



THE GOOD NEWS

July/August 2014
Issue 37

FROM ST. MATTHEW

The community of St. Matthew exists in the world as a visible expression of God's love.

Your donation is needed NOW more than ever!

Contribute now and double your gift thru **September 30!**

Did you know?

7 out of 10 students rely on your support for tuition assistance.

See page 7 for details.

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A Conversation with New Principal Bridget Kramer

As Community of Saints begins its third year of operation, it does so under the leadership of a new principal. Bridget Kramer, who was selected for the position in June, has been a middle school teacher for eight years, including two years at COS and three years at St. Matthew's School. She is a graduate of the College of St. Benedict, has a Masters degree in Educational Leadership and will complete her Educational Specialist degree (Ed.S.) this year. She is a passionate advocate for COS students and strongly believes in the mission of ensuring all children have access to a quality, Catholic education.

Bridget takes over the reins from Doug Lieser, who resigned this summer after guiding COS through its first two years (see sidebar on page 5).

On a personal note, Bridget has taught one of my children for five consecutive years. My kids say she's crazy about books and that nobody messes around in her class. I've always been struck by the energy she brings to the classroom and how much she loves working with students. I recently sat down with Bridget and asked her a few questions as she prepares for the school year to begin.

Q How would you describe your teaching philosophy?

To be successful as an educator, I think you need a mindset that every student is capable of success. It's all about growth and progress. You need to meet kids where they're at and set goals based on that. That means getting to know the students, because as teachers, it gives us a much greater opportunity to help students be successful.

Q You are known for maintaining classroom discipline — what's your approach?

I have high expectations for student behavior in the classroom and I hold high expectations for myself. I also try to be reasonable. For instance, I make a point to explain myself to students so they understand where I'm coming from. I find when students know where you stand, they're more willing to work with you and they're more accepting of consequences.

Q What are your priorities as principal?

My number one priority is to build on our academic excellence. We need to take a hard look at what we can do to improve academic achievement for all students. This school does not

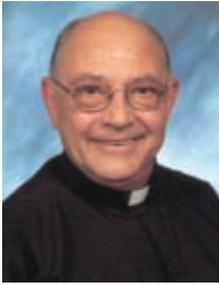
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Did You Buy Cookies from This Girl Scout?

If you did, you have a lot of company. COS student Vivian Kowal was the #1 Girl Scout cookie seller in the state. See page 4 for details.

MESSAGE FROM **father steve**



Dear Saint Matthew School Alums, Friends and Families:

School year 2014-2015 is about to begin. With the beginning of a new school year there arise hopes and expectations — parents have expectations, and so do teachers and students.

The beginning of a new school year can mean making new friends, experiencing new study routines and academic subjects and the opportunity to make a fresh start.

What you and I know is that hopes and expectations need to be more than a pious wish. They need to take on the form of goals with strategies to accomplish and benchmarks to meet.

“

Students succeed at Community of Saints because each student is seen and accepted as a unique individual, with his/her challenges, gifts and opportunities.

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Students Succeed

Students succeed at Community of Saints because each student is seen and accepted as a unique individual, with his/her challenges, gifts and opportunities.

Teachers and administrators know students by name; they grow to know family and family history. Teachers seek to approach each student in the way he/she learns best.

Students succeed because they see themselves as a community of learners and that each person shares responsibility with the other students to make the classroom, ball field, gym, library, computer lab and lunchroom accessible to all. They know that learning and growing is a cooperative effort; no one does it alone.

Students succeed because we exert much energy to forge a strong partnership with parents in the education of their child. School and home — that's the combination that makes all the difference in the world.

You Make the Difference

Students succeed because they have education partners — you. You make the difference; you make it possible for low- and middle-income West Side families to afford a high quality Catholic education.

I appeal to you as we begin another school year; please join me in investing in these students. They are the hope and promise of tomorrow.

God bless you.

Father Stephen Adrian
Retired Pastor, Church of St. Matthew



“You make it possible...for West Side families to afford a high quality Catholic education.”

COS students and teachers march in the Cinco de Mayo parade.

Sr. Anne Becker Celebrates 60 Years as an SSND

Sr. Anne Becker says she hadn't planned to become a nun. In fact, she attended the School Sisters of Notre Dame's Good Counsel Academy high school in Mankato to prove it was possible to go without becoming a nun. But, she said, "God had a different plan." After graduating from high school, she spent four years progressing from candidature through novitiate and took her vows in 1954. This summer, she celebrated 60 years of service as an SSND.

Sr. Anne grew up on a farm in St. Michael, Minnesota, where she was the seventh of ten children, with six older brothers. That no doubt helped her develop the grit that seems to be a prerequisite to life as a religious. "Some people say as the first girl of seven children, I must have been treated as a princess," Sr. Anne observed. "But farm boys don't know much about princesses, so I took more of a tomboy path."

In her early days as a nun, Sr. Anne explained that the SSND were expected to teach during the school year and earn their post-secondary degrees over the summer. "It took a while but I earned my B.A. and M.A. in education with a minor in music."

A Wonderful Time for the Spirit of Jesus

In 1969, Sr. Anne was assigned to St. Matthew's School. It was the year after the church had burned down and the new church hadn't been built yet, so Masses took place in the school gym and at the old St. Michael's church. With the flood of new religious music that grew out of Vatican II, she taught herself to play the guitar. "It was a whole new spirit of song with everything in English for scripture and the music," Sr. Anne remembered. "It was a wonderful time for the spirit of Jesus rather than the spirit of the law."

Sr. Anne taught music to all grades and also developed classes for the middle school students. "For 7th grade I taught the 'History of Jazz' and in 8th grade we studied the 'Story of Rock' and got into the psychedelic music. It was the 70's," she added.

Pastoral Ministry — To Support Community as Needed

In 1976, Sr. Anne left St. Matt's but returned in 2005 as a pastoral minister. "I don't think you could write a job description for what I do," she mused. "If someone comes to the door and needs help finding a safe house, I help them. Or if someone needs a key to the social hall, I'll find it." Sr. Anne helps to support religious education,



Sr. Anne Becker took her vows in 1954 and came to teach at St. Matthew's School in 1969.



the Men's Club, the Rosary Society, assists with music, funerals and whatever other needs may come up.

Sr. Anne has also dedicated many hours to preserving St. Matt's history. She's taken the lead in organizing the archives, has collected the names of all the nuns and lay teachers who worked at the school over 125 years, and she worked with Jason Delmont to create a video that tells the history of St. Matthew's, which she distributes free of charge.

Sr. Anne appreciates how St. Matt's has evolved with its surrounding community over the years. "Way back in 1886, the Germans built what was good for them," she said. "As others moved in, they added their gifts and culture and livened it up. With each new culture and spirit there has been a different life and St. Matt's has made it work. St. Matt's can absorb change and stay strong."

As for retirement, she says she has no plans. "As long as I feel I have work here, as long as St. Matt's has needs I can fill, I'll stay."



In 1969, not all of the items in St. Matt's Fall Festival Silent Auction sold. One item left over was an accordion, so the Men's Club gave it to Sr. Anne. She taught herself to play and now can often be heard performing at the St. Matt's Fish Fry and other events.



COS Girl Scout Is #1 Cookie Seller in Minnesota

When 2nd grade student Vivian Kowal set a goal to sell 3,000 boxes of cookies this year, her mother Emily thought it was a high number but didn't see the harm in trying. "In my mind I was thinking of that saying 'Shoot for the moon and even if you miss, you land among the stars.'"

Vivian's goal was to be one of the top five sellers, which would entitle her to dance on stage when the band Fifth Harmony performed a special concert for the Girl Scouts. She ended up being the #1 cookie seller in the state.

Vivian actually exceeded her goal by selling 3,158 boxes of cookies which included 250 boxes she invited customers to donate to the Neighbors, Inc., food shelf. The average number of boxes sold by a Girl Scout is 159.

In addition to selling at St. Matt's Fish Fry, Vivian sold cookies at booths and by going door-to-door. If she thought her mom was trying to make sales, Vivian asked her to stop. "She told me I was the chaperone and sales was her job," said Emily. "She really loved getting out and talking to everyone in the community."

And she got out quite a lot. Her mom signed her up for as many booths as she could, which meant driving her around to cities like Hastings, Waseca, Albert Lea and Faribault, in addition to locations in the Twin Cities. Despite being one of the coldest winters on record, Vivian also won a badge for her door-to-door sales.

Credit should also go to Vivian's mother who was willing to support her daughter's goal. During the seven weeks of cookie sales, Emily spent her weekends accompanying her daughter everywhere she sold, usually bringing Vivian's two younger brothers with her. She also managed the cookie inventory and kept track of almost \$13,000 in sales. But Emily has no doubt it was worth it. "It's good to set goals in life, even if you don't reach them all," Emily said. "I have never seen Viv beam with excitement as she did when she got on stage to dance with the band."

Vivian is in 3rd grade this year and will be selling cookies with her COS troop again. You can catch them at the St. Matt's Fish Fry. We can't we wait to hear what she has in mind for her next goal.



ABOVE Vivian dressed for the weather and to get attention as she sells at one of many cookie booths last winter.

RIGHT Vivian on stage with her favorite band, Fifth Harmony.



COS Student Named All-Star Athlete

Bella Ramos was named an All-Star Athlete and Fox Sports North Member of the Month for the Boys & Girls Club. Bella was a powerhouse while playing on two West Side Boys & Girls Club teams. Last spring, she helped her U10 volleyball team qualify for the state tournament and, as a pitcher, she led her U10 softball team to a state championship. The award recognized Bella's flexibility as a player, her good attitude, and her leadership abilities. Bella will be a 5th grade student at COS this year and plans to play both sports for the school teams.

Congratulations, Bella!

Bella Ramos won tickets to the Twins Game with other Boys & Girls Club nominees, including fellow COS student Christian Sanchez-Lopez who was also nominated for the All-Star Athlete Award.



Feature story *continued from page 1*

have the achievement gap of other schools with comparable demographics, but there's always room for improvement. Improving discipline is one thing we can do, but there's more. We need to know whether all of our students are meeting academic standards, identify the gaps, and determine where we need to be hitting standards the hardest.

This year, students will take standards-based assessments, which will give us some good data. But that's just one piece of the picture. We need to evaluate where we're at and chart a clear course for where we want to be.

Q What are the strengths of COS?

Our school has many strengths. For starters, we're beginning our third year, so we're not a brand new school anymore with all of the intense challenges that go with that. Now that we have a couple of years under our belt we're at a place where we can comfortably say, 'This is who we are.'

Another strength is our teachers and staff who are incredibly dedicated. All of them have a genuine love for this work and a commitment to the students. My role is to do everything I can to support the teachers in the classroom. So one of my goals is to work on instituting a school-wide, consistent approach to discipline using the PBIS model (Post Behavioral Intervention and Supports). The PBIS system helps teachers take proactive strategies for defining, teaching and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment.

I'd also include our school culture and the diversity of our students as a tremendous strength. I think that contributes to a rich learning environment — one that doesn't exist at many Catholic schools. If you look at the mix of our students, it's easy to see that COS reflects the real world. I think the experience these students have of being with kids from different families, ethnicities and income levels gives our students a real advantage when they're out in the world.

Q What is the role of families?

I love our school families. I always put myself in the shoes of our parents and think about the big sacrifice they're making to send their children to this school. I want the families to see this process of educating their children as a partnership. I want them to feel comfortable coming to teachers with questions, and based on my experience, I think families are very comfortable doing that.



"I feel that it's my calling to be an educator," said new COS principal, Bridget Kramer (center) with past and present students who helped out over the summer.

Q This is a challenging job; what motivates you?

I am strongly motivated by the mission of COS, which was also the mission at St. Matt's School, to offer all children a Catholic education regardless of their background or income level. COS offers something very special to students — strong academics, a caring faculty, a close-knit family environment — I want to see that continue.

I feel that it's my calling to be an educator. I feel at home here at this school and believe I have the skills to be effective in a diverse environment. At the end of the day, I'll do my best to make decisions keeping the kids in mind first. That makes this job special — there's not many professions where that's your standard.

Saying Goodbye and Thank You!

Doug Lieser resigned as principal from Community of Saints at the end of the 2014 school year. Doug and his wife Krissy just had their second child and he plans to spend more time at home with his own children. He will continue to work part-time in development for COS.



After graduating from St. John's University, Doug began his teaching career at St. Matthew's middle school in 1999. He became St. Matt's principal in 2005, and he was instrumental in working with Alums & Friends to expand the tuition assistance program and dramatically increase enrollment at St. Matt's. Doug took the lead in transitioning the three schools to COS, serving as president for the first year and principal for the second year.

We thank him for his many years of dedicated service.

Brad Jenniges ('76) Ordained Priest at St. John's Abbey

St. Matthew's School alum, **Brad Jenniges ('76)** was ordained a priest on May 31st at St. John's Abbey. Brad is the fifth of seven children born to Leona and Gerald Jenniges. After graduating from St. Matthew's School, Brad attended Brady High School, graduated from Humboldt High School, and went on to earn a degree in mathematics from the University of Minnesota.

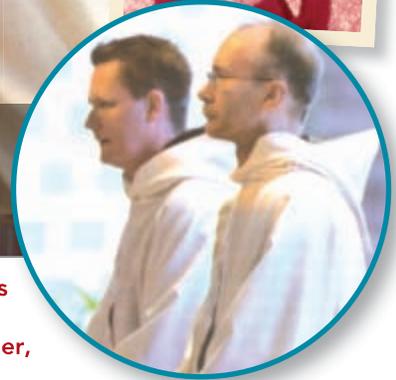
Brad lived and worked on the West Side after college and was an active member of St. Matt's parish life where he served as a lector and was elected to the parish pastoral council in 1988. In 1991, he joined the Benedictine monks at St. John's Abbey and took his vows the following year. In 2010, he began to pursue a new calling by preparing for the priesthood at St. John's School of Theology • Seminary. He is now the Assistant Pastor at St. Anthony and Seven Dolors in Albany, Minnesota.

In June, Brad came back to St. Matt's to celebrate Mass with his home parish. Congratulations, Fr. Brad Jenniges, and best wishes as you live out your vocation.



Bishop Kettler of the Diocese of St. Cloud ordains Brad Jenniges in May at St. John's University.

BELOW
Brad Jenniges
in 6th grade at
St. Matthew's
School.



RIGHT Just months before his ordination, Brad (in glasses) mourned the loss of his brother, Greg, who died of cancer.

"Snapshots" from Reunion Saturday



St. Matthew's School alums and friends gathered to celebrate community over good food and wine. Next spring it'll be the class of 1965's turn to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

All Gifts Will Be Doubled thru September 30!

An anonymous Alum has pledged to match dollar-for-dollar every contribution to Alums and Friends tuition assistance program.

The tuition assistance program helps ensure that West Side families have access to an affordable, high-quality Catholic education.

Please mail your contribution to:
Alums & Friends
St. Matthew's School
PO Box 7005
St. Paul, MN 55107-0005

From the Editor:

No Education Gap at Our School

KIDS COUNT, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is considered the premier source for data on child and family well-being in the United States. In their annual snapshot comparison of how children are doing, Minnesota is ranked in the top five states. But there's a few uncomfortable numbers that stand out.

When broken down by race and ethnicity, the study shows some notable gaps between children of color and their white peers in Minnesota. To cite just one statistic, the study says that by 4th grade, nearly 80% of Latino and African American children aren't hitting the benchmark in reading. While not a new problem, it has growing urgency.

The students falling behind in other schools are the same demographics as students at St. Matthew's School were before and as COS students are now. And yet our results have been so different. There is no education gap among our students. Need proof? Just look at where our 2010 graduates are headed this fall — to college (see below).

St. Matthew's School, and now COS, has a tradition of successfully educating children from all ethnicities and income levels, preparing them for success in high school with the expectation of college.

Here are a couple more numbers to think about:

- 68% of COS students qualify for free and reduced lunch.
- 84% of COS students receive tuition assistance.

At COS, tuition is not a barrier to a good education and your support has made that possible. Thank you for all the support you've given these students over the years. As you can see from the results below, it's making a real difference in these children's lives.

2014 COS Grads Head to High School

Of the 21 COS students who graduated last spring, 14 are attending Catholic high schools. Here's a look at where they're going:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 11 – Cretin-Derham Hall | 1 – St. Croix Lutheran |
| 2 – Christo Rey | 5 – Sibley |
| 1 – St. Agnes | 1 – Humboldt |



Class of 2010 as 8th grade students at St. Matthew's.

Class of 2010 — College Bound

Last year we learned that 100% of St. Matthew's Class of 2009 had graduated from high school and were headed to college or military service. That's an impressive statistic given the demographics of our students.

We're repeating our success this year. St. Matthew's Class of 2010 graduated from high school this spring, and we succeeded in contacting 17 of the 18 students. We learned that 16 of the alums are going to college in the fall and one is enlisted in the National Guard with plans to pursue a post-secondary degree later.

Congratulations to all of the graduates! Here's a list of where they're headed:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| College of St. Scholastica | Winona State |
| St. Mary's University of Winona | Dakota Community College |
| St. Olaf College | Inver Hills Community College |
| Augsburg College | Itasca Community College |
| Bethel University | Normandale Community College |
| University of Nebraska | |



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The Good News is published quarterly by
Alums & Friends of St. Matthew's

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Marlys Dressler Joyce ('49 & '51) submitted this 1942 photo of Sr. Carlissa's class of 41 first grade students. Marlys is in the second row from the right with her hands folded. Can you name the other students? Let us know: AlumniNews@St-Matts.org

