

Spirited Perspectives



SPRING 2015

Kindergarten Tigers dressed like an adult they admire during Catholic Schools Week at Blessed Trinity.

Principled Thoughts

Patrick O'Keefe, Blessed Trinity Principal

As Blessed Trinity turned the legal age of twenty-one this school year, we reflected on becoming grown-ups. Classrooms discussed what it means to be a grown-up, what qualities of grown-ups we admire, what qualities would make us think that a person had grown physically but hadn't really matured on the inside and which grown-ups are serving our community and making our lives better, day in and day out.

During Catholic Schools Week in January, Blessed Trinity students wrote individual and group letters of appreciation to the adults around them, including the parish staff at all three of our sponsoring parishes (Assumption, St. Richard's and St. Peter's); local firefighters, police officers, park workers, veterans, doctors and nurses; Blessed Trinity tutors and Richfield's Knights of Columbus. Students dressed like an adult or favorite job/career, packed supply bags for those struggling during our cold winter

season and celebrated diversity with Mix-Up Day by sitting with someone they don't know well, or at all, at lunchtime. Our eighth graders wrote moving essays that began with, "Blessed Trinity helps me grow into a person/adult of faith, learning and service by..." Through it all, our parents, staff and teachers guided and supported students every step of the way.

After four school years at Blessed Trinity, I can honestly and with heartfelt sincerity declare that every person connected to Blessed Trinity Catholic School is blessed to be a part of an incredibly loving and unique community. Thank you for your role in making our school one that is recognized for its work with all our students, as well as one that nurtures the incredible talents and exciting futures each and every one of our Tigers holds in their hearts, minds and souls.

GROWING TECHNOLOGY AT BLESSED TRINITY

Jill Elfering, Technology Coordinator

Last summer Blessed Trinity submitted a grant application to the Schulze Family Foundation requesting \$30,000 for technology. A few months later we were overjoyed to learn that our total grant request had been approved! Then on Give to the Max Day 2014, Blessed Trinity donors stepped up to a matching donation challenge and raised a total of \$18,390 for technology in just one day! These high profile boosts for technological growth at Blessed Trinity have brought exciting changes and a myriad of new opportunities for academic excellence at Blessed Trinity.

Those new technology dollars enabled us to upgrade our computer lab hardware at our Penn Campus location in order to match existing technology on our other campus. We were also able to expand the iPad project that was initiated with a limited introduction during the 2013-14 school year.

Blessed Trinity's Penn Campus computer lab was upgraded with brand new Apple Mac Mini workstations (500gb hard drives, 8gb RAM) running the latest Apple operating system (OS X 10.10, "Yosemite"). Our students now have access to Apple's suite of productivity (Pages, Keynote, Numbers) and creativity (iPhoto, iMovie, Garage Band, iTunes) software, bringing capabilities for desktop publishing, photo editing, video creation, music production and more to their fingertips. With a connection to our Nicollet Campus "Type to Learn Server," students are now able to work from the early grades through middle school building their skills.



Our students are currently making impressive documents with images and Google Slides presentations. Second graders used the lab to research facts about our Pope. They wrote a factual sentence and then used web search tools to find a photo that depicted that fact and added it to the page. All pages were compiled into a book of young authors! Recently, our kindergarteners created a math fact

booklet using a painting application, with each student writing one subtraction number sentence, then choosing objects to place on the page, counting them, and crossing out the correct number for a visual example of the number sentence. First graders planned and wrote their own multi-media stories, complete with their own illustrations and their own recorded voices! This upgraded computer lab is also allowing for more streamlined standardized testing, which gives our teachers a good picture of student achievement.

In addition to the new computer lab, a full classroom set of iPads was purchased for the Penn Campus from grant dollars from the Schulze Family Foundation and the 2014 Give to the Max Day. A set of 30 (iPad Air 16gb) iPads with protective cases, stands and

headphones now fill a cart where they can be charged, stored and easily moved from classroom to classroom. These iPads are engaging students and enhancing their learning on a daily basis. Students are doing research for reports, taking pictures and video for interviews, creating concept maps, creating their own multi-media stories, and much more—all with one device held in their hands!

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EMPOWERING LIVES: ALUMNI INTERVIEW

Melissa Cavanaugh, Communications Director

Brian Jensen, Blessed Trinity Class of 2003, was in Minnesota for a few weeks recently, before returning to Haiti to continue his work as a Project Manager for Haiti Outreach. He will spend a second year working with a team whose ultimate goal is for clean water coverage throughout the country of Haiti. Read about his experiences in Haiti, along with some great advice for Blessed Trinity students, in this alumni Q&A.

Tell us why you are working in Haiti.

I am working in Haiti for a non-profit called Haiti Outreach, which is based in Hopkins, Minnesota. Haiti Outreach is committed to Haiti becoming a developed country. One aspect of that is creating sustainable water infrastructure: wells and municipal water systems. I am working on a team to create a structure for monitoring this infrastructure so that we can see what is out there, what condition it is in and ultimately who has access to clean water. It helps us to target our work to become more effective at arriving at our goal of 100% clean water coverage.

What are your accommodations like in Haiti?

Relatively very good. I have lived in two places. First, I lived in an apartment that was converted from the old Haiti Outreach headquarters to be livable. That means I had clean water out of the tap, 24/7 electricity, and a U.S. style bathroom. Those conditions are very abnormal for Haiti. The vast majority of people have to walk long distances to fetch water from an often dirty water source and then carry it back in five gallon buckets. Now, I am renting an apartment with a coworker/friend and his family. It is in a middle-income place in town right under Mount Pignon and adjacent to the cemetery. Our 3-bedroom house is made of cement blocks and has a

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GROWING TECHNOLOGY

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These types of innovative student projects have unlimited potential. They enable Blessed Trinity to be ready for the future of education by providing our students with practical, hands-on technological experience that they will need for success in high school, vastly expanding technological integration into our curriculum and remarkably improving our ability to compete as an important educational choice in Richfield and its surrounding areas. Because Blessed Trinity's technology budget relies exclusively on grant writing, donors who restrict their donations to technological spending and fundraising that includes Give to the Max Day and Funding Factory, we are incredibly grateful to the generosity of the Schulze Family Foundation and all our technology donors for the gifts they have given our school and students, allowing us the tools needed to offer academic excellence and keep our students on the cutting edge of technology in education.

BLESSED TRINITY'S Mass & Prayer Event

Blessed Trinity's final Mass this school year will be Wednesday, May 27th, 12:15 PM at St. Peter's Church. Mass will be followed by a presentation about the power of prayer along with Eucharistic adoration until 2:30pm.

Our special intention for this Mass and adoration will be for those who are persecuted for their religious beliefs, especially Christians who have been targeted in some parts of the world.

Please make plans to join us for this very special Mass and Prayer Event. We want as many praying as possible for the welfare and safety of Christians and all who are struggling and/or persecuted throughout the world.

Join Us in Prayer on May 27th!

EMPOWERING LIVES

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poured cement roof. We have electricity about once per day for a few hours which occasionally can go down for 4-5 days. But it is very refreshing living with a Haitian family. My coworker, Elices, is a kind, funny and devoted guy. His wife, Belovda, is a great cook and good company, too. They have a son named Lucas who is 18 months old and loves to ride on my motorcycle. He cries every single day when Elices and I leave in the morning, not because he misses us, but because he wants to ride on the motorcycle!

Are you able to attend Mass in Haiti?

Yep, they have a Catholic Church in almost every town. I live in a mid-sized town called Pignon. The Mass is similar to ours here in the U.S. except that it is conducted in French and Haitian Creole, which was a



problem for me for the first few months. Many Haitians that I know, whether Catholic or Protestant, are very devoted to their faith. Many churches have very active choirs, some have four or five of them. Also, much faith-based aid is distributed through churches. This can come in the form of food-aid, toys, children's programs or faith formation.

Your Mom and friend visited you in Haiti. What did you want them to experience while there?

I wanted them to see that Haitians are mostly the same as Americans: they are hard workers, they want what's best for their children and they want to be good people. Children play the same (maybe a little rougher and often without pants), adults sit and gossip, and teens try to impress each other with their dress and boisterousness. We walked around town,

passed through the market, stopped at friends' shops, went to church and hiked some mountain roads. As in the case of small towns everywhere, everyone knows everyone and everyone knows everything everyone does.

What advice would you give Blessed Trinity students who want to grow up to serve the poor in our world?

Do it! And everyday use your Catholic education and your ability to think critically to analyze the causes of the problems in the world, whether it be the poor in Haiti or the spread of AIDs in Africa. Then, work collaboratively to solve those root problems. And instead of thinking of it as helping the poor people of the world, think of it as empowering them to better their

lives. When people own the solution and help themselves, they have pride in it, sustain it, and are empowered in all areas of their life.



What motivated you to give another year of service to Haiti?

Easy! Because it is the best job ever! But more than that, it's an

opportunity for me to do something significant for the common good instead of the often overemphasized individual good.

Brian is the son of St. Peter's staff member Theresa Jensen. We asked Theresa to tell us a little about Brian:

"Brian is a person who everyone likes to be around. He is fun, funny, active and always looking for something new and different. He decided in high school that he wanted to work to help a third world country with their water problems; then he set out and earned a degree in engineering to make that happen. Now, he is making a difference in the Haitian quality of life. I love that he has immersed himself in the country. He speaks Haitian Creole, which he learned by living there. I am very proud of Brian and what he is doing in Haiti."



MASK-A-RAVE!

Michelle Breitsprecher, St. Richard's Church



February is the perfect time for a parish community celebration before entering the Lenten Season. The Mardi Gras Mask-a-Rave at St. Richard's Church is a glamorous event that brings people together for fellowship, dinner, games, fun, and dancing while seeking to bring good to our parish home. Each year party-goers playfully raise funds for projects that are identified by parish leadership. Two years ago, enough money was raised to purchase new chairs for the social hall. St. Richard's parishioners and Blessed Trinity students, teachers and parents all enjoy the comfort of those new chairs! This year, St. Richard's faced a more serious and pressing problem. The flooring in the Blessed Trinity education wing was desperately in need of repair. With cracked and breaking tiles, we were being mandated to cover this floor as soon as possible. So this past February, St. Richard's rolled out the red carpet. There were all of the usual

games, social hour, dinner and live auction that folks have come to expect at the Minnesota Valley Country Club. Through all of the rallying, reveling and mask-a-raving, we brought new safety and new beauty to our parish home and school. We raised enough money to re-carpet the northeast portion of the school wing and even the front entry way, which was an exciting bonus in our fundraising efforts! Thank you to all who supported this amazing event by attending, making donations or volunteering. It couldn't have happened without collaboration between the communities of St. Richard's Church and Blessed Trinity School. The flooring work is scheduled to be done after school gets out for the summer in June. We invite all to join the fun next February as we rally for another great cause! Mark your calendars as a reminder and watch for communications as the time draws near, so that you may attend the next Mardi Gras Mask-a-Rave at St. Richard's Church!

SERENDIPITY

Ann Garland, St. Peter's Church

There was a healthy dose of serendipity associated with an endowment fund that began over 20 years ago at St. Peter's Church. Twenty-two years ago Bernie & Ratna Mallawaarachy donated \$30,000 to establish an endowment fund. Their three children had graduated from St. Peter's School and Academy of Holy Angels (AHA). In fact, one of their sons, Rajika Mallawaarachy, is currently the Director of Finance at AHA. The Mallawaarachy family's endowment was established to help pay tuition for a St. Peter's parishioner who graduates from St. Peter's School (now Blessed Trinity), enrolls at AHA and qualifies for financial assistance. The interest earnings from this endowment fund, rather than the original \$30,000, is what can actually be used as the scholarship gift; and so it has taken some time to mature to the point where money could be drawn and awarded to a student. But in December, that \$30,000 had grown to \$50,000. It can now generate \$3,000 per year over four years' time. With this happy development, the next step was for St. Peter's Church to select the recipient for the Mallawaarachy Scholarship. Enter the serendipitous hand of God! In looking at the students most involved in the parish, Gihara Perera became one of several possible candidates for the scholarship. Gihara is a current altar server, poised to graduate from Blessed

Congratulations Father Mike Tix!

Father Mike is a former Blessed Trinity Canonical Administrator & Assumption Pastor and current Chaplain of Academy of Holy Angels. He was recently named recipient of the National Catholic Education Association's (NCEA) Distinguished Pastor Award!

Trinity in June and enrolled at AHA next school year. As it happens, the Perera family is from Sri Lanka, just like the Mallawaarachy family. In addition, the Mallawaarachy family owns and operates Bernie's Montessori School & Child Care, originally located at St. Peter's Church and now located at 12th & 66th in Richfield. Gihara's mom is currently operating a child care out of the Perera's home, with Gihara always willing to lend a hand as needed. These similarities in background and experiences in part guided the decision-making, and last month St. Peter's Church proudly awarded Gihara Perera as the recipient of the Mallawaarachy Scholarship. She will receive this tuition aid over the next four years, as long as Gihara continues her studies at AHA. Both the Mallawaarachy and Perera families are filled to the brim with Sri Lankan heritage and commitment to Catholic education! Congratulations Gihara! St. Peter's is thrilled your parents selected Blessed Trinity and AHA for your education in America!
