

# ALUMNI ARROW

## NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022

### MIND, BODY, SPIRIT – AND A PUPPY!

Since it was established in 1929, St. Sebastian Parish School has been dedicated to developing the whole student: mind, body and spirit. Catholic values are placed at the center of all learning, and these values are strengthened through the religion curriculum, sacramental preparation, community service activities, daily prayers, weekly Mass, and many more programs and activities designed to guide students as they grow spiritually and morally. In recent years, St. Sebastian Parish School has taken steps to expand on this solid base with additional efforts to address the social and emotional needs of the students.

#### Weller, the Therapy Dog in Training

This is where the puppy comes in! Principal Anthony Rohr, who in recent years developed an appreciation of therapy dogs, tried for months to bring a therapy dog to visit our school. He was unsuccessful because all the dogs were too busy with visits to places like hospitals and senior centers or unable to visit due to pandemic protocols. But, by chance he and his wife found out about a litter of golden retriever puppies, and they realized it was a win-win situation: Their family would welcome a new dog, which would help them move forward after the recent loss of both of their family dogs, and the school would (hopefully) have regular access to a therapy dog, which would help students and teachers decrease stress and increase smiles.



Principal Rohr's puppy, Weller, will begin training to be a therapy dog this winter. While there are no guarantees that Weller is suited to be a therapy dog, Principal Rohr is hopeful that training will go well and that Weller will

start visiting the school as an official therapy dog next school year. Principal Rohr introduced Weller to the students in January with a surprise visit to all the classrooms. He shares this story of his visit with the kindergarten classes: As he was leaving, he stopped and invited one of the students to come say goodbye to Weller. The student was having a bad day and was visibly upset, but after petting Weller for a few minutes, she calmed down, her tears were replaced with a smile, and she went back to class ready to learn. Principal Rohr notes, "This is exactly the impact a therapy dog can have: When you are able to address students' social and emotional needs, they are more successful in learning."



#### The Friendly Program

In 2020, St. Sebastian Parish School began participating in "Friendly," a national social and emotional learning program designed for schools. Friendly, which is an official partner with the National Catholic Educational Association, aims to tackle the friendship challenges every child faces by teaching students what it means not only to have good friendships, but also how to be really good friends. Friendly incorporates strategies for developing the social and emotional skills that research shows lead to greater success and happiness later in life. The program was founded by parents who saw the rise of smartphones and other technology result in the most technologically connected — and yet most socially disconnected — generation ever.

*(continued inside)*

# ALUMNI UPDATES

## Class of 1953

**Bob Haas** wrote in to say, “When reading the Fall 2021 Alumni Arrow about the Class of 1949, it brought back memories of when I played football as a member of the 1953 class under coach **Mel Kramer**. We went on to win the CYO grade school football championship for the 1952 season. At the awards ceremony, each player received a small gold football with the letter ‘S’ and dated 1952, which I still proudly cherish. Thanks for bringing back those memories.” Bob kindly sent a picture of his treasured football memento.



## Class of 1971

**Maureen McCarty Slone** retired in 2016 and wrote to us from Belize. Maureen shares that her husband, Craig, accepted a position in Belize, and they will be splitting their time between Belize and their home in North Carolina for the next several years. Maureen and Craig have two adult children: Holly (35) and Kelly (25).

### Please Share Your Memories!

Do you have a favorite story or memory from your school days? Email us at [alumni@stsebastian.org](mailto:alumni@stsebastian.org) or contact Kathy Holaday: 330-836-2233 ext. 113.

## Class of 1972

**Alice Maher Luse, Anne Najeway Vainer** and friends have planned a fantastic 50th reunion for the Class of 1972 for Sept. 9-10, 2022. On Friday, Sept. 9, join your classmates for drinks at Thirsty Dog Brewery at 6 p.m. On Saturday, Sept. 10, activities include optional Mass at St. Sebastian at 4:30 p.m., dinner at Portage Country Club, and an after-party at the home of **Orville and Kathy Beringer Reed**. Contact Anne Vainer at [annevainer@att.net](mailto:annevainer@att.net) or (330) 687-1550 if you have any questions. Anne provided the wonderful photo below of the Class of 1972’s First Communion Day in 1966.



## Classes of 1972, 1973, 1974

Does this guy look familiar to you? **Stan Najeway** coached 8th-grade basketball at St. Sebastian Parish School for the classes of 1972-1974. Stan is married to an alumna, **Patricia Long Najeway '44**, and all five of their children (**Stan Jr. '71**, **Anne Vainer '72**, **Steve '76**, **Cecelia '77**, and **John '84**) and a grandchild (**Madison Najeway '19**) are alumni. Stan, who has been a familiar face at St. Sebastian Parish for decades, is featured in the current issue of Northeast Ohio Catholic magazine as part of the Diocese of Cleveland's 2022 Catholic Charities appeal. Stan's smiling face will also show up in the video that the Cleveland Diocese will play at all Masses Feb. 19-20. As part of the video recording session, Stan stopped at the St. Sebastian gym to shoot some baskets and reminisce about his coaching days. (Photo courtesy of Bruce Gates.)



At 97, former coach Stan Najeway's form is still solid!

## Classes of 1978, 1982, 1987

This picture of a CYO basketball team turned up in the parish archives without any identifying information. The picture was posted on the school's Facebook site, and **Eric Schreiner '82** quickly identified his teammates and coaches. **Christopher O'Connell '82** added, "We were a fun, hard working group and Champs 3 years in a row!!!!" Several people commented on their admiration for the coach in this picture, **Ronald Shaw**, who passed away on Dec. 19, 2021. Mr. Shaw and his wife Donna had twin sons who graduated from St. Sebastian: **Ronald Shaw, Jr. '78** and **Thomas '78**. Ron Jr. is also shown in this picture in his role as his father's assistant coach. Ronald Shaw, Sr. was a long-time basketball coach at St. Sebastian Parish School, and he also coached youth football and baseball. Coach Shaw made an impression on the lives of many of his athletes, and news of his death prompted many comments on Facebook from alumni, parishioners, and school parents who remembered him fondly. For example, **Dave Meeker '87** commented, "I'm saddened to hear of the passing of a great guy - Mr. Ron Shaw. He was our grade school basketball coach and ... an usher at the church ... and every single time he was in that

church for a Mass and we were there, he'd come up and give the best smile and firm handshake. He was a really great person and really big part of growing up. What a beautiful human being." **Marlon Balana '87** added, "Yes! He certainly and truly made an impression on me at a young age. Such a positive influence. We were so lucky to have him around us during those years."

Back Row (L-R): Coach Ronald Shaw, Eure Benson '82, Eric Schreiner '82, Dan Rosso '82, Patrick Lyons '82, Rick Davis '82, Ronald Shaw, Jr. '78; Front Row: Mike Luby '82, Chris Pepe, David Fenn '82, Eddy Zsembik '82, Chris O'Connell '82



## Miss Melane Francis 1939-2022

Melane Francis passed away January 13, 2022. Miss Francis worked at St. Sebastian Parish School for 40 years, including 35 years as a classroom teacher. She also worked as a reading specialist and as principal of the Parish School of Religion for many years. Rest in Peace, Miss Francis, knowing that you had a positive impact on decades (and generations!) of students at our school. Pictured here, Miss Francis is surrounded by her last class of first graders (St. Sebastian Class of 2021) at their "Hats Off to Miss Francis" farewell party.



## Class of 2012

**Maria Paparella** (pictured below, fifth from left) was featured in a Nov. 17 article in the Akron Beacon Journal for her role as founder of Chair-ity, a non-profit organization that helps those leaving foster care. The article focused on the non-profit's fundraiser, "Tailgating for Chair-ity," at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. According to Chair-ity's Facebook page, the event raised over \$76,000 to help young adults make the transition from foster care to independent living. The event included a "tailgate" meal, which guests enjoyed while watching



a Cleveland Browns football game, as well as a basket raffle, a silent auction and a cornhole tournament. Chair-ity provides those leaving foster care with furniture and other household items as they start life on their own. Chair-ity is based in Cleveland but serves six counties: Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, Medina, Stark, and Summit. The goal is to ensure a successful transition to independent living for young adults who age out of the foster care system by turning their house into a home. In December 2021, Chair-ity was selected as a "Diff Maker" by the Cleveland Cavaliers, which gave Chair-ity special recognition during a home game, including images on the "Humongotron" video scoreboard. Maria says, "I was honored to have Chair-ity's name and mission in front of so many people in one setting; it was an incredible way to educate and inform so many local peoples about the population we work with and our mission." For more details about Chair-ity, visit [www.chair-ity.org](http://www.chair-ity.org).

## Classes of 2018-19

**Andrew Powell '18** received his Boy Scout Eagle Scout Award at the Troop 96 Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony on Jan. 29. The Eagle Scout award is the highest rank a Boy Scout can achieve, requiring the scout to earn 21 merit badges and to demonstrate leadership and community service by organizing and completing a special project. Andrew's Eagle Scout project is well known to all current students at St. Sebastian Parish



School. Andrew and his helpers constructed a large "gaga pit" on the school playground. A gaga pit is a small playing field with a low wall around it. The game is played like dodgeball, but players may only eliminate their opposition by striking the ball below their opponents' knees, with the goal of being the last person standing. St. Sebastian's gaga pit quickly became the most-coveted playground activity, requiring weekly scheduling by grade level to make sure everyone gets a chance to play! Pictured here (L-R), lifelong friends **Luka Krejsa '18**, **Andrew**, **Michael Puglia '18** and **Ben Phillip '18** celebrate Andrew's achievement at the Court of Honor ceremony.

Three St. Sebastian graduates were selected as 2021-22 officers for St. Vincent-St. Mary High School's Mu Alpha Theta organization, which is a national mathematics honor society: **Olivia Kindbom '19** (junior representative), **Elizabeth Schlueter '19** (corresponding secretary), and **Xavier Vesco '18** (senior representative).



Several St. Sebastian alumni were inducted to the National Honor Society at St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in October, including those pictured here: Back Row (L-R) : **J.P. Rybka '19**, **Ethan Wyszynski '19**, **Shane Adamczyk '19**, **Noah Meyer '19**, **Jason Walter '19**, **Andy Thomas '19**, Front Row (L-R): **Mary Hanlon '19**, **Olivia Kindbom '19**, **Elizabeth Schlueter '19**, **Fiona Yori '19**, **Sophie Walker '19**, **Julia Pentasuglio '19**, **Olivia Ovall '19**, and **Dillon Weems '19**. Not pictured: **David Armbrust '19**, **Kathryn Kastelic '19**, **Michael Puglia '18**, and **Elizabeth Saliga '19**.

## MIND, BODY, SPIRIT, *continued from the cover*

Our school uses Friendly's biblical model, which teaches students God's design for friendship. Using the lens of scripture, the Friendly program focuses on teaching self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. With each unit, the Friendly program incorporates different scripture verses and provides activities, handouts, and even graphics such as the one on the cover of this newsletter to help the lesson take root. The school often combines Friendly lessons with activities in which older students work with their younger "buddies," helping to foster a sense of community throughout the school.

Principal Rohr states that educating the learners at St. Sebastian Parish School requires a focus not only on the mind, but also on the body and spirit. He explains, "We know that emotions affect how and why students learn and that social and emotional literacy supports success in every part of a student's life, and this is why we believe the Friendly program has been such a great addition to our curriculum. Learning social-emotional skills is vital, especially given the change and uncertainty we have faced over the last two years during the pandemic. Our teachers know they can't help students unlock their full academic potential without first unlocking their full

social-emotional self. Our school and our incredibly dedicated teachers have worked so hard to provide interactive lessons and engaging activities to strengthen the school culture and teach students the skills they need to be successful in school, in relationships, and in life."

For more information on the school's activities — and updates on Weller! — follow St. Sebastian Parish School on social media (**Facebook:** [saintsebastianparishschool](https://www.facebook.com/saintsebastianparishschool); **Instagram:** [st.sebastianschool](https://www.instagram.com/stsebastianschool); **Twitter:** [@stsebschool](https://twitter.com/stsebschool)), or read the school's newsletter online: [www.stsebastian.org/school/brick-lot-bulletin](http://www.stsebastian.org/school/brick-lot-bulletin).

## #WEGIVECATHOLIC 2021 EFFORT RAISES \$21,055 FOR ZWISLER HALL PROJECT

Thank you to everyone who supported the 2021 #weGiveCatholic effort on Giving Tuesday (Nov. 30, 2021). This year, the donations were directed to the school's "Lights, Camera, Action" effort to fund improvements to the audio, visual and lighting systems in Zwisler Hall. Thanks to the generosity of more than 100 donors, **the Foundation surpassed its \$20,000 goal for #weGiveCatholic by \$1,000!**

Upgrading the audio, visual and lighting systems in Zwisler Hall is very costly, so the funds raised through the #weGiveCatholic effort will be combined with funds raised at the 2022 St. Sebastian Spectacular during the paddle raise for the "Lights, Camera, Action" project. The #weGiveCatholic donations got the project off to a great start, and we are so very thankful to everyone who donated. Special thanks to the students who helped us promote the effort by showing off their smiles during the photo shoots!



## ++ *We Will Remember ...* ++

The Alumni Association extends our sincerest sympathy to the families and friends of our deceased alumni (Oct. 2021-Jan. 2022). If you learn of the passing of a St. Sebastian alumnus, please contact us by phone at 330-836-2233 x119 or by email at [alumni@stsebastian.org](mailto:alumni@stsebastian.org).

Clarence J. Swedenburg '38, July 1, 2021  
Jane Cahill Kovacic '41, January 6, 2022  
Patricia McDermott Strigle '41, November 15, 2021  
Patricia Clark Saunders-Barnes '45, Sept. 28, 2021  
Joseph L. Metzger '47, November 21, 2021

Marjorie Mehigan Durbin '48, December 21, 2021  
Patricia Abraham Morin '51, November 2, 2021  
James W. Ferraro '53, November 18, 2021  
Pauline Robert (Crouse) Chase '56, Nov. 15, 2021  
MaryAnn Amer Steiner '77, October 25, 2021

## ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

The Alumni Scholarship Endowment was established by the St. Sebastian Parish Foundation in 2013 to provide financial assistance to students attending St. Sebastian Parish School. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of the St. Sebastian community, in 2016 the fund received enough donations to become an endowment that provides tuition assistance on a yearly basis. What a wonderful way to make a lasting contribution for the benefit of St. Sebastian Parish School! Listed below are donors who gave to the Alumni Scholarship Endowment from January, 2021 to January, 2022. The St. Sebastian Foundation and the parish school families who benefit from this fund are deeply appreciative of their generosity! Gifts to this fund can be made at any time online at [www.stsebastian.org/school/alumni/scholarship-endowment](http://www.stsebastian.org/school/alumni/scholarship-endowment).

Anonymous

Janet Ciotola

1940 Jeanne Ott, in memory of Conrad C. Ott

1943 Lawrence Halter, in memory of Sandra J. Halter and Sharon L. Halter Hampton

1943 David Keeney, in memory of Richard Keeney Class of 1946

1945 Thomas L. Savalan, in memory of Malvina Savalan Cummins

1949 John and Kathy Bachmann, in memory of John Beringer

1949 Edward Dannemiller

1949 Toni Schapansky, in memory of Betty and Joann Augustine

1950 Ron Karg, in memory of Emily Sue Anderson Karg

1951 Tim Scanlon, in memory of Maureen Spearman Scanlon Class of 1951

1955 Charles A. and Theresa Peter

1955 Thomas Rhodenbaugh

1957 John Reichart, in memory of Marie J. Lynch

1958 Dennis McAleese, in memory of the Deceased Classmates of 1958

1960 Robert B. Floyd

1961 Angela Devore, in memory of Angelina Lobello

1961 Ronald and Margaret Elsner

1961 Mike and Ginny McGuckin

1961 Ginny and Mike Prueter, in memory of Ralph Del Greco

1962 David L. Osborne, in memory of David R. Osborne

1965 Anne Lynett Clark

1965 Bob and Nancy May

1966 Katherine Hatton and Richard Bilotti

1968 Susan Patnode Wehrmann, in memory of Michael Patnode Class of 1958

1969 Ann Besch

1970 Lori Gingold, in memory of Ann and Kirk Gingold

1970 Frank LaRose

1972 Mr. and Mrs. Michael Rote

1973 Teresa Redle Brostowitz

1973 Larry and Kathy Dannemiller, in memory of Thomas, Evelyn and Jere Dannemiller

1973 Thomas and Heather Mascolo, in memory of Robert Mascolo

1973 Kaye Kipp Rowe

1977 Jackie Savage, in memory of Teri Peterson

1978 Kelly Montgomery Hoy

1978 Paul Kearnes, in memory of Thomas and Rosemarie Kearnes

1985 Anne and Andy Dennée

2001 Max Bedell, in honor of Mike and Pat Bedell

2008 Sholar Petit, in memory of Jerry Petit

2009 Jimmy Ciotola

2009 Madison Petit Klue, in memory of Jerry Petit

2012 Julie Ciotola

2013 Olivia Petit, in memory of Jerry Petit

*Thank  
you!*

### Send us your Alumni Updates!

We love to hear from our alumni! Please let us know what you are doing. Email us at [alumni@stsebastian.org](mailto:alumni@stsebastian.org) or use the online form: [stsebastian.org/school/alumni/contact](http://stsebastian.org/school/alumni/contact).