, 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

"An important lesson that Father Steve taught me and many others was to do a good deed even if the person you're doing it for hasn't been nice to you. Father Steve helped me know more about God. He told us if we wanted to do better at school, to pray to God and He will help you."

