

FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

It always amazes me how fast the academic year goes by. We can hardly keep up with the speed of time! It is already the end of February and spring is near. Our school and our students continue to grow and develop in marvelous ways. God continues to bless us with his loving guidance and care as we try to live according to His plan. Prayer and action is the order of the day so please enjoy this wonderful news from our school.

Catholic Schools Week: All the activities planned for Catholic Schools Week, beginning with the Character Breakfast to benefit our RISEN Program, which raised \$2,444.19, and ending with the Mardi Gras Dinner Dance and Basket Gala, were a great success. Parents, students, teachers and staff had great fun! We want to thank all of the people that worked so hard to make this Catholic Schools Week so wonderful: Mrs. Jane O'Friel, the RISEN staff and pool of dedicated volunteers for the Character Breakfast, Mrs. Maureen Kamercia, Mrs. Diane Maleno and Ms. Cathy Santangelo for the school activities during the week, and the Parents Guild, led by the Mardi Gras Basket Gala Committee composed of Mrs. Staci Riley, Mrs. Rinta Abraham, Mrs. Kristen Grubb and Mrs. Sue Jennerwein, for the great Mardi Gras fundraiser. I also want to thank all of our students that represented our school in all of the Sacred Heart Church Masses the weekend before Catholic Schools Week. Our students, proudly wearing their uniform, participated in the many ministries of the Mass with confidence. Their presence enriched our liturgical celebration. Special thanks to Mrs. Marissa Mills, Mrs. Jeaninne Lamothe, Mrs. Pat Snyder and Mrs. Ann Griffin for helping in the coordination of our students' participation in these Masses.

Open House: Our school hosted a very successful Open House for new families last Wednesday, February 8th. We had 20 families in attendance of which 13 have already registered! We have waiting lists for Kindergarten, 1st grade and 3rd grade, and not too many spots are available for pre-K and 2nd grade. I would like to thank our school faculty and staff, participating 8th grade student ambassadors, and members of the different parish and school organizations for helping make it a great success. We heard many good comments, especially about our student ambassadors. They were in charge of greeting and guiding our guests, signing them in, and conducted 7 tours of the school that night. They played a key role in recruiting new students and we are grateful and proud for their contributions.

Facilities Update: During this winter break we have renovated the closets in Mrs. Kamercia's 4th grade room. The renovation of the closets in Ms. Santangelo's 3rd grade is planned for the week of April 12th through the 16th (spring break). We have also initiated the process for a school and parish wide raffle to finance additional renovations in rooms shared by the parish and the school. Stay tuned for more information coming soon!

Technology Update: Our emphasis on integration of technology in the classroom continues strong. A projector and smaller Smart Board have been installed in the Kindergarten room. Our faculty and many of our staff members will be attending a training session here at the school to learn to use the Odyssey on-line program from the Compass Learning Company. Moreover, our school is one of 5 schools in the Diocese selected to host a pilot program called the Blue Ribbon Project. This program offers structured on-line resources for Reading and Math for grades 6, 7 and 8. Our Middle School teachers, Mrs. Jane Murphy (English) and Mrs. Amy Ward (Math) have already attended a training session to use this program.

Middle School News: The 6th graders are once again the winners of the Middle School Homework Challenge for the month of January. In addition, 36 Middle School students received a Principal's Dress Down Pass for a perfect homework record. They are David Abraham, Fatima Barlan, Alannah Bunkley, Mia Farnworth, Timothy Foster, Kiana Foster-Mauro, Christina Lawton, Beatrice Mills, Matthew Murphy, Isabella Niece, Darby Nisbett, Courtney Rose, Paul Snyder, Kimberly Thomson, Corrine Wagner, Megan Bosetti, Michelle Chapman, Shannon Forrester, Patrick Griffin, Celine Harris, Elizabeth Jennerwein, Audrey Jones, Gavin Jones, Briana Kleiner, Kathleen Kuchembrod, Francesca Matira, Ellie McCarthy, Joey Warmus, Martin Wolk, Bea Asuncion, Justin Bell, Morgan Gagne, Brigid Horan, Molly Lang, Andrew Luo and Bianca Matira. Congratulations!

In addition, our Student Council, under the direction of Mrs. Amy Ward, has coordinated a very special fundraiser to complement our Haitian Relief efforts (see below). Hearts for Haiti is fashioned after the Light the Tree fundraiser that takes place during the Advent Season. Members of the SHS community were asked to send messages to their loved ones for \$1.00 each. These messages were written on heart-shaped construction paper and will be posted in the school's lobby. Kudos to our Student Council for their generous initiative! And finally, the 8th Advanced Math students participating in Mathcounts Club Program did a great job at the Mathcounts Eastern Chapter Competition, which took place last Saturday, February 6th at the Coast Guard Academy. They were Brigid Horan and Andrew Thomasco.

Elementary School News: On Saturday, January 23rd, our 2nd grade students made their 1st reconciliation at Sacred Heart Church. Our pastor, Fr. Dariusz Dudzik presided over this beautiful ceremony. Three other priests participated as well. May the light of God's grace shine in their hearts forever! In other news, our 5th grade students, under the direction of their homeroom teacher, Mrs. Gail Facas, submitted short stories and illustrations that culminated in a book publication entitled "20 Awesome Stories". It is truly an awesome accomplishment. I am also happy to report a new extracurricular activity for our 4th and 5th students. The Photography Club, under the direction of our Pre-K teacher, Mrs. Julie Sparks, is now offered on Wednesdays after school. Thank you, Mrs. Sparks, for offering this fun extracurricular activity for our students!

Other School News: As we hinted above, our school has joined the rest of our nation in our efforts to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti. On Tuesday, January 26th, our school held a special collection to collaborate with Sacred Heart Parish's Haitian Relief efforts. We collected \$1,178.01! In a separate fundraiser, our school participated in the Hoops for Heart fundraiser to benefit the American Heart Association. Our PE teacher, Mr. Steve Sheridan coordinated this fundraiser, which helps save many lives from heart disease. Our school raised \$1,876.25 and that is \$300 more than last year! Thank you, Sacred Heart, for all your generosity!!!

We continue to be very active in our efforts to generate school publicity. The most recent "The Good News" bulletin from the St. Vincent De Paul Place in Norwich published an article that mentioned the contributions of our Middle school Service Club. It also included a picture with some of our students. In addition, advertisements for our Open House were featured in The Day, The Groton Times, WBMW radio station (106.5 FM) and its affiliate Jammin 107.7 FM, as well as on television (Groton Cable Public Access Channel). But most of all, thank you to our school parents, for always being the most successful form of school publicity!

Our school has also been active in the celebration of Black History Month. All our grades had special activities and projects related to this important celebration. In addition, during morning announcements, I have included facts about the origins of Black History Month as well as the extraordinary contributions that many African Americans have made to our country and to the world. To finish this month, we have scheduled a school assembly (grades 3 and up) to watch a video of a guest speaker that Ms. Santangelo welcomed to her class last year. Mr. Richard Sugarman is a social worker that had the opportunity to participate in the Civil Rights March of August 28, 1963 in which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous and inspiring speech "I Have a Dream". Mr. Sugarman speaks of his experience as a participant of this defining moment in modern American history.

In athletics news, all our basketball teams participated in the St. John Invitational Tournament that took place the weekend of January 30th and 31st at St. John School in Old Saybrook and did a fine job representing our school. Indeed, we are very proud to announce that our Boys Varsity Team won second place. Go Crusaders! On a separate note, I hope you all enjoyed last Guild meeting's new format. I would like to thank the Guild Officers, Mr. Dave Singleton, Mrs. Dena Grant, Mrs. Jennifer Armstrong and Mrs. Suki Reilly for all their efforts. In fact, I am thrilled to announce that our Kindergarten students are the winners of our first Guild Attendance Challenge for the highest parental attendance to the Guild meeting. Mrs. Fleury's class had 46% attendance. Great job! I will be in touch with Mrs. Fleury to plan the reward that her class will enjoy. And finally, I am very excited to announce that our school has received a \$1,000 donation through the Catholic Alumni Partnership initiative. This brings the total for our CAP donations to \$1,225!

I would like finish by thanking our students for their numerous loving gestures and tokens related to the celebration of Valentines Day. My heart warmed up and my mind could not believe how much love was demonstrated towards all of the members of our school community. Please know that we love each and everyone of you back. Your presence enriches our lives, giving us joy and purpose. As we enter into the Lenten Season, may we grow in our desire to follow the One who loved us the most. And may nothing stop us from loving Him back with all of our heart.

In Christ's love,

Dr. Calle