



ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH SCHOOL'S

BRICK LOT *Bulletin*

November 2023

From the Principal's Office



Congratulations, St. Sebastian Parish School, on earning the National Blue Ribbon School Award!

What a great honor to be selected by the U.S. Department of Education for this national award. St. Sebastian Parish School is only the eighth Akron school to earn this award since it was founded in 1982. This year, our school was one of only 40 private schools across the country to receive the award. It is noteworthy that 36 of those 40 schools are Catholic schools, which affirms the strength of the Catholic school model, which strives to educate the whole student – mind, body and soul.

I am immensely proud of our school and full of gratitude for this tremendous community. The award is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our students, teachers, staff, parents, and parishioners. It underscores our shared mission of being dedicated to Christ and committed to excellence in education. Special thanks to our faculty and staff, who worked on the lengthy and rigorous application process, and to all the parent and staff volunteers who helped us celebrate this award.



While it was hard to keep this secret, Fr. Valencheck and I had fun planning the surprise announcement to the students, teachers and staff on Sept. 19. Zwisler Hall was full of excitement as I shared the news, the school band played the fight song, and students enjoyed doughnuts with blue icing while watching the official announcement video from the U.S. Department of Education. I hope you have had a chance to view the video of the raucous cheering once "St. Sebastian Parish School" finally appeared on the screen, it's priceless! For a link to the video, more Blue Ribbon Award details, pictures, and a proclamation from Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan declaring Oct. 2, 2023 "St. Sebastian Parish School Day," visit stsebastian.org/school/blueribbon.

We are grateful that so many families were able to join us on the Friday after the announcement for a National Blue Ribbon School Celebration on the playground, including blue decorations, blue cotton candy, blue M&M's candies, blue fruit punch, and a DJ playing music. Thank you to the many parents who jumped into action to help prepare all the goodies, set up, serve, and clean up!

On Oct. 2, we were honored to have Bishop Malesic (pictured here with Fr. Valencheck to his left and me and Weller to the right) join us to celebrate Mass, which included beautiful songs sung by our junior high choir. Thank you to Mr. Beshore, the choir, all the servers, ambassadors, and participants in the Mass. Two superintendents from the Office of Catholic Education also attended this Mass and toured the school. Both commented that they had always known



of our academic excellence, but they were also very impressed with the Catholic culture of the school.

I am looking forward to representing the school at the National Blue Ribbon School award ceremony in Washington, D.C., Nov. 16-17. Congratulations to 2nd-grade teacher Sue Vernon, who has taught at our school for a remarkable 36 years, who was voted by her peers to attend the ceremony with Fr. Valencheck and myself.

I would be remiss if I didn't pause to thank everyone who helped do all the usual things to get this unusual year off to a great start. During the first quarter, the school was so thankful for the efforts of HASA (Open House, Monster Mash, Park/Play/Pray, staff lunches); the Welcoming Committee (Welcome Back Coffee, New Family Picnic, Pre-K and K Dinner); Socials Committee (8th-grade pool party, Celebrity Night, Trunk or Treat); the Athletic Booster Club/coaches (fall sports); Sally Weakland, Maggie Blischak, Jennifer Smee (Power of the Pen); Robert Dedinsky, Debra Landis, and Megan Sanford (MathCOUNTS); Scott Mason (school band); and Jeff Beshore (choir). Thank you, and God bless you for all you do!

Yours in Christ,

Anthony Rohr
Principal

From the STEM Coordinators

Grades K-3, by Susan Vernon

Apples, Pumpkins, and Engineering!

The autumn season is one of the best times for favorite STEM activities in the primary grades! Students in the first and second grades studied apples in so many ways: identifying parts with a diagram, tasting, weighing, graphing favorites, and testing predictions about sinking or floating. The children made apple prints and bountiful trees with red button apples, and of course, they read about Johnny Appleseed! Second graders also completed their annual study of bones – hand, wrist, and arm – and then created spooky black crayon and vegetable oil X-ray drawings! During the seasonal leaf walk across our beautiful campus, children collected specimens for leaf activities. They made amazing leaf rubbings and preserved their favorites in a leaf booklet. Our kindergarten classes visited Kingsway Pumpkin Farm in Hartville, where they picked out their own pumpkins and learned so much about this seasonal gourd! Third graders



are employing the scientific method through a paper airplane activity! By changing variables, they are attempting to beat the teacher's model and win the competition for the longest flight. All classes are currently exploring a new online learning program, IXL, that provides review and enrichment specifically tailored to each grade level's curriculum. The first quarter was an exciting time for our primary students!

Grades 4-6, by Jennifer Slegus

The 4th-grade class has been super busy at the start of this school year. The students were engaged in a "Shark Week," during which they learned all about sharks through research, math activities, grammar games, and science labs. The students had to build shark cages using only specific materials, it had to fit a diver (supplied), and be free-standing. The cage that was able to hold the most weight won. One group reached almost 100 pounds! Students also completed a "Cartesian Diver" lab while learning about gas properties. During all these activities, students were challenged to take on the role of entrepreneurs as they portrayed participants on the TV show "Shark Tank." They had to invent a new good or service and then create a company, a logo, a slogan, a print ad and a commercial for their product. The students then went in front of the four judges in hopes of getting someone to invest in their idea. The students have also been learning about different animal and plant adaptations. They completed a simulation lab in which they discovered the differences and similarities of birds' beaks. They used different tools (ex: toothpick for spearing and clothespin for pinching) and imaginary food (ex: beans for grubs and marbles for snails) to show how well birds' beaks are adapted to eat their specific food.

The 5th-grade class compared the Scientific Method and the Engineering Design Process in the "Penny Boat Challenge" lab. They designed a boat using only foil and then tested the buoyancy by adding pennies to their design. They were able to improve their design and retest the buoyancy. The 5th graders set up and conducted their own experiments. They had to

make a hypothesis, write the steps of the procedure, complete a data table, create a graph of the results, and write a conclusion. The 6th-grade class completed an online "Gizmo" lab in which students simulated the greenhouse effect and learned how it is affecting the planet. Sixth graders also practiced using the scientific method by completing a "Mystery Powder" lab. Students were given four known substances to test with vinegar, iodine, water, and red cabbage juice. They recorded the reactions/results. Then, they were given a mystery powder to test. They compared their tests of the mystery powder to the results of the known powders to determine what their mystery powder was.



Grades 7-8, by Megan Sanford

Our 7th-grade students studied the engineering design process, empirical evidence, and the scientific method. We have been busy doing scientific investigations and STEM activities to explore concepts learned in class. One of their favorites was a "Water Drop" lab, in which they learned about cohesion, adhesion and surface tension. They also enjoyed a lab exploring the scientific method with candy pumpkins and different liquids, including water, milk, Sprite soda, and vinegar. They made a hypothesis of what would happen when a candy pumpkin was dropped in a cup of each liquid.

In 8th-grade science classes, students studied experimental design and data analysis. They conducted several classroom experiments to practice their skills of writing procedures, testing hypotheses, taking measurements, and collecting data. In their recent data project, students took on the role of CDC medical researchers to look for trends causing a zombie outbreak. Students discussed important statistical topics like trends, variation, and correlation.

All of junior high students are preparing science fair projects on a topic of their choice. Science fair is an opportunity for students to apply the scientific method as they independently research an idea and design an experiment. Science fair projects give students an opportunity to explore science outside of the standard curriculum. Participating in the science fair teaches life skills of inquiry, design, time management, and communication. Junior high students have also enjoyed creating logic/suspense stories. Many of them contributed school-related mysteries and deductive logic projects using video, print, and picture clues/



puzzles, which are intended for classroom use for grades 5-8.

Falls Sports Wrap-Up

Cross Country

Our cross country team, which included 39 runners in grades 1-8, had another banner year. Congratulations to the boys grades 6-8 cross country team, which won the CYO championships for the third year in a row! Special congratulations to Nathaniel Chuba, who took first place in the championship race, and to Joe Haller, who placed second.

The girls grades 6-8 team also had fantastic results at the championship meet, earning the runner-up trophy! Special congratulations to Annie Haller for taking second place overall. Our boys team for grades 5 and under won every meet. To top it off, these young runners took fourth place in the state at the Ohio middle school cross country championship meet in the 6th-grade and under category in Columbus on Oct. 22, with James Sellers placing 12th out of 263 runners. Way to go, Terriers!



Soccer

Congratulations to our girls grades 6-8 soccer team, which recorded a phenomenal 10-0 undefeated regular season! In playoffs, they made it to the championship game, taking home the runner-up trophy in the 8th-grade division. There were six CYO teams in soccer this year. The younger teams were not eligible for playoffs, but they all had winning seasons, with a combined record of 14-6-1. Our boys grades 5-6 team had a very impressive 6-2 season, losing a heartbreaker in overtime in the playoffs. The DD Soccer program (grades 1-2) had five teams with 61 players, and the Soccer Stars program (Pre-K and K) had six teams with 75 players.

Football and Volleyball

This year St. Sebastian had one flag football team in grades 1-2. The team held their own, had a lot of fun, won some games, and showed a lot of promise for the future. Our grades 7-8 football team was very competitive in a tough division. This fall, we fielded four girls volleyball teams, with all four teams having a fun season and showing great improvement.

St. Sebastian Wins 5th STEM Education Award

For the fifth year in a row, St. Sebastian Parish School earned the Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education and Student Research! Congratulations and thank you to our students and the following 19 educators, who also earned individual awards: Michelle Antochow, Maggi Blischak, Jennifer Bradley, Kathy Cardarelli, Giana Dandrea, Robert Dedinsky, Christina Friedl, Michele Kellner, Debra Landis, Cassie Laube, Anne Riede, Allyn Rose, Megan Sanford, Jennifer Slegus, Jennifer Smee, Lesley Starcher, Sue Vernon, Sally Weakland and Mary Weitzel. St. Sebastian Parish School was one of only 48 schools in the state of Ohio to earn the Award for Excellence, which is awarded annually by the Ohio Academy of Science.



Students in the News

Student Council

Congratulations to the following student council members who were elected by their classmates for the 2022-23 school year: Benjamin Hagenbush (president); Owen Lawson (vice president); Gemma Griffin (secretary); Ryan Senko (treasurer); and Drew Johnson, Nathan Paxton, Luca Hall, and Talen Bills (room representatives).

Student Ambassadors

Our school's Student Ambassadors program welcomed 10 new members this fall: Jackson Edgar, Gemma Griffin, Anlin Haller, Kevin Hanna, Clare Kenny, Evan Rea, Ellen Rothkopf, Madelyn Sellers, Ryan Senko, and Adeline Trenor. These 7th-graders will join current 8th-grade student ambassadors in representing our school at various events such as open houses, school tours, and Grandparents Day.

CYO Day of Service

In August, St. Sebastian's CYO leaders collaborated with the Good Samaritan Hunger Center to recruit over 50 students and their parents to pack 1,500 lunches for kids in Akron. They also took on the tasks of harvesting and weeding the school garden and organizing the gymnasium storage room. Thank you to all who participated!



See you at the Athletic Booster Club's
Night at the Races
Friday, November 10
 Zwisler Hall, 6 p.m.
bidpal.net/terrierboosterclubnatr2023



News and Notes

Trunk or Treat

The 2023 Trunk or Treat Social was held on the appropriately spooky Friday, the 13th of October. The 195 families in attendance had a great time trick-or-treating in the brick parking lot at 43 decorated trunks.

This year's "Best Trunk" award went to the Azar family for their fantastic pumpkin patch creation, and the Dagnall family took home the 2nd annual "Best Chili" prize. Thank you to the hosts, the Knauer and the Buehner families, and thank you to all the families who participated! The event raised \$2,500 for the Teacher Appreciation and Wellness Fund, which provides Christmas bonuses, gifts, catered lunches, and more for our wonderful teachers and staff.



#WeGiveCatholic 2023

This year's #weGiveCatholic effort is raising money to help purchase and install a new greenhouse. This beautifully constructed greenhouse, which will stand for generations to come, will be a wonderful resource for cultivating the many flowers and bulbs that beautify our altar and our parish grounds! This greenhouse is in honor of the 25th anniversary of the ordination of our pastor, Fr. John Valencheck. Please contact Kathy Holaday for more details (holadayk@stsebastian.org or 330-836-2233 x113). Online donations to benefit this project may be made on Giving Tuesday, Nov. 28, at www.wegivecatholic.org. Thank you for your support!

Angel Scholarship Fund

Ohioans can receive a 100% Ohio tax credit of up to \$750 (\$1,500 if married filing jointly) for cash donations to the Angel Scholarship Fund. You can specify that your donation goes directly to St. Sebastian Parish School, which will use it for student scholarships. If you make a donation in 2023, you can claim the 100% tax credit on your 2023 Ohio taxes by including your contribution receipt from the Angel Scholarship Fund. Visit www.catholiccommunity.org/angel to learn more or to make a donation. (*Always consult with your tax professional for information on the impact of any charitable donations.) Last year, over \$83,000 in donations were designated to St. Sebastian Parish School for scholarships for our families. Thank you to everyone who made a contribution for this fantastic support! **Note: New this year is an extended deadline for 2023 donations: Donations made by April 15, 2024, are eligible for the scholarship tax credit in the 2023 tax year.**



Monster Mash

Boys and their mummies had a spooktacular time at the Oct. 19 Mother/Son Monster Mash sponsored by HASA. Special thanks to teachers Mrs. Burns and Mrs. Vernon for joining us and judging the costume contest. Congratulations to the winners: Best Boy – Ethan Tate, for his out-of-this-world costume; Best Mom – Becky Jeffries, who was practically perfect in every way; and Best Mother/Son Duo – Nat and Ben Jarupan, for making laundry day so fun! Thanks to 3rd-grade parents Cheyenne Bratton, Mary Childers, and Angela Morabito-Conrad for all your help planning the event!



Join Us for "An Italian Evening Under the Stars" April 20



Save the date for the 20th annual St. Sebastian Spectacular, "An Italian Evening Under the Stars" on April 20, 2024. This event is our school's largest and most important fundraiser, so we hope everyone will lend a hand and plan to attend! This year's co-chairs, Missy Knauer and Zorie Brdarski, have a great evening planned! The event will feature live and silent auctions, a sit-down dinner, live music, an open bar with a signature cocktail, and a few special surprises. There are also exciting sponsorship opportunities, including a VIP pre-party for our sponsors. Invitations will be mailed to all families in early March.

Over the last 19 years, this event has raised over \$1.4 million and has enabled us to academically enrich our children in many ways. The paddle raise for this year's event will focus on updating the Technology Learning Lab with new desktop computers powerful enough to be used for art, photography, design applications such as Canva, movie-making, 3D creation, and more. Funds will also be used to purchase additional 3D printers, acquire better green screen video equipment, and expand our STEM curriculum with the establishment of an eSports platform for our students.

Participation in eSports helps middle school students develop the same skills as other sports: teamwork, communication, problem-solving, strategy development, coordination, and creative thinking through safe and secure eSports competitions.

There are many ways you can support this event, including attending the event, volunteering your time, becoming a sponsor, placing an ad in the program, or donating to the live and silent auctions. Visit www.stsebastian.org/school/st-sebastian-spectacular to learn more. If you have any questions, please contact Missy at mknauer@att.net or Zorie at zore_n_2000@yahoo.com. Or, better yet, come to the **Spectacular Volunteer Meeting at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 17, at Forest Lodge**. All are welcome!

Flight 93 Memorial Field Trip

For the sixth straight year, our 8th-grade class visited the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pa. Thanks to funding from Title IV funds, this trip was provided free of charge to parents. St. Sebastian's 8th graders always schedule this field trip in September around the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, with this year's visit taking place on Sept. 8. As is tradition, while on their early morning bus ride, the students watched a movie about the experiences and brave actions of the Flight 93 passengers and crew, who worked together to prevent even further tragedy. Once arriving at the memorial, our group visited the Tower of Voices, a 93-foot-tall tower that honors each of the 40 crew members and passengers with 40 unique chimes. Students visited the field near the crash site where they heard a special talk by a national park ranger and viewed the wall where 40 panels memorialize the passengers and crew. At the visitors center, students were able to listen to recordings of messages left by passengers for their loved ones, view news footage and maps of the attacks, and observe debris and personal items from the wreckage. On the return trip, students were asked to reflect on what they learned. Here are some excerpts:

"While at the memorial, I had a feeling of individualized pride for each and every one of the passengers and crew of Flight 93 for their bravery and a loving gratefulness of God for giving them the strength to do what no one else could." – Claire Jopperi

"What stood out to me was the 1,600 trees in 40 groves with 40 trees each for all the 40 passengers that lost their lives ... and that life is short and doesn't last forever, so you should always try to do the right thing." – Sadie Borges

"Something that stood out to me is how nature took over the crash site. It looked so peaceful and calm for a place that wreaked havoc. From this trip I realized that tomorrow isn't promised, but God always has a plan." – Noelle Keso

"The passengers were able to show that America stands united as one. As a collective group, they were able to save many lives and protect a vital government building of our country. Through God's power, those on Flight 93 were able to come together to defend. Their bravery is a true sign that God was with them. They had to have faith to accomplish what they did." – Frances Knauer

"I definitely acknowledged more that God gives us each and every day – they are all gifts, not to be taken for granted." – Ben McDonald

"One of the main things I took away from the trip religiously was God's impeccable timing. If the plane had crashed just seconds later, it would have hit a school full of kids, and if God hadn't placed these 40 incredibly brave people on that plane, they wouldn't have saved hundreds more lives." – Henry Thomas



Get Involved with HASA (Home & School Association)!

Three New Committees Formed to Encourage Parent Involvement, Fellowship

HASA's mission is to act as a bridge between the school and parents and to support the school, teachers and staff. Every year HASA raises money to defray field trip expenses, provide teacher stipends, and fund two 8th-grade scholarships. HASA also hosts social events such as Monster Mash, the Father/Daughter Dance, and Family Game night. There are three new committees this year aimed at getting more parents involved and providing more support for the school, teachers and staff.

1) **The Faith and Catholic Culture Committee** was formed to help encourage families to deepen their Catholic faith. This committee created the Park/Play/Pray days, which invites

parents and students to meet at the playground on Tuesdays after dismissal to socialize and then go to church for prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament. More fellowship activities are in the works!

2) **The Fundraising Committee** is helping with the traditional Read-a-Thon fundraiser and is also looking into fundraisers that both raise funds and make things easier for families/the school, like the school supply packs that were offered at the start of school, which both raised \$450 and saved parents the hassle of shopping around for school supplies.

3) **The Parent Engagement Committee** is working to get more parents involved in many ways, both in the classrooms and as helpers/planners for school and parent events. If you'd like to get involved in any HASA activity or committee, please come to the next HASA meeting at 3 p.m. Nov. 30 in the large meeting room at Byrider Hall (the gym), and/or send an email to HASA@stsebastian.org, or send a message to HASA in the Bloomz app.

Acme Community Cash Back: HASA is collecting Acme receipts dated Aug. 1, 2023-Feb. 15, 2024, as part of the Acme Community Cash Back program. Please save your Acme receipts and send them into the office!

2024-25 Scholarships

Thanks to the generosity of our school and parish community, there are many opportunities for St. Sebastian Parish School students to earn scholarships for next year. Scholarships for the 2024-25 school year, listed here, are available for students currently in grades pre-K-7 (to be applied to next year's tuition at St. Sebastian) as well as 8th-grade students (to be applied to high school tuition).

The St. Sebastian Parish Foundation, which acts as a clearinghouse of information for all these scholarships, has posted applications and additional information on the school's website at www.stsebastian.org/school/scholarships.

The application deadline is Jan. 25, 2024. If you have questions, please contact Anne Dennee at dennea@stsebastian.org. Last year our students earned over \$41,000 in scholarship awards! Winners will be announced March 1 and recognized at the Foundation Scholarship Mass at 8:05 a.m. on March 14.

Scholarships Funded Through the St. Sebastian Parish Foundation

NEW! Michael R. Beck III Memorial Scholarship – (grade 8), 1 or more available
 Mary Ley Burke Scholarship – (grades K-7), up to 4 available
 Christopher James Consilio Scholarship – (grade 8), 1 or more available
 Dayspring Opportunity Scholarship – (pre-K to 7), up to 2 available
 Elms Family Scholarship – (grade 8), 2 or more available
 Denise Maroon Finley Scholarship – (grade 8), up to 2 available
 Lynn Frey-Steward Organ Scholarship – (grades K-7), 1 available
 Gerstenmaier Family Scholarship – (grade 8), 2 or more available
 GOAL Scholarship – (grades 2-7), 3 or more available
 Hanlon Family Scholarship – (pre-K to 7), 1 or more available
 Karg Family Scholarship – (grades K-2), 1 available
NEW! Tom and Jeanne LaRose Family Memorial Scholarship – (pre-K to 7), up to 10 available
 William and Mildred Loftus Memorial Scholarship – (grade 8), 1 available
 Frances L. Sharp Music Scholarship – (grades 4-7), up to 2 available
 John A. Trecaso Scholarship – (grade 8), 1 available

Scholarships Funded Through Parish School/Parish-Related Groups

HASA Youth Christian Service Scholarship – (grade 8), 2 available
 Knights of Columbus Deacon Terry Peacock Memorial Scholarship – (grade 8), 2 available
 Sanctuary Society Service Scholarship – (grades 5-8), 1 available
 St. Irene Scholarship – (grades 1-7, grade 8), 2 available

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND IMPORTANT DATES

SAVE THE DATE

International Festival ~ Feb. 3
 Innovation Night ~ Feb. 8
 Parent/Teacher Conferences ~ Feb. 13, 15
 No School ~ Feb. 16, Feb. 19
 HASA Meeting ~ Feb. 29
 1 p.m. Dismissal ~ March 7
 Preschool Only No School ~ March 8
 Confirmation ~ March 8
 Scholarship Mass ~ March 14
 Spring Music Program ~ March 14
 Kindergarten Screening ~ March 18-19
 End of 3rd Quarter ~ March 21
 No School ~ March 22
 Easter Break ~ March 29-April 5
 Solar Eclipse Dismissal at 12 p.m. ~ April 8
 St. Sebastian Spectacular ~ April 20
 No School ~ April 26

NOVEMBER

Mass, Feast of All Saints	November 1 (Wednesday)
Explorer Day	November 3 (Friday)
Read-A-Thon Kick-off	November 6 (Monday)
Parent/Teacher Conferences	November 7, 9 (Tuesday, Thursday)
No School, Parent/Teacher Conferences	November 10 (Friday)
Booster Club Night at the Races	November 10 (Friday), 6 p.m.
Ladies Luncheon & Christmas Boutique	November 12 (Sunday), Portage Country Club, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Spectacular Volunteer Meeting @ Forest Lodge	November 17 (Friday), 6:30 p.m.
Confirmation Meeting (8th grade)	November 20 (Monday), 7 p.m.
Thanksgiving Break	November 22-27 (Weds.-Mon.)
HASA Meeting, Byrider Hall Large Room	November 30 (Thursday), 3 p.m.
Christmas Music Program (grades 1, 3, 5, 7)	November 30 (Thursday), 7 p.m.

DECEMBER

Sanctuary Society Christmas Tea, Zwislser Hall	December 6 (Wednesday), 6:30 p.m.
Choir and Band Concert	December 12 (Tuesday), 7 p.m.
Pre-K to 3rd-Grade Christmas Family Social	December 16 (Saturday, time TBD)
Christmas Break	December 20-January 2 (Classes resume Jan. 3)

JANUARY

End of Second Quarter	January 11 (Thursday)
No School	January 12 (Friday)
No School	January 15 (Monday)
Open House	January 28 (Sunday), 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Catholic Schools Week	January 28-February 3
Confirmation Meeting (8th grade)	January 29 (Monday), 7 p.m.

Questions/Suggestions? Email Anne Dennee, newsletter editor, Anne@DenneeFamily.com