MISSION STATEMENT

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Syracuse share in the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ to love and be of service to God and one another. Together with our families, communities, and parishes, our schools provide an education rooted in the Gospels that is “living, conscious, and active.” Students witness and are taught values and ideals that are in accordance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. We empower our students to live their faith with compassion, integrity, and respect for all life and the diversity of our world.

Our schools are faith-centered communities focused on promoting academic excellence while developing a strong moral conscience and embracing Catholic social teachings that enable our students to meet the lifelong challenges and demands of our rapidly changing world.

Images used in this publication were taken or submitted at various times, some of which were pre-pandemic. More current photos were taken under the guidelines of the CDC and the Catholic Schools of the Syracuse Roman Catholic Diocese for mask wearing and social distancing at the time.
Dear Friends,

This year is a significant year in the life of our local Church in the Diocese of Syracuse. We completed our Year of Vocations in November and opened the synodal as part of the Worldwide Synod at the Vatican in 2023 and our own Diocesan Synod in 2024.

I raise these two significant events because they have been instrumental in bringing our diocese together to work collaboratively toward two important priorities. The Year of Vocations, which closed on the Feast of Christ the King, was a tremendous success in highlighting our individual call, whether it be to priesthood, religious, married or single life. Much prayer and discussion took place in our schools as they partnered with our Office of Vocations to explore what a vocation is and ways to discern God’s call in our own lives beginning at an early age. I am convinced that these efforts, which of course continue, will bear much fruit.

The second priority is the synod — both the Worldwide Synod and the Diocesan Synod. Your first question may be: What is a synod? A synod is a process in which we journey together — priests, religious, laity, those who have been away from the Church and those on the fringes of society. The journey involves listening, speaking and dialoguing about our hopes and dreams for the Catholic Church. The synod is underway with multiple listening sessions, and members of our Catholic Schools are key to this process. I invite all administrators, teachers, parents and students to find a listening session in your area and lend your voice, your listening ears and your prayer to this important work, which I believe is truly guided by the Holy Spirit.

I continue to be impressed by the excellent work of our Catholic Schools in forming our students in the faith while providing academic excellence at every level. The support and enthusiasm from our pastors, administrators and parents are the reason our Catholic schools continue to thrive.

Thank you for your commitment to Catholic school education. Be assured of my prayers today and every day.

In the Name of Jesus,

Most Rev. Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse
Dear Catholic School Family:

Welcome to our new edition of Pillars magazine. As we pass the two year mark of the pandemic, I’m pleased to bring you some much needed good news in the form of the stories inside these pages. Certainly, two years ago, we could never have imagined the challenges we would face, the flexibility we would need to embrace and the faith we would find in ourselves to operate in this atmosphere of mixed blessings. But the good news you’ll see in the following pages is that we have succeeded at many levels. We see it in our test scores that show our students are learning, thriving and progressing in the classroom. We see it in our high school graduation rates and the success of the Class of 2021. We see it inside the doors of our schools that have remained open this past year. Our children are blessed with the opportunity to learn safely in-person, while still finding an important need to provide service to others. I’m certain that if you look closely at the photos found in this magazine, you will find many smiles hidden behind the masks.

It goes without saying that the success of in-person learning throughout the pandemic could not have happened without the stamina of our faculty and staff. Every person – from the teachers and the administrators to the custodians and the cafeteria workers – has made sacrifices in order to make this work for all of us. I’ve witnessed that it has taken much inspiration from the Holy Spirit to keep our collective faith going on some days, but they’ve continued to do God’s work, so that our children can continue to do theirs.

You’ll read about some of the great initiatives we’ve taken on with the Mother Cabrini Team Health program that have shown our children the importance of caring for others. You’ll read about alumni who are making a change in the world today, and you’ll even get to meet an adorable dog named Luna, who has been an important part of easing our students’ worries. In addition, take a close look at some of the statistics coming out of our schools in the Foundations annual report section included in this issue. That will also speak to our success, as we see 100% of instructional days were in-person in the 2020-2021 school year, 99% of our high school graduates went on to college and our school enrollment has remained steady, thanks in part to families who joined us during the pandemic specifically because they wanted an in-person education.

I’m particularly fond of the cover of this issue of Pillars, as we see Fr. Brenden Foley and several students from Holy Cross at Mass. It is a great illustration of our school’s commitment to continuing to work with the Office of Vocations and Fr. Jason Hage, as we educate our faculty, our families and our students on the importance of taking some time to truly listen for the direction in which God is calling each and every one of us.

Certainly, this has been a difficult time for all, but I hope Pillars will help you to see that we still have many reasons to celebrate our Catholic schools! I wish you good health, encourage you to get vaccinated and take precautions for keeping others healthy, and I ask for your continued prayers that God may grant us peace in our struggles. I thank you for your continued support of Catholic education in the Diocese of Syracuse.

Yours in Christ,

William Crist
Superintendent of Catholic Schools
School Enrollment Boosted By In-Person Learning During the Pandemic

BY CHRISTY PERRY TUOHEY

In early 2021, U.S. Catholic school enrollment numbers looked grim. The National Catholic Education Association released its annual report on schools, enrollment and staffing on Feb. 17, 2021. At that time, the research showed Catholic school enrollment across the nation had fallen 6.4% from the previous academic year — the largest single year decline in nearly 50 years. The COVID-19 virus was deemed the culprit behind the classroom losses.

But as the months rolled by in 2021, schools of the Syracuse Diocese saw something different: an increase in Catholic elementary enrollment. It seems as though the COVID-19 pandemic brought another dynamic into play. Parents of public school students began transferring their children to Catholic schools.

“We have experienced a joyful increase in many of our Catholic schools during this COVID-19 experience,” said Superintendent of Schools William Crist. “Our schools opened to five-day, in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year to the delight of parents — new and old alike.”

Ellen Fitch is one of those new-to-Catholic-schools parents. She and her husband are both essential workers at Crouse Hospital, where she is a nurse practitioner, and he works in the hospital’s anesthesiology department. Their daughter, Abbie, was a public school kindergartner when the pandemic hit and learning went completely online.

They had considered transferring Abbie and son Connor to Catholic school when they were older, but the pandemic sped up that timeline. “As soon as they [the Syracuse Diocese schools] were going to do five days a week, and we both had to work, we decided to make the move,” Fitch said. Abbie started first grade at Syracuse’s Holy Family School in 2020, and Connor began kindergarten there in fall 2021.

Fitch said both are doing well academically, and, as a health care provider herself, she is comfortable with the safety protocols the school has in place. “I feel like last year, for sure, they were on top of any possible exposure, would quarantine people if they were within a certain amount of time frame and distance from people, and just made sure everyone was safe,” she said.

Crist said in-person learning at diocese schools has been a priority, with proper precautions. “The only time that we needed to pivot to an alternative plan of remote instruction for a grade level or an entire school was the result of an outbreak or concerns about the viral spread to the entire school population,” he said, noting that that was few and far between.

Oswego resident Jessica Woodruff’s children were students at what she described as a “good public elementary school” near their house when the virus

continued on page 4
hit Upstate New York. "But when it came to having to do more virtual learning and remote learning, I knew that was something that wouldn’t work well for my son," Woodruff said. “And I thought it was going to end up pretty disastrous.”

She began talking to other parents whose children were students at Oswego’s Trinity Catholic School and found out how the school navigated both virtual and in-person learning. “I was very impressed with how they handled the situation, in that the kids continued to learn, while I feel like the public school kids just were stagnant,” Woodruff said, adding that she knew her son Matthew’s learning style was not conducive to all-online teaching.

Woodruff decided to keep her sixth-grade daughter in public school, but began making phone calls to Syracuse diocese schools to see if they had openings for Matthew. Trinity Catholic School, although closer to home, had a waiting list at the time, but St. Mary’s Academy in Baldwinsville had a spot, so she enrolled him in third grade there. Before the first day of school, though, she got a call from Trinity, a space had opened up.

Matthew is 9 years old now, and Woodruff, a K-12 Catholic school alumna herself, said he is thriving at Trinity. “I just knew he would do well because I grew up in that type of environment — that small classes, family-centered program,” she said. “I knew he would really dig it, quite honestly.”

Woodruff’s son Matthew and Fitch’s daughter Abbie have each been quarantined once during the pandemic for brief periods, but both mothers appreciate that the respective schools exercised an abundance of caution. “They were very careful about making sure that families knew how important it was for them to keep the kids healthy and safe and always encouraged families not to send their kids to school if they weren’t feeling well,” Woodruff said.

Crist is optimistic that student numbers in schools in the Syracuse Diocese will remain steady as time goes on. His prediction: “We’re confident that we will be able to sustain these enrollment patterns into the future, as we safeguard the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of our students.”

Christy Perry Tuohey is an author and freelance writer in Syracuse, New York.
Compassion Learned in Catholic School Helps Pharmacist on the Frontlines

BY KIRA MADDOX

As the world continues to thank healthcare workers for their service battling the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there’s one group of healthcare workers often overlooked — pharmacists.

Sara Mastrolia, a St. Patrick’s School alumna, is a pharmacist at St. Luke’s Hospital in Utica. She graduated from pharmacy school at SUNY Buffalo and recently earned a second master’s degree in healthcare data analytics from Clarkson University.

Like other hospital workers, Mastrolia and other pharmacists have been on the frontlines fighting the pandemic. Mastrolia said the COVID-19 pandemic has been “like nothing [she’s] seen in healthcare before,” and has been deadly across the board, killing from patients in their 30s to patients in their 90s.

From behind the scenes, she rapidly double-checks medication orders to ensure new, complicated drugs being rolled out to fight the novel coronavirus don’t interfere with patients’ pre-existing conditions or potentially react negatively with other medications already being administered. Certain go-to drugs for respiratory distress suddenly could not be used for fear of spreading the virus, Mastrolia said, so it was up to pharmacists to research alternatives.

“We were working live,” Mastrolia said. “It was a learning curve, but you got to see how adaptive your staff could be.”

Even after the new drugs are administered, it’s on Mastrolia to monitor patients’ lab work and stay vigilant for any signs of complications. That’s on top of contending with mounting drug shortages and backorders, as non-COVID patients, who previously avoided hospital care for non-emergencies, get the courage to return for wellness checks. Mastrolia said the PPE shortage also greatly affected pharmacists, who rely on these items to keep them safe while mixing up dangerous drugs used for chemotherapy to fight advanced diseases like cancer.

Mastrolia went into pharmacy after working for about three years for the state as a water scientist, monitoring urban water systems. She said pharmacy has been very rewarding because of the personal connections she gets to make with people, from counseling them at discharge to working alongside refugees. To her, healthcare is about erring on the side of compassion — something she said St. Patrick’s School helped instill in her. She hopes her two children, currently enrolled at the school, will take away the same valuable lesson.

“It’s easy to judge or not see things from other people’s point of view,” she said, “but when you have the values of Christ instilled at a young age, you learn to carry those morals with you.”

Kira Maddox is a freelance writer in Utica, New York.
Barbara Messina: Two Decades of Dedication to Education Guided by the Holy Spirit

BY CAROLINE K. REFF

Barbara Messina believes that much of her career within the Catholic schools of the Syracuse Diocese has been guided by the Holy Spirit. From her early days as a classroom teacher to her position as an administrator steering the diocesan schools through the Middle States accreditation process, Messina has let her faith lead her support of Catholic education for more than 20 years.

While she officially retired in June 2021, Messina remains an important resource to the schools, staying on as a part-time consultant through the schools’ current Middle States reaccreditation process.

A graduate of St. Rose of Lima School in N. Syracuse, Messina is grateful for her own Catholic education. “The experience definitely had an impact on my faith formation and is one of the reasons I’ve always valued Catholic education,” she explained. “In the formative years of my life, being a Catholic school student gave me access to things I couldn’t have gotten any other way.”

Messina became a teacher, married and had a family. In 1997, she accepted a classroom position at Most Holy Rosary School in Syracuse, which she fondly refers to as “some of my best teaching years.”

Not long after, just as she was feeling at home and comfortable at Most Holy Rosary as a classroom teacher, she was asked to sit on a search committee for a new principal for the school.

“We had great candidates, but no one had quite the balance of skills and experience that we were looking for,” she said. The search committee suggested that Messina consider taking the job. “I gave them 10 reasons why that could never happen, but the pastor, Fr. Fred Mannara, asked me to pray about it. And, a trusted friend encouraged me to take the job despite my reservations about going into school administration. ‘Who knows how to do a new job?’ she told me. ‘The whole idea is to grow into it. Give it a try!’”

Messina did prayerfully consider it and believes the Holy Spirit led her to take the position of principal. She became the first lay principal in Most Holy Rosary School’s 90-year history and quickly grew to love her new role.

“Most Holy Rosary was a place that was just magic because everybody wanted to be there – the students, parents, teachers and pastor,” she explained. “I really felt the presence of God in that school, and I really felt the Holy Spirit showing up to tell me what to do next.”

During this time, she attended Le Moyne College to get her Certificate of Advanced Studies. There she met the late Dr. Elinor Ford, a professor from Fordham University. As a result of Ford’s mentoring, Messina enrolled in a program for Catholic educators at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. After seven years, she became “Dr. Messina,” earning a Ph.D. in Catholic educational leadership.

“It was an amazing experience, where I made so many connections,” she explained. “But I had to leave my husband and family at home in the summers to accomplish the task. That was very difficult, but they were supportive through the years, and the experience was very rewarding!”

While working on her Ph.D., she left Most Holy Rosary after 11 years and joined Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School for the next three years to work as an assistant administrator. She found it a challenging educational experience to work with junior and senior high school students and particularly enjoyed the middle school students and their dedicated teachers.

“At this age, students aren’t as trusting as the elementary school kids are,” she explained. “Their social and emotional capabilities are always being tested. But, I found that if they come to trust and respect you, they typically open up to learning and developing their potential.”

In 2012, Messina stepped away from her position at...
Bishop Grimes in order to care for her mother. However, in 2013, then-Superintendent of Catholic Schools Christopher Mominey asked her if she would be interested in serving as the internal coordinator for accreditation. The position guided and supported the process required to seek accreditation as a system of schools by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. This was a new approach to accreditation that was designed to provide strength as a result of the schools’ collaborative efforts.

“Some schools were reluctant to go through the accreditation process, which is complex and time consuming. But we worked through the process together and came to a consensus that we were working towards one common mission: educating our children in the ways of the Catholic faith,” she said.

The initial accreditation process, which included a self-study to assess the current state of each component school, as well as the system as a whole, showed that many of the schools within the diocese were running on long-held assumptions that simply weren’t working any more. The process helped schools discover that they needed to base their actions on facts and data in order to set priorities for real growth and success.

“We developed a seven-year strategic plan, building on our strengths and not taking anything for granted,” Messina explained. “The Middle States Association has a very sound protocol that helped us develop a viable plan. It was exactly what our schools needed then and something we are still running on today.”

Messina was named the director of leadership development and mission effectiveness in 2015. The Catholic Schools System in the Diocese of Syracuse received its first seven-year accreditation in December 2015 and is now in the process of applying for reaccreditation.

“Barb has been such an important part of the success of our Catholic schools,” said William Crist, superintendent of Catholic Schools. “From her gifts as an educator and principal to her tireless leadership through the Middle States Accreditation process—one of the biggest achievements that our schools have undertaken—she is a true example of dedication, faith and humble service. Our schools are better for all that she has accomplished.”

After her husband retired, Messina started wondering if she might do the same. She admitted that the pandemic and the death of her mother had taken its toll and changed her priorities. “I knew my job required 1,000%, and that told me that it was someone else’s turn,” she said. “I felt it was time to retire.”

The Holy Spirit once again came to her aid. The previous fall, she had facilitated a course in the formation for Ministry Program, where she met another educator, Amy Sansone, Ph.D. Sansone made such an impression on her that Messina mentioned her to Crist as someone to consider should a principal’s position open up in the future. Little did she know that she was actually recommending her own replacement. Upon Messina’s retirement, Sansone was hired to fill her position.

Today, Messina is enjoying retirement and the time she has to spend with her husband, Dc. Larry Messina, and their three daughters and five grandchildren, but she is also happy to stay connected with the Catholic Schools Office and the Catholic schools as a consultant in the reaccreditation process. She enjoys helping out at her home linked parishes of Christ the King and Pope John XXIII and finds new experiences there very interesting and rewarding!

“I loved the path I followed in my ministry as a Catholic school educator, as well as all the people I worked with throughout my career, not to mention the students and families who were part of our school communities,” she said. “The Holy Spirit guided me every step of the way, and I’ve truly been blessed.”

Caroline K. Reff is a freelance writer based in Syracuse, New York, and the editor of Pillars magazine.
Assessments Show Students Made Significant Academic Gains Through In-Person Learning in 2020-2021

BY AMY SANSONE

Often when a child returns home from school, the first questions a parent asks are, “How was your day? How was school?” These are the same questions we ask ourselves in each of our school buildings and as a larger system of 21 schools.

Our mission states that we are “Promoting academic excellence while developing a strong moral conscience and embracing Catholic social teachings.” But, how do we measure our pursuit of academic excellence? How, in these unpredictable times, do we make sure our students are growing and achieve their goals?

Part of the strategic plans emerging from our Middle States accreditation in 2015 was a desire to implement more systematic and regular assessments for purposes of gathering such information. After a period of research and discussion, i-Ready from Curriculum Associates was chosen as the vehicle. These diagnostic assessments measure student progress in both math and reading. Administered via computer, they are both simple to use and quick to deploy. The disruption is minimal, and, as students are exposed to the system three times a year, the level of test anxiety is also decreased.

This brings us to the good news we’d like to share. According to our i-Ready results from the 2020-2021 academic year, the students in the Diocese of Syracuse Catholic schools not only resisted a COVID-induced backslide last year but made gains – significant gains! The pie charts on the opposite page show how our students not only out-performed peers across New York State but also across the nation.

The graphs on the opposite page show the outstanding results students achieved from the fall of 2020 to the spring of 2021. The fall 2020 numbers represent how many of our students were negatively impacted by the disruption of the previous spring 2020 semester when the pandemic first started.

However, most recovered quickly, as is evident in the number of students who met the minimum requirements for the expectations of college and career-ready standards in their grade level jumped 35% in math and 32% in reading by the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. In the same time frame, students working below or at grade level dropped by 33% in math and 24% in reading.

Our administrators and teachers should be proud that by providing in-person instruction last year – all year – our students were able to continue learning and displayed admirable growth. Our parents and students should be equally proud of the day-to-day hard work, both at school and at home, that resulted in true growth in learning. As we have reached the half-way point of the 2021-2020 academic year, we look forward to once again seeing outstanding success in these unprecedented times.

Amy Sansone is the director of leadership development and mission effectiveness for the schools of the Syracuse Roman Catholic Diocese.

KEY

- Each color represents relative grade level assessment.
- Three+ Grades Below
- Mid On-Grade or Above
- One Grade Below
- Early On-Grade
- Two Grades Below

Amy Sansone
**MATH**

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n 2013 Dylan Letcher, a graduate of Immaculate Conception School in Fayetteville, started a small garden on farmland owned by his family. He wanted to donate the food he grew to those in need. That small seed of service has literally bloomed over the past eight years into what is now Salt City Harvest Farm. It is a place where new Americans — most are refugees — grow food, community and culture through an exchange of food traditions. Lives are changed via access to land, education and economic opportunities.

Sparked by the idea of Dylan’s garden, Assumption Church — which serves a large population of refugees on the city’s northside — and Syracuse Grows approached the Letcher family about using the land. The family, including mom, Theresa, a Pre-K paraprofessional at IC, donated the use of 36 acres in Kirkville to nonprofit Salt City Harvest Farm. Through this organization, new Americans from countries like Congo, Bhutan, Burundi and Somalia volunteer to work the land, share a sense of community, hone their English skills, and not only take home their harvest but share it with friends and family facing food insecurity. The farm is also a perfect spot to grow produce unique to their home countries that are not easily found in local stores.

In 2018, another group started volunteering at the farm: deaf new Americans. During the growing season, about 17 members of this organization can be found working the farm and enjoying the opportunity to interact with others who also cannot hear, thus reducing their isolation. The majority are just beginning to learn American Sign Language, so interpreting services are provided both in American Sign Language and Nepali Sign Language at the farm.

Today, Salt City Harvest Farm is a thriving community with an incubator farm, a multi-use storage building, an apple orchard and a vineyard, in addition to fields full of delicious vegetables. Salt City Harvest Farm has been able to accomplish this work through a number of partnerships including Cornell Cooperative Extension, Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE) and SLUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The organization aims to transform the Central New York community by creating opportunities for New
“Our connection with the Letchers and Salt City Harvest Farm has shown our students how they can accomplish great things, even during such difficult times, as well as reach out to people who are truly in need.”

NANCY FERRARONE, PRINCIPAL, IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL

Americans to grow foods significant to their traditions and bring together cultures from around the world for the benefit of all.

Over the past year, Salt City Harvest Farm has been developing programs to provide deeper community impact, as well. The farm has received significant funding from the Central New York Community Foundation and the Chobani Impact Fund — which allowed for the construction of a pavilion for increased cold storage access, harvesting tools and connections to market produce to consumers.

While the Letcher family still owns the land, the farm is run by Salt City Harvest Farm and has acquired staff who handle the day-to-day operations.

Before the pandemic, the organization was often found outside Immaculate Conception Church after Sunday Masses selling freshly picked items, thanks to the generosity of IC Pastor Fr. Thomas Ryan. The profits, sometimes $500 to $600 a day, were reinvested to purchase things like seeds and tools.

PUMPKIN PATCH POPS UP AT IC

One of the items that Salt City Harvest Farm produces is pumpkins. When COVID-19 hit in 2020, Immaculate Conception School could no longer take its students on field trips, including the traditional fall excursion to a pumpkin patch.

Coordinated by IC’s sixth graders, the school created its own temporary pumpkin patch. With the help of the Letcher family, Salt City Harvest brought pumpkins to the school. Each class took turns wandering through the pumpkin patch, and every student selected his or her favorite to take home. The event was such a success that it was held again in the fall of 2021. The sixth grade class worked hard to make it look just like a real pumpkin patch with festive decorations.

According to Nancy Ferrarone, principal at IC, the hope is that once COVID-19 restrictions ease, the sixth grade students might be able to go to Salt City Harvest Farm and help plant pumpkins in the spring for harvesting the following fall.

“Our connection with the Letchers and Salt City Harvest Farm has shown our students how they can accomplish great things, even during such difficult times, as well as reach out to people who are truly in need,” said Ferrarone. “This experience is a unique way in which we can bring our students together and model how to give to others and give back to the community.”
St. Margaret’s Families Embraced at St. Rose as Two Schools Combine

BY RENÉE K. GADOUA

Carmen Falasco and his daughter, Isabella, were sad and disappointed when they learned in January 2021 that St. Margaret’s Elementary School in Mattydale would close in June 2021 and consolidate with nearby St. Rose of Lima School in N. Syracuse. Isabella, then a fourth grader at St. Margaret’s, had attended the 67-year-old school since Pre-K. Her sister, Christina, went to St. Margaret’s from Pre-K through sixth grade and is now a senior in high school.

“We’re moving in a good direction. It’s a change for all of us. We’re a new community, and we’re building something bigger and better than we were before. The school’s philosophy is ‘starting new and forging ahead together.’ . . . It’s new for everyone.”

MARY CRYSLER, PRINCIPAL, ST. ROSE OF LIMA SCHOOL

“We immediately invited the families to join St. Rose,” she said. “We guaranteed spots for them. I sent a letter to all the families saying that we felt for them. We wanted them to know we were thinking of them and would welcome them to our family.”

Fr. Christopher Celentano, pastor of St. Rose of Lima and St. Margaret’s, reached out as well, quickly sending letters to the impacted families.

“The letters came at just the right time, when we were feeling down, and the palpable sense of warmth and compassion were good medicine,” Falasco said. “(It) was kind and comforting. Fr. Celentano said he was praying for us, that he understood how we felt and that we were welcome to be part of the nice family at St. Rose of Lima.”

About a week later, father and daughter Falasco visited St. Rose with Chrysler and Fr. Celentano showing them around.

“The St. Rose teachers we met and the classrooms we saw helped us know that it would be a good place for Isabella to continue her studies, and we’re happy with that decision,” he said. “Like the nice folks at St. Margaret’s, the people at St. Rose truly care about the kids and their families, and we are very grateful. It is a loving place.”

Isabella and her classmates are adjusting well, and Falasco is glad they chose to continue her Catholic school education. “The community and church leaders of tomorrow start as young children such as these,” he said. “He is grateful that Isabella is a ‘happy, healthy, productive and academically oriented child in a safe and caring environment.’”

St. Rose’s staff welcomed new students and families through a community party, invitations to tour the schools and special outreach. The school has worked on service projects with both parishes, and the staff continues to seek ways to build a new community.

“St. Rose families called the new families to welcome them,” Crysler said. “It’s hard to leave your traditions behind and start over. We didn’t want them to give up all that.”

All the students — from both schools — participated in a major change to give everyone a sense of a shared community. “We switched our uniform
— colors, logo, everything — this year, so it was not St. Margaret coming into St. Rose's,” Crysler added.

Girls attending St. Rose previously wore maroon, while boys wore blue. Students at St. Margaret’s wore green. Now the school’s uniform colors are gray, white and black.

Last year, about 225 students attended St. Rose. That included about 85 Pre-K students. Transfers from St. Margaret’s and enrollment from public school students raised St. Rose’s enrollment to 346 students (Pre-K through sixth grade) this academic year.

“We have plenty of space,” and we took some walls down last year to make the rooms bigger for COVID [safety protocols],” Crysler explained. “We’re moving in a good direction. It’s a change for all of us. We’re a new community, and we’re building something bigger and better than we were before. The school’s philosophy is ‘starting new and forging ahead together.’ We’re thinking through what our goals and our mission are and how we will do that together. It’s new for everyone.”

“Kids come in here and are just happy to be in school and with their friends,” Crysler said. “Our teachers have been really good at helping them get to know each other and learn.”

“We believe all students can achieve success,” she added. “We strive for academic excellence and rigorous learning experiences. We are teaching students to be active members of the church and community. Our Catholic approach brings connection to the heart of all activities.”

Renée K. Gadoua is a freelance writer and editor and a frequent contributor to The Catholic Sun.
Foundations

Average Elementary Class Size: 15
Average Junior/Senior High School Sections Size: 17
Percentage of In-Person School Days in 2020-2021: 100%
Teacher Retention Rate: 99% PERCENT

“...The staff has gone above and beyond to provide a five-day-a-week education during Covid. My kids are thriving in a way that they would not have in a hybrid situation.”*

Percentage of Catholic Students: 72%
Enrollment Increase Over Previous Year: 2 PERCENT

Enrollment

Pre-K – Grade 6: 2,893
Grades 7 – 12: 1,135
Total Enrollment: 4,028

*Based on 2021-2022 NCEA data, Sept. 2021

Ethnicity*

Hispanic/Latino: 401
Non-Hispanic/Latino: 3,627

Student Demographics (Pre-K – 12)*

African-American/Black: 7%
American Indian/Native Alaskan: <1%
Asian: 4.4%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: <1%
Two or more races: 6%
White: 80%
Unknown: 2%

*Voluntarily self-reported data
"The level of respect, decency and all around morale shines through. In my opinion, the faculty and staff do an exemplary job."*

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ACCEPTED AT FIRST CHOICE COLLEGE: **90**

STUDENTS ATTENDING CATHOLIC COLLEGES: **26 PERCENT**

NUMBER OF HIGH LEVEL COURSES (AP, IB) OFFERED: **15**

STUDENTS ATTENDING COLLEGE: **95 PERCENT**

IN TOTAL COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED **$14,230,520**

*I love the Pre-K teachers. They are very kind, loving and very attentive to my child’s needs."**

Christian Service Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K – Grade 6</td>
<td>34,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 7 – 12</td>
<td>36,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70,911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The school is definitely teaching my child love and compassion for others through the different acts of mercy and charity. I am so impressed, and it encourages me to be more charitable."*

* DIRECT QUOTES FROM CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS SURVEYED DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR.
### 2020–2021 Budgeted Income and Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Budgeted Income</th>
<th>$35,315,253</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Budgeted Expenses</td>
<td>$35,278,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeted Net Income/All Schools</td>
<td>$36,633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: Does not include bad debt or depreciation*

---

### Total Budgeted Income: $35,315,253

- **Gross Tuition**: 70% | $24,835,452
- **Tuition Discounts**: -10.5% | ($3,694,709)
- **Development Income**: 7% | $2,532,309
- **Mandated Services**: 3% | $1,139,445
- **Misc./Nurse Reimbursement/Transfer**: 2% | $477,358
- **Other Income**: 1% | $286,172
- **Student Activities**: <1% | $164,440
- **Gifts/PTA & HSA Support**: 3% | $936,300
- **Athletic Income**: <1% | $221,120
- **Café Revenue**: 2% | $633,095
- **Parish Support**: 14% | $4,924,759
- **PCA Support**: 1% | $288,668
- **Diocesan Support**: 2% | $838,738
- **Funded Tuition Support**: 5% | $1,732,106

### 2020–2021 Average Budgeted Cost/Tuition/Subsidy per Pupil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Cost per Pupil</th>
<th>Average Net Tuition per Pupil</th>
<th>Average Subsidy Needed per Pupil</th>
<th>Average Net Tuition &amp; Subsidy Support per Pupil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$10,861</td>
<td>$5,923</td>
<td>$4,937</td>
<td>$7,137</td>
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<tr>
<td>$7,177</td>
<td>$4,520</td>
<td>$2,657</td>
<td>$5,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,181</td>
<td>$4,903</td>
<td>$3,279</td>
<td>$6,112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Pre-K enrollment and related expenses

**Does not include support from Mother Cabrini Foundation awarded in 2020-2021*

### Financial Aid 2020–2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centrally Funded Aid</th>
<th>Hoppe Appeal</th>
<th>TAP A</th>
<th>Scuderi Fund</th>
<th>Heritage Fund</th>
<th>Total by Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>$355,275</td>
<td></td>
<td>$67,169</td>
<td>$138,932</td>
<td>$561,376</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>$12,350</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,340</td>
<td>$4,840</td>
<td>$19,530</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>$117,025</td>
<td></td>
<td>$22,320</td>
<td>$46,166</td>
<td>$185,511</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>$132,850</td>
<td></td>
<td>$25,171</td>
<td>$52,062</td>
<td>$210,083</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals** ***</td>
<td>$617,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td>$242,000</td>
<td>$976,500</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Allocations based on parent financial aid application and calculated need

**Does not include local aid from individual schools

***Does not include support from the Mother Cabrini Foundation in the amount of $500,000
"We are especially impressed with how well everyone at the school lives their faith and are good role models for our daughter."*

Total Budgeted Expenses: $35,278,620

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Budgeted Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>$22,458,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Expenses</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>$5,694,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Activities</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>$251,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics Expenses</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>$694,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Expenses</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$1,019,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Supplies</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$890,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café Expenses</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$399,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development/Marketing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$886,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and Maintenance</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$1,099,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Programs (BAC/PREK/UPK)</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>$69,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$1,039,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Expenses</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>$774,091</td>
</tr>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>$774,091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Coming in as a transfer from a public school and not knowing what to expect – this has been a successful learning and safe environment for my son."*

2020–2021 DIOCESAN SCHOOL PARISH SUPPORT BUDGETED

**WESTERN REGION**
- Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School: $265,926
- Bishop Ludden Jr./Sr. High School: $265,926
- Urban Education Support (CAP/BS/MHR): $348,750
- Financial Aid/Educational Support: $75,000
- Parish School PCA Support (SMS/IC/St.R/HCSMRA/SMAS): $194,652
- **Total Western Region**: $1,150,254

**NORTHERN REGION**
- Trinity Catholic School: $179,387

**SOUTHERN REGION** (Broome County combined)
- All Saints School, St. James School, St. John the Evangelist School, Seton Catholic Central School
- **Total Southern Region**: $937,500

**EASTERN REGION**
- Utica Notre Dame High School: $306,882
- Utica Notre Dame Elementary School: $299,382
- Rome Catholic School: $177,263
- St. Patrick’s School: $147,939
- **Total Eastern Region**: $931,465

* Diocesan School Parish Support: $3,198,606
* Excludes parish school support

**Note:** The Diocesan Strategic Planning Committee approved a 25% regional reduction in the school subsidy beginning the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

"My daughter started in public school and since switching (to Catholic school), she has become more confident, loves going to school and is less anxious. We love it!"*

* DIRECT QUOTES FROM CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS SURVEYED DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR.
Bishop Grimes Graduate Grateful for Support on his Path to the Stage

BY CHRISTY PERRY TUOHEY

As a high school student at E. Syracuse's Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School, Zach Jones planned to study veterinary medicine in college. As a student at Rochester's Nazareth College, Ty-Gabriel Jones changed his major to musical theater. Same person, different career path.

“Long story short, I realized that I did not enjoy the science coursework,” he explained. “So, one year in [at Nazareth], I changed majors.” He took the stage name Ty-Gabriel Jones and quickly began to shine in the footlights in New York City, Florida, South Carolina and Utah.

This is not to say that Grimes student Zach showed no interest in the arts. In fact, from an early age, he was eager to learn trumpet, trombone and piano, which he taught himself to play.

“I totally thought he was going to be another Wynton Marsalis,” his mom, Lydia Jones, said. “He kept finding these opportunities, but, also, as he got older, he would make his own opportunities.”

His first taste of acting was in the musical “Aladdin,” at a middle school in the city of Syracuse. “It was fun,” he said, “but I think in high school there was more of a community of people who were interested in performing, and I think that was what made me gravitate toward it.” At Bishop Grimes, he sang and acted in multiple productions, including “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” “Alice in Wonderland” and “Crazy Town.”

Syracuse resident and arts supporter Ellie Kinne vividly recalls the first time she saw Jones perform. “Bishop Grimes was doing the play ‘Once Upon a Mattress.’ It was narrated by a minstrel cat,” she recalled, adding that she noticed him right away from her seat in the back of the auditorium. “Strolling down the center aisle was this very tall, lanky cat singing with all the confidence in the world, setting the stage for the story. I watched him with amazement as the play continued, and I thought to myself, ‘I have to ask Pat about this young man!’”

Pat is Ellie's son Patrick Kinne, vice principal and world languages teacher at Bishop Grimes. One day during Jones’ senior year, Patrick Kinne called him to the main office.

“He said, ‘There are two people who would like to meet you,’” Jones remembered. “And, I go into this room, and there’s this lovely couple sitting there, and they introduced themselves.”

Ellie’s memory of that visit matched up with Jones’. “We talked about his years at Bishop Grimes, his excitement about attending college and his aspirations for the future,” she said. “He then stepped into the hallway with Pat and asked, ‘But who are these people?’”

“These people were Ellie Kinne and her husband, Chuck, who unbeknownst to Jones had been quietly, anonymously supporting his education since they first saw him perform.

[Mr. Kinne] said, ‘These are my parents, and they’re also your sponsors. They’ve supported your tuition for the past couple of years, and they really wanted to meet you before you graduated,’” Jones recalled. “And that blew my mind! They were complete strangers who just wanted to support me. I was so grateful. I couldn’t believe that.”

The Kinnes’ investment in his future, as they refer to it, is paying off years later, as well. During his years at Nazareth, he auditioned for and landed parts in college productions, including “Detroit ‘67,” which was directed by actor/director Gary DeWitt Marshall, a film and stage veteran. The production won an award from the Theater Association of New York State.

His auditions landed him far afield from college, too. “I feel really blessed to be able to say that as soon as my sophomore year, I was auditioning, and I was getting contract offers from places in Pennsylvania, Florida and South Carolina,” he said. “I think I had a really healthy track where I was able to work while I was in school and then leave school and start working professionally.”

But before he received his bachelor’s degree in fine arts, his plans abruptly derailed. The COVID-19 virus began to spread in early 2020, and productions across the world went dark.

“For me personally, it was devastating,” he said. “I was about to graduate from college. I was in finals for three leading roles on Broadway, in the call-back process. I was up
for ‘Lion King,’ I was up for ‘Dear Evan Hansen,’ and I was up for the national tour of ‘Anastasia.’”

The pandemic not only tested Jones’ patience but brought to the forefront the unpredictability of a performing career. “When I graduated from Grimes, I was pretty set on being a veterinarian,” he said. “[Performing] isn’t a career path that anyone teaches you is available or is accessible or is a good, viable option because it’s so unconventional.”

His mother took her son’s career change mostly in stride. “I was trying to be realistic but not the crusher of dreams,” she said, recalling that she advised him to consider the instability that an arts career can have. But she could also see how well-suited he was for pursuing his dream. “He just can’t help but be involved in these things. If they’re not there already, he makes them happen, and it’s just so natural.”

As the global pandemic persisted, Ty persisted, too. In 2021, he landed a role in the Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe production of “Eubie” in Sarasota, Florida. It’s described as “a toe-tapping revue of songs by Eubie Blake, legendary composer, ragtime pianist and ‘father of Black Broadway.’” The show’s original late 1970s run on Broadway featured Blake himself on piano, and the cast included the late legendary actor/dancer Gregory Hines.

“Eubie’s” 2021 run ended in late November, but Jones will return to Florida in spring 2022 for the Westcoast Theatre Troupe’s “Broadway in Black” revue. In between the Florida shows, he will join the off-Broadway cast of “Love is Love: The Musical” for a limited winter run.

Jones credits his experience at Bishop Grimes for instilling in him a sense of diligence and commitment, which he finds also in the theater community. “In the theater, there’s almost always someone who wants to pray with you before the curtain rises,” he said. “And I think that that community and that diligence and commitment to community is something that I’m forever grateful for.”

Christy Perry Tuohey is an author and freelance writer in Syracuse, New York.
Ten Schools Hold Walkathons to Raise More Than $27K for Golisano Children’s Hospital

Everyone knows that walking is good for you, but walking can be even better when it also helps others in need. That’s just what a number of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Syracuse proved last spring when each held its own walkathon and together raised $27,686 towards the establishment of the Golisano Center for Children with Special Needs at Upstate Golisano Children’s Hospital.

Ten schools participated in the walkathon — St. Patrick’s in Oneida, Rome Catholic, Notre Dame Elementary in Utica, St. Mary’s Academy in Baldwinsville, Most Holy Rosary in Syracuse, Cathedral Academy at Pompei in Syracuse, Blessed Sacrament in Syracuse, St. John the Evangelist in Binghamton and Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School in E. Syracuse. The team effort was spearheaded by the Cabrini Team Health Program.

Each school conducted individual events — some doing laps on playgrounds or in the neighborhoods around their schools; others walking inside their school’s gymnasiums. The children had fun participating in this healthy activity, while also knowing they were helping others.

On June 21, the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Syracuse presented the Upstate Foundation with a check during a ceremony held at the hospital. Superintendent of Catholic Schools William Crist and Joan Spector, director of the Cabrini Team Health, attended the event, along with student representatives from Bishop Grimes, CAP, St. Patrick’s and St. Mary’s.

One particular student at the event was Jude Jbarah, who attended along with his mother, Diala Karadsheh. Jude was proud to have raised $300 at the walkathon in memory of his sister, Jennah, who was a preschooler at St. Patrick’s School when she died of rhabdomyosarcoma, a form of cancer. The Golisano Children’s Hospital was a place of great support and comfort for the family while Jennah received treatments, and Jude’s participation in the walkathon was a way to show his appreciation.

“Our doctor did a lot of research on Jennah’s condition during her treatment at Golisano, and everyone there genuinely cares about the patients. We were not just one of many in a medical file. They have care there specifically for pediatric patients, which is not the case everywhere. It was a second home to us for a long time,” Karadsheh said.

There to accept the donation from the Catholic schools were Hank Roane, Ph.D., director of the Golisano Center for Special Needs, and Julie Galler Simms, director of development, community campus, for the Upstate Foundation.

“With your gift, you bring us that much closer to reaching that goal — so thank you so much,” said Simms, who noted that, due to the significant donation, a room in the center will be named for the Diocese of Syracuse Catholic schools.

At the ceremony, Crist also commended the participating schools and thanked the hospital for the opportunity to partner for such a worthy cause; “The walkathon helped us to live our faith by helping those in need and providing service through action,” he said. “That is at the core of our Catholic education.”

Some information in this article was used with permission from The Catholic Sun.
St. James Student Studies Remotely All the Way from Turkey

BY KIRA MADDOX

Mavi McAuley, whose mother is Turkish, spends summers in Turkey visiting with his grandparents. Summer 2020 was no different. His father, Jeff, returned to the U.S. early to care for his own mother with the plan that that Mavi and his mother would come back mid-fall.

The plan was for Mavi to start his fifth-grade education at St. James School in Johnson City remotely and then enroll in person, Jeff McAuley said.

“The conversation with St. James was actually very simple,” he said. “Most of the technology was already set up due to the pandemic.”

With many people still wary of the COVID-19 pandemic and no vaccine currently available for young children, St. James gave all parents the option at the time to have their children learn remotely, according to Principal Patrick Monachino. At the high point, he said about 10 students were learning synchronously via Google Classroom.

“To the kids in the room, the only difference was [Mavi’s] Mediterranean background on the screen was real, not some kind of filter,” Monachino said. “Mavi was still able to interact, play games and connect with the other students.”

But things quickly became challenging for the family. Jeff McAuley contracted COVID-19 and had to be isolated, delaying Mavi and his mother’s initial October 2020 return plans. Then the pair tried to come stateside in November, around Thanksgiving, but Turkey went into lockdown and barred foreign travel.

Eventually, they received the news that Mavi’s Turkish grandmother was terminally ill with cancer. So, it was decided the two would stay in Turkey to be with her.

Mavi stayed enrolled at St. James School virtually through the remainder of the 2020-2021 academic year. Thanks to the remote option, he was able to keep in contact with his friends back home and stay up-to-date on his schoolwork. Instead of participating in a traditional physical education class, Mavi would record time spent outside or swimming, his father said. Mavi and the other remote students even got to participate in the Christmas concert remotely.

Jeff McAuley was glad Mavi didn’t have to miss out on his education, even though the time difference was a challenge. At nearly seven hours ahead, Mavi’s schooling ran from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. in Turkey, though he often was let out early.

“St. James School was very considerate of Mavi’s situation,” he said.

Jeff McAuley said he personally is not particularly religious but had to consider other options for education after Mavi began having difficulties with public school after his second-grade year. His parents agreed they wanted him in an environment with different behavioral standards for his peers, and St. James had a good reputation. After enrolling for third-grade, Jeff McAuley said it was obvious his son was much happier.

Fluent in Turkish, Mavi is now relying on private tutoring for his sixth-grade education and is also learning German while abroad. His parents plan to re-enroll him at St. James as soon as he and his mother are able to return to the country.

Kira Maddox is a freelance writer in Utica, New York.

Mavi McAuley attended St. James School online while staying with his family in Turkey.
THE CLASS OF 2021

Congratulations to Valedictorians and Salutatorians

While the Class of 2021 at the four Syracuse diocesan Catholic high schools didn’t exactly have a “normal” year, they were able to participate in in-person classes, sports and other school activities despite the pandemic. One such event was an in-person graduation. Yes, there were mask requirements, social distancing and limited attendance, but these hard working students still had the opportunity to cross the stage, receive their diplomas and celebrate a major milestone in their lives last June. Congratulations to all of the members of the Class of 201 at Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School, Bishop Ludden Jr./Sr. High School, Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School and Seton Catholic Central School.

The following were the 2021 valedictorians and salutatorians of their respective schools:

**BISHOP GRIMES JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL**

Valedictorian: Noelle Card (University of Toronto)
Salutatorian: Sarah Falgiatano (Siena College)

**BISHOP LUDDEN JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL**

Valedictorian: Paul Kolenda (Cornell University)
Salutatorian: Aidan William Craner (The University of Rochester)

**NOTRE DAME JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL**

Valedictorian: Luke Putelo (Dartmouth University)
Salutatorian: Kristina Donets (SUNY Polytechnic Institute)

**SETON CATHOLIC CENTRAL SCHOOL**

Valedictorian: Valerie Crowley (Clemson University)
Salutatorian: Krista Murray (SUNY Stony Brook)
Everyone Loves Luna

Luna is everyone’s dog at Holy Family School in Norwich. Owned by faculty member Lana Benjamin, Luna, an AKC Certified Canine Good Citizen and school therapy dog, is a fan favorite at the school. She greets students as they come through the doors in the morning and can always be found giving comfort and affection to everyone in the Holy Family community. Luna loves to be walked, pet, played with and, of course, she is always willing to accept treats. She teaches empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills, like making eye contact and responding to verbal cues. She also provides anxiety relief for students and teachers alike. In fact, many of the teachers at Holy Family keep treats in their rooms for Luna’s impromptu visits. She’s so well loved that she even receives Christmas presents — and was also invited to a student’s birthday party! Luna also provides a sense of connection in the great Norwich community. When students see her at a local park or community event, they always say hello and tell people about her role in their school. She is truly a part of the Holy Family School family.
Nutrition Program Teaches Students, Parents the ABCs of Eating Vegetables

BY CAROLINE K. REFF

“A” is for asparagus, and “Z” is for zucchini. While that seems like a simple lesson, it has become a truly valuable one for Pre-K classes and one kindergarten class in six of the Catholic Schools in the Syracuse Diocese thanks to the work of the Cabrini Team Health Program. Cabrini Team Health works with community partners to improve the education and health outcomes of low-income and poverty level students and families within the schools of the Syracuse Diocese.

This particular initiative used funding received from a grant from the Central New York Community Foundation to help preschoolers at Blessed Sacrament School, Most Holy Rosary School, St. Rose of Lima School, Holy Family School in Fairmount and St. Mary’s Academy, as well as kindergartners at Cathedral Academy at Pompei, not only learn their ABCs but also discover the deliciousness of vegetables.

Funding was used to purchase the children’s book, “Mrs. Peanuckle’s Vegetable Alphabet,” written by Mrs. Peanuckle and beautifully illustrated by Jessie Ford. Each student at the participating schools received his or her own copy of the book, which reinforced the idea that vegetables not only keep them healthy but can be a tasty part of meals, too.

Students from the Department of Nutrition & Food Studies at Falk College on the Syracuse University campus also lent their time to the project,
designing pre- and post-tests to find out just how much the students knew (or didn’t know) about vegetables. The SU students also helped develop lesson plans for the schools to best introduce the topic and make an impact.

Also assisting was Brady Farms, a 5-acre garden “oasis” in the middle of the City of Syracuse, that’s goal is to provide fresh, affordable produce to the community. Under the direction of Jessi Lyons, farm coordinator, Brady Farms supplied vegetables for the project — carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes and snap peas — so the students could try them in class.

“Many of the students that benefitted from this program are receiving free or reduced priced lunches at their schools, which already makes them a vulnerable population in terms of nutrition,” said Joan Spector, director of the Cabrini Team Health Program. “Some of the preschoolers had never had a few of the vegetables we offered them, but most were willing to give them a try!”

Another component of the effort was educating the children’s parents about the importance of including a healthy dose of veggies. This effort included giving them resources, like the story book, showing them how to establish healthy eating patterns and stressing the importance of including vegetables in their meals at home in order to meet the nutritional goals of their children.

While the original grant’s criteria only covered schools within Onondaga County, the Cabrini Team Health recently received funding from the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation to provide the same Pre-K literacy and nutrition program for the remaining 10 preschools across the diocese — in Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Oneida, Onondaga and Oswego counties.

“It’s essential to reach our students at a young age in order to impress upon them the importance of good nutrition,” said Spector. “This type of project helps our Catholic school community by improving the nutrition of some of the students we serve. We are helping our most vulnerable — and isn’t that what Jesus would do?”

Caroline K. Reff is a freelance writer in Syracuse, New York, and the editor of Pillars magazine.

What is Cabrini Team Health?

Cabrini Team Health, in collaboration with community partners, is dedicated to improving the education and health outcomes of low-income/poverty level students and families of all denominations in Diocesan Catholic schools. Guided by faith and values consistent with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, its mission is to positively impact the circumstances of students and families by fostering programs and educational experiences that improve their lives. Building upon the foundation that the Catholic schools provide, the initiatives will address the social determinants of health to provide for the needs of students and families, thereby reducing health prevalent disparities.

Mother Cabrini Health Foundation
Diocese Welcomes Seven New Principals in Past Two Academic Years

(Editor's note: While several principals took on their new roles at the start of the 2021-2022 academic year, a few additional principals new to positions in the previous year were not included in last year's edition of the magazine due to issues related to the pandemic. The following article celebrates all of our "new" principals who have joined our diocesan schools in the past two academic years and continue to commit their careers to educating our students in Jesus' name. We thank them -- as well as every one of our principals -- for their service to our schools, particularly during these unprecedented times.)

JIM ABRAMS: ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST SCHOOL
Jim Abrams became the principal of St. John the Evangelist School in Binghamton at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. He holds a bachelor's degree from Le Moyne College and a master's degree from Binghamton University, as well as a Certificate of School District Leadership from SUNY Cortland. He started his teaching career in the Catholic Schools of Broome County. "I became an educator to help young adolescents to navigate what can be a very challenging time in their lives," he said of his calling. Abrams originally retired as an educator in 2015, but was eventually drawn back, working for Catholic Charities of Broome County as a tutor in a boys' group home before taking leadership at St. John the Evangelist.

ALLYSON HEADD: BISHOP GRIMES JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL
Allyson Headd is a proud alumna of the Syracuse Diocese's Catholic Schools, having attended Holy Cross School and then Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. High School. She went on to graduate from St. Mary's College (South Bend, Indiana). Prior to taking the position at Bishop Grimes, she was a principal at a Catholic high school in the Midwest. She attributes her decision to teach and lead in a Catholic school to many of her Catholic school teachers at Holy Cross and Bishop Grimes. "I'm just so excited to be able to give back to a community that has given me a lot," she said of taking over as principal of Bishop Grimes in January 2021.

ROY KANE: NOTRE DAME JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL
Roy Kane was named the executive principal of Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in 2020. Prior to that, he was the associate principal there for 14 years. He began his teaching career at Notre Dame as a NJROTC instructor and history teacher. He also was on the coaching staff of the school's varsity football team. According to Kane, he has relied on the strong team of staff and educators at Notre Dame to help him lead through the challenges of the pandemic. His reward, however, is seeing the senior move on with the knowledge that Notre Dame has prepared them for whatever path in life they choose.

MICHAEL MCAULIFF: BISHOP LUDDEN JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL
Michael McAuliff is also a product of Catholic education, having attending St. Jerome's Elementary School in E. Rochester, New York, as a child. He received his bachelor's degree in physical education, master's degree in education and CAS in educational administration from SUNY Cortland. After teaching and then serving as assistant principal for a number of years in the public school system, McAuliff was appointed principal at Parish Elementary School in the Altmar-Parish-Williamstown (NY) Central School District, from which he retired in 2016. However, in 2018, he return to his calling as an educator as principal of St. Margaret's School in Mattydale and in 2021 was named principal at Bishop Ludden. He is proud to come from a family of educators. His sister is a retired teacher, and his brother, a Jesuit priest, serves as a principal at a school in Indonesia. McAuliff's wife also works in Catholic education as the senior director of advancement at Le Moyne College. "I believe that leading a Catholic School allows me to combine academic excellence with spirituality and service," he said.
Bob McCrone joined Holy Cross School in Dewitt as principal in 2020. He attended Catholic schools through the eighth grade in Buffalo and Rochester, New York. Later, he earned a bachelor’s degree from SUNY Buffalo and a master’s degree from SUNY Oswego, along with a CAS from SUNY Cortland. For 20 years, he was an educator in the Liverpool School District, where he was the principal of Long Branch Elementary School for 16 years. He was pleased to have the opportunity to lead in a Catholic School, despite the difficult and unprecedented times of the pandemic. “The pandemic is a challenge,” he said, “but I want students to go home at the end of the day and say how much they love their class, their teacher and their school. I don’t want them just talking about masks and social distancing. To me, that’s the real challenge.”

Sherri Stone joined Most Holy Rosary School in 2020 as its principal. A native of Georgia, she attended Georgia Southern University, Troy State University and SUNY Albany. She has taught all levels of elementary school — from kindergarten through eighth grade, having most recently been a teacher at Most Holy Rosary. “Working in education is a job like no other, and only a teacher understands how hard it is and how completely amazing it can be,” she explained. “We are responsible for the next generation and leading our children to become the leader of tomorrow. What a profound task — and one that I am so blessed to share.”

Sarah VanLiew became the principal at St. Mary’s Academy, Baldwinsville, in 2020. A graduate of Nazareth College and Syracuse University, she chose to be an educator because she wanted to make an impact on children’s lives. After 33 years in the public school system — her last 18 years as a principal and assistant superintendent in the Westhill Central School District — she retired in June 2020. She quickly started a new chapter at St. Mary’s in the midst of a global pandemic. “St. Mary’s Academy seemed like the perfect fit,” she said. “… a school that focused on academic excellence while developing a strong moral conscience and embracing Catholic principles.” She credits the close knit community of parents, students and educators for facing the challenging of the pandemic and “working together to create the best plans possible for a success.”

Some of the information from this piece was taken with permission from The Catholic Sun.
Parents at All Saints Elementary School truly embodied the spirit of giving over the past year-and-a-half as they stepped up to make the school a “wonderful place to bring smiles to the kids’ faces and give them some playtime together,” according to Principal William Pipher. In 2020, parents rallied together to establish a stronger, more organized PTO. From that came some ideas about what the school could do to provide more play space for the students in Pre-K and kindergarten, particular under the social distancing restrictions brought on by the pandemic. One All Saints family, which asked to be anonymous, donated the time, funds and effort to turn an empty room into a special play area where children could not only safely get some exercise but also have the opportunity to expand their imagination. Today, the room is filled with a climbing apparatus, slide, play café and grocery story and a chalkboard wall. “It’s been such a great addition to our school,” said Pipher. “The family was amazing and did the work themselves. Now, our students use it every day!” The PTO also wanted to improve the small outdoor space at the school, which had a crumbling blacktop surface that wasn’t conducive to playing outdoors. Again, another family, this time a set of grandparents, who also wished to remain anonymous, donated 75% of the cost to transform the area into a turf field where the children could play safety outside in the fresh air. The rest of the funds came from other families through the fundraising efforts of the PTO. The project was completed in October 2021 and used any time weather permits. “Our All Saints families have really stepped up to make these wonderful improvements and give our students something to look forward to during some tough times,” said Pipher. “It wouldn’t have been possible without the generosity and hard work of our PTO and our All Saints families.”
Art Project Brings School Community Together

When students at St. Mary’s School in Cortland came back to in-person learning, they had a greater appreciation for the sense of community. To that end, “Together” became the theme for the 2021-2022 academic year, as it seemed a fitting word to describe, to uplift and to face the challenges and the joys of the school year. A project under the direction of art teacher Molly Reagan, who is also an alumna of the school, the mural involved each child in Kindergarten through sixth grade creating a doodle that captured what came to mind when he or she thought of the word “Together.” The doodles were compiled and superimposed over text. A T-shirt was created with the new design to raise the funds for the cost of the paint pens needed to complete the project. Finally, fifth and sixth graders traced the doodles on a wall inside St. Mary’s School. The result was an inspiration mural that is displayed as a testament to the power of pivoting in difficult time together.
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