

Rejoice

It's different here!

The Director's Newsletter

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In this issue:

The Work of God's Hands
- St. Mary's, Goderich

Holocaust Survivor Visits St.
Anne's & St. Michael

System Cross Country

Local Food Banks Bringing
Dignity and Hope to Those
in Need

Thanksgiving Coat Drive

...plus more

Student Voice

St. Patrick's student body speaks up about school improvement

*"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."
~ (1 Timothy 4:12)*

It's unlikely that most of today's parents had much of an impact on the way their own schools were run. At the time, their role was to focus on the three R's...while school improvement efforts fell squarely on the shoulders of teachers and administrators.

Mr. Dan Gracey remembers those days, and now, as principal at St. Patrick's School in Kinkora, he's interested in changing the status quo and hearing what his students have to say.

"At St. Patrick's, everybody knows everybody, which makes it an ideal environment for empowering student voice," he explains. "Though it is early on in the process, we want to jump in with both feet. We're examining how we can involve our students in the ongoing process of school improvement, and foster engagement by making them part of the decision-making process."

Though active efforts are still in the early stages, Mr. Gracey is excited to share a variety of areas where vibrant student input is affecting the school in positive ways:



Blended Learning Project & Code of Conduct

As traditional learning tools like pencils and books share an increasing amount of space with online resources, St. Pat's is keeping pace by providing opportunities for students to experiment with electronic media.

"Our students expressed an interest in learning more about communication and emerging technologies, and we are feeling our way through with the creation of an e-learning environment," Mr. Gracey says.

That environment includes a school blog as of late, complimenting the classroom use of current technologies. As a safe and password-protected forum, the new blog offers students an opportunity to share their ideas in both teacher-directed and student moderated conversations.

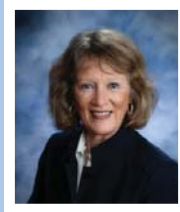
While commenting, students adhere to an online Code of Conduct that they helped establish, ensuring that online contributions remain caring and respectful.

Speak Up Initiative

Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the *Speak Up* Initiative invites students to share ideas about strengthening student engagement by creating a culture where students are welcomed to participate in school decisions and everyone feels they belong.

Continued on page 2

From The Director



Dear Members of the Huron-Perth community:

This new school year brings renewed energy, optimism and hope for the success of every student that walks through our doors. From our early learners in our Kindergarten programs to our graduates – we celebrate Catholic education and our call to be “Walking in the Light of Christ”.

We are extremely proud of our students’ accomplishments. We have worked hard as a Catholic community to plan for the brightest future for the students entrusted to our care and we proudly announce that **Huron-Perth Catholic is one of the highest achieving boards in the province!** There is clear evidence that our school staffs embrace their calling to work diligently to meet the needs of our students. Our Catholic schools are places of quality learning and teaching where our students achieve the Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations.

This coming year we will celebrate 165 years of quality Catholic education in Huron-Perth

As we move forward to “*Realizing our Capacity*” 2010-2013, I urge you to visit your local Catholic school, to become involved with your school community, to see yourself as an important partner in your child’s learning and to give thanks for the enduring gift of Catholic education.

My warmest wishes for a successful year.

God Bless,

Martha Dutrizac
Director of Education

Continued from page 1

St. Pat’s has created a forum where students can share what they would like to see happening within the school. Positive input is encouraged, with progress driven by suggestion, not criticism. Students again asked for increased exposure to technology, and with the help of their own Catholic School Advisory Council, St. Pat’s now offers access to iPads, iPods, and a SmartBoard in nearly every classroom.

Student Prayer

Last year, St. Pat’s Grade 7 & 8 class wrote a prayer specifically for their school, in collaboration with their teacher. The school as a whole has prayed it with such frequency that they’ve committed it to memory. This month, the prayer was emblazoned on laminated posters and displayed prominently in every classroom.

“We love

this prayer because the kids wrote it,” says Mr. Gracey. “Some of those who worked on the project are still students at St. Pat’s this year, and it’s exciting for them to hear their words lifted up proudly by the school community.”

School Mass offers further opportunities to engage in prayer leadership, with students invited to get up as individuals and sing the Responsorial Psalm.

“St. Pat’s really participates in song. We have beautiful voices,” Mr. Gracey explains. “This is a role that models courage. We are able to pull a singer from each class, even in our small school. It goes to show that when someone is worked with and supported for a whole week, they can achieve at a high level.”

CSAC Meetings

While Catholic School Advisory Council meetings are largely the realm of parents, Mr. Gracey regularly invites students to speak out regarding issues of importance to them. When St. Pat’s was awarded Gold Medal Eco School status for the third year running, students made a 10-minute presentation to CSAC about their environmental initiatives. The talk was so well received, they were asked to present to the CWL of their local parish.

Board-Level Leadership

A group of four St. Pat’s students are among the elementary school representatives who will join high-school students and Chaplains in leadership development opportunities that will direct social justice and ministry initiatives for the year.

“Kids help decide where the fruits of our energies will be directed,” explains Mr. Gracey. He adds that St. Pat’s has already participated in a coat drive with the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Goderich to help families impacted by the tornado.

While much progress has been made with regards to enabling student voice, Mr. Gracey insists that what’s been done so far is just the beginning.

“It’s definitely a work in progress,” he says. “As a school, we’re figuring out what it looks like to deliver a curriculum vested in student input -- one where students are engaged, involved, and able to say, with confidence: *‘I made this!’*”



The Work of God's Hands

"The landscape of our community forever changed August 21, 2011, when a deadly tornado wreaked havoc on the Prettiest Town in Canada: Goderich, Ontario. We are God's hands, so let us rebuild our community with great spirit and strength. Please take time to slow down, love one another, appreciate more and be thankful for each and every day."

~ Preface, St. Mary's Social Justice Club Cookbook

In reflecting on the shocking disaster and subsequent blessings that have befallen the town of Goderich, St. Mary's School principal Mrs. Jackie Simpson offers up simple affirmation: "We are God's Hands."

The feeling that God's presence is felt through the actions of His people is a timely one in the St. Mary's community, where the act of being "God's Hands" is tangible. Though it was chosen long before disaster struck, the idea is also this year's school theme.

His Providence at Work

"As God's Hands, our goal has been to work together to rebuild our community while helping families in need," says Mrs. Simpson. "It is of utmost importance that we recognize and support the challenges and feelings created by the tornado, and that the school community pulls together to support the people of Goderich as much as we possibly can."

The process of reaching out across the St. Mary's community has been underway from the first days of school, when students were encouraged to share their thoughts



about what the small town had endured. As their stories emerged, students were reminded that God does not "let" or "make" tragedies happen. They are simply a part of the human condition, and in this case, the limited injuries and loss of lives were truly miraculous. Mrs. Simpson's contagious optimism seems another sure sign of the Lord's hand at work.

"While the tornado itself was devastating for our town and our families, we've seen it bring our community together," she explains. "As people of God, we've seen so much good come of this situation – to the point where we can be even better than we were before. We are focusing on how wonderful our neighbouring communities are and how lucky we are to live in a country like Canada. We have services to help us immediately, and co-citizens that care so much."

As a Christian people of hope, St. Mary's families are focusing on the fact that good can come out of every opportunity. Around the school, the experience has fostered a deeper understanding of the importance of everyday outreach efforts.

"We emphasize with how we are

now in solidarity with many people around the world who suffer disasters and hardships on a daily basis," reflects Mrs. Simpson.

"We can now fully understand their hardships and respond more appropriately to them."

The lesson has been wide-reaching. Across Huron-Perth, neighbouring schools have responded to the Goderich disaster with actions and initiatives that reflect God's presence.

Adopted Families

During the first month of the academic year, schools across the Board chose St. Mary's as the recipient of their outreach efforts for the upcoming year, in an outreach project titled "Giving Light Back to Goderich".

Under the direction of their principals, support from neighbouring schools will reach St. Mary's in the form of cards, crafts, prayers and the "adoption" of affected families.

Aid recipients remain anonymous, identified only by their needs and the ages of their children. Donations supplement the varied needs of these families, providing everything from groceries and household items to shoes, coats and school agendas.

Cookbook Sales

Prior to the disaster, the St. Mary's Social Justice Club began working on a cookbook featuring recipes offered up by the school

families. In the wake of the tornado, the books are being offered at a price of \$10.00 each, with all proceeds going directly to support affected families in need.

The theme of food and celebration will continue in December with a Christmas Feast – plans are currently taking shape, again under the guidance of the Social Justice Club.

While the effect of the disaster has been profound, Mrs. Simpson adds that many of the programs that were previously underway at St. Mary's are continuing this year with great success. Three Full-day

Kindergarten classes are now in full swing, and the new construction project that began last year will be complete with all classrooms in their newly renovated area by the end of October. The school is also welcoming new teachers and early childhood educators into the program.

“It has been a difficult fall,” reflects Mrs. Simpson, “but we

are celebrating the chance to come together with a compassionate and giving group of people.”



The Spirit of Thanksgiving

During this Thanksgiving season, the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board community answered their calling to be Christ-like as they collected donations of coats for children and adults in need. Pictured below are students from St. Patrick's School in Kinkora who were pleased to do their part.

Everyone needs one warm coat. Unfortunately, for many people buying a new coat is not an option. This annual one week blitz to collect winter coats for adults and children in Huron and Perth Counties is a reminder that there are many people whose wish is a warm coat for their children, parents, or themselves. Families and staff from all schools in the Board met this immediate need. All coats have been delivered to the local Salvation Army in Huron and Perth counties for distribution.



Published Author at Precious Blood School

Shay-Lynn Durand, a grade 5 student at Precious Blood School, is a published author! Her first story, *Beach Gone Wild*, was written and illustrated by Shay-Lynn with the encouragement of her parents and teachers. The storyline was inspired by visits to her grandparents' cottage.

Shay-Lynn recently held a book signing at the Exeter Public Library. She read her story aloud with expression and enthusiasm. A signed copy of Shay's book will be placed in each elementary school library. Shay-Lynn is donating the proceeds of her book sales to the Goderich Relief Fund.



A Dinner in Celebration of Catholic Education

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board hosted their annual Deanery Dinner on Thursday, October 20th, at the Mitchell Golf & Country Club. Representation from various groups such as Parish Priests, members of the Catholic School Advisory Councils, Religion Advisory Teachers, Trustees, Principals and Vice Principals, Learning Coordinators and Senior Administration of the Board attended the event. The keynote speaker, Father Jim Mockler, spoke about embracing and respecting the diversity of the home, school, and parish partnership roles.

Fr. Jim Mockler is currently serving as the Episcopal Vicar of London Deanery and Rector of St. Peter's Cathedral in London. He is the Chaplain to the London District Catholic School Board, Chaplain of London Police Service, Chaplain RCMP for the Ontario Division and the Chaplain to the Ontario Police College in Aylmer.

Fr. Jim communicated the importance of building positive relationships with all partners in Catholic education by celebrating our common goals and our understanding of Church teachings. He spoke about supporting students in living out their faith by affirming, encouraging, mentoring, comforting and helping them in their faith journey. Fr. Mockler shared that we - the home, school, and parish - are one body, and that each part has a very important function that cannot

be fully successful in isolation. Catholic partners must respectfully and humbly work together in unity to live out the mission that is ours.



Holocaust Survivor Visits St. Anne's and St. Michael CSS

Holocaust survivor, Dr. Eva Olsson, spoke to St. Anne's students on October 5th. Her message of love, compassion and unconditional acceptance was extremely powerful. Students were silent as she shared her story of being silenced by the Nazis in 1944. She held nothing back in telling about the terrible ordeal that she and her Jewish family suffered at the hands of the Nazi bullies. "There is nothing to be proud of being a bystander and watching someone being hurt and you're silent. Silence is a killer. In 1928 in Eastern Europe, there were 300 Nazi bullies. But, by 1933 there were 300,000. The bystanders had joined the perpetrators and the rest is history," Eva said. Her message was hard to hear as she shared her last memories of her mother and her father. The 86 year old now tours the continent spreading her message of the incredible destructive power of hate but of the even greater power of love, compassion and unconditional acceptance. She receives energy from all of the young people who fill her with hope. We are the last generation to hear her message first hand and it is our responsibility to ensure that we do

not spread hate or stand by when others are hurt. Her legacy to her mother and father and all the victims of the Holocaust is to share their story. St. Anne's was deeply moved by Dr. Eva Olsson, who left us with these parting words. "Every day I wake up and thank God for everything in my life. I try, every day, to be a better person."



Angels in Our Midst

Local Food Banks Bring Dignity and Hope to Those in Need

A lot has been reported about the Goderich tornado and the small and not-so-small acts of kindness shown to the town in the time since, but in a small corner of “Canada’s Prettiest Town”, two of its residents work tirelessly to bring hope and dignity to those who are disenfranchised. Even a tornado couldn’t stop them from doing what they do best.

Pat Clifford and Mary Barry, the two beautiful women who oversee the volunteers at the St. Vincent de Paul in Goderich, are examples of faith in action. They have been hard at work since the August disaster collecting non-perishables, sorting donations, and offering support to the displaced. Immediately following the storm, they were out on the streets of Goderich, providing food and coffee for first responders and knocking on the doors of those who would have been afraid or unable to leave their homes, providing hugs and a warm meal. They were at St. Mary’s School handing out backpacks with our Director of Education, Martha Dutrizac, so that no child would start school

without needed supplies. Pat and Mary also came to our System PD Day at St. Michael CSS in Stratford so that system staff could donate non-perishables—filling a cube van before 9:00 a.m.! Everything they do is done with a smile and with so much gratitude; you can’t help but support them!

Pat and Mary are just two of the many amazing volunteers who work for food banks in Huron and Perth Counties. Food banks were first thought of as a temporary measure when the first one was opened in Edmonton in 1981. According to Food Banks Canada, today there are over 900 food banks across the country. 51% of those assisted are families with children, and 38% are children and youth. The number of people assisted by a food bank in March 2010 was 867,948*-- the highest level on record. Food

banks often act as advocates for their clients and work to promote their dignity as well as provide the necessities of life that we may take for granted.

As another holiday season approaches, please remember to support your local food bank.



From left: Mary Barry, Pat Clifford, and teacher, Anne Marie Lambert, collect food for the Grocery Bag Drive at St. Michael CSS.

System Cross Country: Running for Personal Best

On an overcast October day, the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board held its annual cross-country meet. The event took place at the beautiful Falls Reserve Conversation Area in Benmiller, Ontario. Over 500 students participated from every Catholic elementary school in both Perth and Huron counties.

The mission of our system sporting events is embedded in our Board’s mission statement of nurturing a Christ-centred environment, providing student-focused learning opportunities, and supporting the growth of the whole person. With this in mind, we strive to provide a positive and inclusive opportunity for all students to participate in a variety of activities and athletics throughout the year.

Congratulations to all of our student athletes for striving to reach their personal best while exploring their God-given talents!



St. Michael CSS Celebrates 25 Years of Catholic Education

The announcement by Premier Bill Davis in 1984 that full funding would be extended in Catholic schools for Grades 11, 12 and 13 (OAC) was welcomed by the Catholic community in Huron and Perth. And so began construction of a Catholic secondary school in Stratford. In September of 1986 the Board welcomed 60 students, 6 teachers plus the principal, day and evening custodians, and one school secretary.

Twenty-five years later, on September 29th, St. Michael CSS opened their weekend long festivities with a school Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. Bishop Ronald P. Fabbro. Special guests included former students, parents, former and present trustees and superintendents, and former teachers. Two future students were invited from the elementary partner schools to represent future students. Mr. Dan Bishop, first principal, spoke to the students about their responsibility to carry on the traditions of the pioneers of the school and the legacy and privilege of Catholic education. Immediately following the Mass, guests were treated to a reception sponsored by the Huron Perth OECTA branch and the students departed the school to go on the annual "March for Mike's" walk.

To commemorate the occasion an aerial photo was taken. Current student and World Champion baton twirler, Samantha Metalski, entertained the student body with her amazing baton twirling skills. On Saturday,

alumni were treated to an open house featuring archived photos and yearbooks, a children's play area and a barbecue. The wine and cheese event hosted in Eckert Hall capped off a great weekend with alumni reminiscing about the 'good old days'. A generous donation to the St. Joseph Church building fund and an alumni scholarship was given with the proceeds from the events.



Some of the first graduating students of St. Michael. Former principal Dan Bishop is on the left.



Visitors from Kenya Thank St. Anne's for Raising \$38,000

Susan Mebet, a student of Kisaruni All Girls High School in Kenya and her principal, Carol Moraa travelled to St. Anne's to thank the "Me to We" club and the Huron-Perth community for raising \$38,000 for their school. "I would like to thank you for the warmth you have shown us," said Susan. "Most girls in the Masai Mara region of Kenya have to work for the whole day, collecting water or looking after cattle."

Education is a powerful tool in breaking the cycle of poverty for all Kenyan youth. The Kisaruni school has 41 students that attend classes in Math, Physics, English, Business, Agriculture and five other subjects. This really is a tremendous step forward, as women are the backbone of most Kenyan communities.

In keeping with their fundraising efforts, the St. Anne's "Me to We" would like to invite everyone to their second, "African Culture Night" on Thursday, December 8th at 5:30 p.m. With an evening filled with celebrating AgriCULTURE they hope to raise another \$25,000 for agriculture centre beside Kisaruni School. "This is going to be such a fun night where we celebrate the agriculture and culture of two communities: Huron County and the Masai

Mara. We'll be eating Kenyan and local dishes, listening to Kenyan drummers and Ontario fiddlers, and celebrating the importance of agriculture." said Deanna Devereaux, co-organizer of the big event. Please call St. Anne's for more information or to book your tickets.



Happenings at Sacred Heart, Wingham

Owen Curtis is a very special and popular grandpa to two students at Sacred Heart School in Wingham! In September, he dropped by the school to show off his 722 lb. pumpkin! Every year Mr. Curtis tours 17 schools in the North Huron/South Bruce County schools with pumpkins as big as this (or bigger).



On another fall note, Sacred Heart's Social Justice Club lead the way to the school collecting 700 lbs. of food for the North Huron Food Share. The cupboards were almost bare before their drive. Below: Students pose with NHFS organizers.



St. Michael Students Visit France

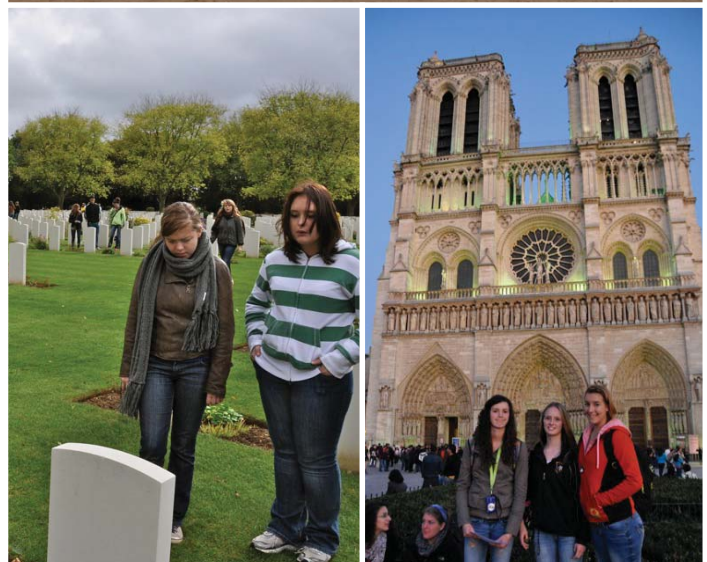
Thirty-six St. Michael students enrolled in French classes this year travelled to France with three teachers from October 6-16. The students were participating in the first half of St. Michael's 5th biennial exchange with the Lycee Sacré Coeur which is located northwest of Paris in Normandy.

Students lodged with their exchange partner's family which allowed for an authentic immersion experience, both linguistic and cultural.

While in Normandy, the St. Michael students visited classes in the French school and went on several day excursions including a visit to Juno Beach Centre in Courseulles. This is a Canadian museum dedicated to telling the story of Canada's participation in the 1944 D-day invasion and subsequent battle of Normandy. Students also visited a nearby Canadian war cemetery at Bény-sur-Mer, and visited the home of impressionist painter Claude Monet in Giverny and the garden which inspired many of his paintings.

Before heading home, students visited the majestic Palace of Versailles and spent two busy days in Paris. They climbed the Eiffel tower, strolled the famous Champs-Élysées, and visited the Louvre museum to see, among other treasures, the famous Mona Lisa. Mass at Notre Dame cathedral and a moonlight boat cruise along the Seine river for a last look at the sights of Paris capped off the visit.

St. Michael students look forward to hosting their partners in the second half of the exchange when they visit for a taste of Canadian winter, February 16-28.



Upcoming Events

Nov. 1	All Saints' Day
Nov. 2	All Souls' Day
Nov. 4	P.D. Day - All Schools
Nov. 6	Fall Back! Daylight Savings Time Ends
Nov. 11	Remembrance Day
Nov. 27	First Sunday of Advent
Nov. 28	Board Meeting (4:00 p.m.)
Nov. 29	Volleyball Elementary "A"
Dec. 5	Inaugural Meeting of the Board
Dec. 26-Jan.6	Christmas Break

Hallowe'en Faces

Spooky, scary faces from Mrs. Devereaux's Kindergarten class at St. Patrick's, Dublin, visited the Board Office on Hallowe'en day. The students sang Hallowe'en songs to the staff so that they could be "treated" with goodies!



Congratulations!

...to Deb Tate, EA at St. Michael CSS, on the birth of her son Lindsey.



St. Michael Teacher Receives "Woman of the Year" Award

There are many extraordinary Canadian women who live in Perth County and St. Michael teacher Tina Robinson is one of them.

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board would like to congratulate Tina on receiving the 2011 Optimism Place "Woman of the Year" award in the Educator category. She serves as the Arts department head at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School. In this capacity she is a very efficient leader in drama, visual arts, and music. Taking words from Tina's nomination form; "In my 25 years of teaching, no other teacher has demonstrated such passion, energy, and determined focus to give so much to her students everyday in every way."

Congratulations, Tina!

