



THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ST. MATTHEW

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

"Scholarships are so important. It's going to make it possible for families that couldn't swing it alone."

Gilbert de la O
Formerly of
Neighborhood House

School Enrollment on the Rise

Doug Lieser, St. Matthew's Director of Education & Formation, has a message for anyone who's thought about Catholic education for their child but assumed it cost too much. "If you think you can't afford our school — think again. Alumni & Friends of St. Matthew's is raising money so any family who wants an education from St. Matt's can get it."

It's part of an effort to address a problem that many urban Catholic schools are facing around the country. Changing neighborhoods often result in declining enrollment because most families who live nearby can't afford the tuition. For many schools the result has been a kind of slow death as the student population shrinks and resources diminish.

Alumni & Friends of St. Matthew's is working to turn that around. The Alumni & Friends committee, together with the parish and school, have set two goals: first, raise money to cover the tuition for students who couldn't otherwise afford it; then get the message out to families that scholarships are available at St. Matthew's.

Doug thinks it's good for the families and the school. "For us to survive, it's the only way to do it. At the same time, we're living our Catholic mission by making our community better."

And he can see that it's starting to work. "Enrollment has gone down every year for the past 10 years. We're turning that around this year and next fall we expect to have a net increase in students. We've already got more kids registered for next year than we had last year. That's huge."

Gilbert de la O, who retired recently after 30 years with Neighborhood House, agrees that the scholarships are a great opportunity for families on the West Side. "Paying tuition is

going to be a challenge for some families, especially with the economy in a downturn. Scholarships are so important. It's going to make it possible for families that couldn't swing it alone."

While Gilbert likes to point out that he is a long time supporter of public schools, he thinks the schools on the West Side have changed from when he and his children attended. To him, they no longer feel like community schools, places with deep roots in the neighborhood. But he thinks that feeling still exists at St. Matthew's. "St. Matt's still has that spirit of a community school, a place where a kid goes where maybe his aunts, uncles, cousins, go. A place with history. That's what makes a community strong is schools. St. Matt's still has that."

Gilbert also thinks the small class size at St. Matthew's is a big plus, and Doug says that's not going to change. The goal, Doug says, will be to have about 20 kids per class.

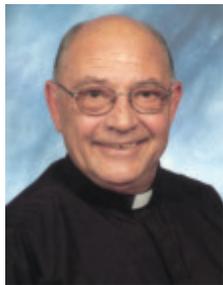
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Science Fair and More!
1st graders show off things they made from recycled items for the Science Fair. See page 6.



Fr. Steve's homilies are available on-line at www.st-matts.org

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Current total raised **\$88,050**

Goal is \$150,000 tuition aid by September 1st.

Join the Cause — It Could Save a Life and Change a Life

The following is a report on the work of Alumni & Friends written by John Riehle, Parish Administrator.

Last fall, the Alumni & Friends steering committee set a challenge to raise \$150,000 for tuition assistance and scholarships for students who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford St. Matthew's School. The opportunity to receive a high quality, Catholic education can make a real difference in the life of a child and where they end up as an adult. We're asking for your help to bring this opportunity to more kids on the West Side.

As of June 1, \$88,050 has been raised. That's great for the first nine months. And we still have time to surpass the \$150,000 level by September 1 — the beginning of the next school year.

We've received alumni gifts ranging from \$10 to \$15,000. Any size gift is welcome so please join the cause.

I am absolutely convinced that many low and moderate income families of the West Side never ever consider St. Matt's School for their children because they believe that the tuition is beyond their means. I am committed that no student ever be denied a Catholic education because of finances.

Thanks to you, I am able to go to a mom and dad and assure them that, because of the generosity of Alumni & Friends, there is a way for their son or daughter to receive a first class Catholic education at St. Matt's. You can be a miracle worker in the life of a child; your gift can make the difference.

We are in the business of changing and saving lives.

Thank you.

Stephen Adrian, Pastor

Student Enrollment, *continued from page 1*

“St. Matt's hasn't told its story enough. It's doing some good stuff.”

GILBERT DE LA O

Doug explains, “Maintaining a small class size is really important. We're going to stay small.”

Providing tuition assistance to families has been a policy for many years and reflects Fr. Steve Adrian's commitment to make Catholic education available to all children. But the practice wasn't strategically implemented until Doug became the Director of Education & Formation.

“Alumni & Friends now makes it possible to extend what we're doing. It gives us the financial means to reach more families.”

For families who wonder if the scholarships will be available to help them in the future, Doug says it comes down to trust, “We're dedicated to the mission of educating kids. So long as you're still dedicated, we'll find a way to make it happen.”

Gilbert de la O says his neighbor's children attend St. Matthew's and he's seen how it's made a difference for them. But he also thinks people don't realize what they've got with St. Matthew's. “St. Matt's hasn't told its story enough. It's doing some good stuff.”

Doug agrees, “Alumni & Friends is raising the money. Now we need to get the word out.”

St. Matthew's Made a Difference for Them

Ash Miller ('02) started life with a couple of strikes against her. Her mother was only 18 when Ash was born and until last year, her father didn't even know she existed. Shortly after her birth, Ash's mother gave up custody to Ash's grandmother who promptly enrolled her in St. Matthew's Child Care Center while she worked the night shift at the post office. Looking back, Ash ponders how her grandmother did it and concludes simply, "She's an amazing woman."

Ash's grandmother, who's Lutheran, was committed to sending Ash to a private school. Having grown up on the West Side, she knew about St. Matthew's and had confidence in it.

As a result, Ash grew up at St. Matthew's, attending first the Child Care Center, then preschool and kindergarten, till she graduated in 2002. Ash says, "I felt safe. I had fun. I was friends with most of the kids in my class....It's nice, such a small class, the teachers give you individual attention. And if something's wrong, the teachers know you, they can tell."

Ash remembers a parent-teacher conference in 8th grade with her teacher, Mr. Lieser and her grandmother, "Mr. Lieser was praising me a lot to my grandma. He mentioned that I was 'college material' and my grandma was 'Wow!' She just thought it was so cool."

Ash is the first member of her family to go to college. She will be a junior next year at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls where she is majoring in Spanish. "The path I'm taking now is to be a translator, so there will be a lot of fields I can work in." She also points out that she began studying Spanish in 4th grade, "So St. Matt's paved my way for that."

Ash doesn't claim any religious affiliation but she believes Catholic education gave her structure. "Going to St. Matt's helped form who I am, my morals and values."

Looking back at her grade school years, Ash calls herself a bit of a troublemaker, "Although I never got a pink slip." But she has some advice for current students, "All the troubles with classes – it's all worth it in the end. It paves the way. So don't cause trouble and pay attention."

Ash
Miller



In 2003, **Vincent Abrego ('05)** was in the 6th grade at Cherokee Heights Elementary, and his mother, Lucina Abrego, was worried about him. She explains, "Some kids were pressuring him to be in a gang. Once he told the kids he didn't want to join, he was getting threatened. Towards the end it was really bad. I had to pick him up at school."

If he stayed in public school, he'd go to Humboldt next where she figured the problem would just get worse. That was when she heard about St. Matthew's School from her niece. At the time, she didn't even know there was a school. She just thought it was a church. But her niece thought Vincent would like it and Lucina liked the idea, "I just didn't know if I could pay the tuition part."

That was when Lucina's mother heard about some scholarships being offered through Common Bond. Lucina jumped right on it and got both her boys enrolled at St. Matthew's. "The scholarships came just at the right time."

When asked what it was like to change schools in 7th grade, Vincent says, "I was nervous at first, but I liked it by the first week. I got along with everyone. Everybody made me feel welcome."

And, Vincent says, as soon as he switched schools, the gang members stopped pressuring him.

He said the work was harder, especially math, but the teachers helped him whenever he needed it. What he liked best was language arts and writing, something he still likes to do.

When asked, Lucina and Vincent agree that St. Matthew's made a big difference in their lives. Lucina says, "If he hadn't come to St. Matthew's, I think I would have lost him. The pressure was so great (to join the gang) he would have had to give in. And I would have failed him. Coming to St. Matthew's saved him."

Vincent agrees, "It kept me out of a lot of trouble. I got away from all of it."

Vincent will graduate from high school next year and while he's still undecided about his plans after that, Lucina expresses confidence in his future, "Now that he's older, he knows what's right and wrong. He has a good head on his shoulders."

Vincent
Abrego



Reunion Sunday — It Was Great!

Around 90 people came to St. Matthews for Reunion Sunday on May 4th where they celebrated mass, shared a meal and a lot of memories. Twenty-five members from the class of '58 came to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

A highlight of the event included a visit to the school. Parish administrator, John Riehle, played Sousa Marches over the loud speaker to give the alumni a little flash from the past. When an alum told John that she used to be the Group Announcer, he put her on the speaker to give the dismissal order. She got it right, "Group 1, Section 1, Grades 1 and 2. Group 1, Section 2, Grades 3 and 4...."



Alumni from classes that graduated before 1958.



Alumni from the class of '58.



Alumni from classes that graduated after 1958.



Guests at Reunion Sunday enjoyed brunch in the social hall before touring the school.

Photographs taken by Conor Sexton.

Joe Marthaler and
Theresa Blaeser on
their wedding day
in 1929.

Joseph Marthaler Celebrates 105th Birthday July 17

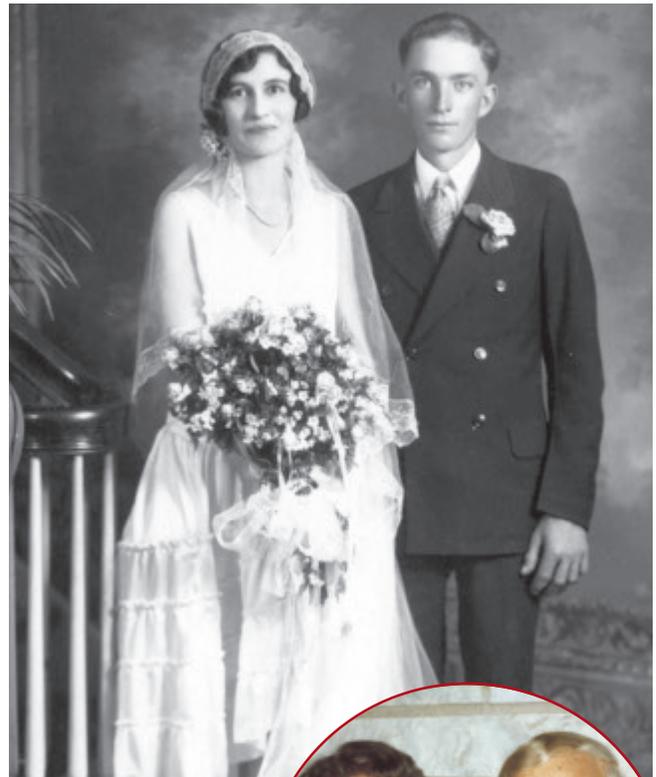
By Marian Wolters '51

Joseph Marthaler and Saint Matthew's Parish grew up together. Joe was born the year after the school was built. It was 1903 and West Saint Paul was mainly a farming community. His Marthaler grandparents had emigrated from Germany to Illinois. After a few years they came to West Saint Paul. That was 1852. They built a cabin in the woods near what is now the intersection of Oakdale and Marie. In 1863 they built a larger limestone home a mile north on the new "German Road" which is now Oakdale near Lothenbach.

The Marthaler Farm was 160 acres between Wentworth and Marie. There were six daughters and one son in the second generation. Native Americans stopped at the farm to trade beads for bread on their route between Kaposia and Mendota. In 1887, son, Henry, married Angeline Denzer at the Assumption Church. That same year Saint Matthew's Parish celebrated its first Mass. Joseph was born to Henry and Angeline, the seventh of eight children. Three generations were living together in the seven room house. Joseph's grandfather died in 1890 and his grandmother about ten years later.

Joe's older brothers attended Gladstone School near the farm. Joe and his sisters attended Saint Matthew's, arriving by horse and buggy. They parked it anywhere they could near school. Sometimes it was in a garage on George Street or on Stryker Avenue at Curly Moran's (now Mazlatlan Mexican Restaurant).

Joe left school before finishing 8th grade to work on the family farm. Theresa Blaeser, three years younger, also went to Saint Matthew's. She walked or took a streetcar to school. They met and in 1929 Joe and Theresa married and lived in the home-place with his parents raising five children who also attended Saint Matthew's. Joe's parents lived their last days with them. His father had a terrible disease which left him unable to walk. He died in 1938. His mother's heart attacks had Joe getting the priest from St. Matthew's several times before she died in 1948.



(RIGHT) Joe and
Theresa in photo
taken in early
1990's.



The Marthaler's took their potatoes, grapes, and berries to the St. Paul Farmers' Market and traded eggs for groceries. The farm had a dairy herd until 1956. In 1980 Joe and Theresa retired from farming as homes and businesses encroached on their original borders. Joe took care of Theresa throughout her last illness until she died in 1996. He maintained the yard and home until 2005 even cutting the lawn with a riding mower in the summer of 2004 when he was 101.

Joe and Theresa were active in the parish Men's Club, Rosary Society, and Leisure Club. Joe now lives in a senior residence in West Saint Paul just north of what was the Marthaler Farm. He continues to amaze his family with his constant faith and sweet disposition. Joe will celebrate 105 years in July.

Saint Matthew's Parish and the Marthaler Family have much in common. The parish buildings and the Marthaler home were built on the same foundations; rock from the limestone quarry where Cerenity Senior Care is now located. Both have a long history on the West Side and both have a tradition of respect, caring, and hard work.

St. Matt's Students Love Their Science!

May was a busy month for budding scientists. May 8th was St. Matt's annual **Science Fair**. Students from 1st–8th grade presented exhibits which ranged from the cool — underwater exploding fireworks, to the exciting — exploding volcano, to the just plain gross — a bucket of bacteria.

Science Fair



Students explain results of their experiments at Science Fair.

On May 12, 4th and 5th graders were treated to a demonstration by **3M Visiting Wizard**, Jim Pedginski. Visiting Wizards are 3M employees or retirees who conduct free demonstrations at schools to help build students' interest in science. While learning about cryogenics, students used liquid nitrogen to turn a banana into a hammer and then pound a nail.

5th graders got a special treat. They participated in **STARBASE**, a rigorous one-week science, math and technology curriculum where they learned to think like scientists and engineers while exploring the wonders of flight and space.

STARBASE



STARBASE brings students to the Minnesota Air National Guard to learn about science and engineering.

3M Visiting Wizard



Jim Pedginski helps students learn about cryogenics — how molecules behave at very low temperatures.

St. Matt's Grad Chosen CDH Commencement Speaker

Diana Kessel ('04) graduated from Cretin Derham Hall (CDH) this spring and was chosen to be their commencement speaker this year. Diana was also recognized for her academic achievements in English, choir and drama.

Speaking at her high school graduation was something Diana said she has wanted to do since her 8th grade graduation at St. Matthew's. At that time, Diana asked and was given permission to speak at the graduate luncheon. It went well and she felt like despite the ups and downs of her final years in grade school, it allowed her to connect with her classmates and leave on a positive note.

To be the commencement speaker at CDH, students were invited to write a speech and present it to a committee.

She said her inspiration for the speech was the song Defying Gravity from her favorite musical, *Wicked*. "It's where the main character is transforming and she

"I encourage everyone to walk through life with an open mind and heart..."



realizes she has to do it herself, she's on her own... and we've got to do that too, do it for ourselves."

In her speech, she acknowledges that it won't be easy "It'll be a terrifying transition from our homes to wherever we may go next....I know I may see a washing machine next year and wonder if it's just a really big microwave."

She also took the opportunity to thank the teachers and parents as well as challenge her classmates, "I encourage everyone to walk through life with an open mind and heart....There are fascinating and weird people out there, for better or worse, and our greatest pains and happiness will come from finding these people."

Diana will be attending Viterbo University in LaCrosse, WI, where she has been accepted into the Theater program. We wish her continued success.

From the Editor

Family's Gift is Example to Follow

On June 19th, newspapers announced a \$10 million grant (\$1 million annually for 10 years) from an anonymous family foundation to support "struggling" urban Catholic elementary schools in the Twin Cities. St. Matthew is one of 15 schools to be included in the grant.

This is great news. It means St. Matthew's, and schools like ours, who have been trying to educate children whose families can't afford tuition, will receive much needed help. We don't know yet exactly how much money this will mean for our school. Each of the schools identified will receive a yearly grant based on how many of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch. But as the details emerge, we will be sure to share them in future newsletters.

We do know this — while this grant is important, crucial even, it does not solve all our problems. What will ensure St. Matthew's long term success is the

combined financial support from grants, tuition and contributions from Alumni & Friends.

And this was the intention of the family who made the gift. **They want other donors, big and small, to know that these Catholic schools are worth your investment.** They want their gift to be an example that others will follow.

Only about 30% of families at St. Matthew's can afford to pay the full tuition and the full tuition reflects only half the actual costs it takes to educate a child for a year. Everybody who has a child at St. Matthew's pays something, but whether they pay the full tuition or a small monthly token, there's ground to make up.

So "Hooray!" for the grant and "Thanks!" to the family who made the gift. Now let's keep working so St. Matthew's will be able to provide a high quality, Catholic education to kids on the West Side for another hundred years.
— Maggie Lee, Editor



**PARISH COMMUNITY OF
SAINT MATTHEW**
490 Hall Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55107

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Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, MN
Permit No. 3673

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Published Bi-monthly by Alumni & Friends of St. Matthew's.

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All expenses associated with editorial, printing & mailing are donated.

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St. Paul, MN 55107

Pastor: Fr. Steve Adrian

Parish Office: 651-224-9793

Weekend Liturgies:

Saturday - 5 p.m.

Sunday - 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

www.st-matts.org

EVENTS calendar

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY — July 14-18

St. Matthew's parish members are invited to help build a house in Minneapolis. There is a need for on-site volunteers, food servers, nurses and site hosts. For those unable to travel or pound a nail, you can still get involved. To find out more, contact: Ginny Roethler 651-222-2867.

BRADY HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF '88 HAVING 20 YEAR REUNION — July 26 & 27

The Planning Committee is trying to reach as many graduates as possible and needs your help! If you're in this group or know someone who is, please send an e-mail to Kathy (Shea) Zent: echozent@hotmail.com.

SCHOOL REGISTRATION NIGHTS — August 12 & 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Families not yet registered can sign up their children for the school year and find out about financial aid and scholarships.

FEAST OF ASSUMPTION MASS AND PICNIC IN CHEROKEE PARK — August 14 at 6:00 p.m.

Join us for this annual celebration. Hot dogs & hamburgers will be provided by the Men's Club. Bring a dish to pass and enjoy the evening. In case of rain mass will be at church.

LABOR DAY MASS — September 1 at 9:00 a.m.

REUNION FOR CLASS OF 1955 — September 8

For more information, contact George Schmid, 651-454-2410.

REUNION FOR CLASS OF 1968 — September 13

For more information, contact Monica Weigenant Bahls, 651-459-0048.

FALL FESTIVAL — September 20 & 21

Plans are in the works for this year's Festival and, like always, they'll include good food, music and fellowship. If you'd like to be involved, call the Parish Center at 651-224-9793. Hope to see you there.