

The Catholic Education Community Newsletter

January/February, 2007 • vol. 1 issue 5

The Good News in Education

The nation's nearly 8000 Catholic schools will celebrate Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 28 – Feb 3. This year's theme is "Catholic Schools: the Good News in Education."

The Catholic School community here in Tidewater certainly has lots of "Good News." The primary part of the "Good News" we have to share is the message of Jesus Christ. Our main mission as Catholic School educators and as parents is to bring our students into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. We can brag about our high achievement rates, high moral values and high parent and student satisfaction, but they mean nothing if we do not bring our school communities the "Good News of Jesus Christ."

I am sure we all plan to highlight our programs such as band, sports, forensics, computer labs, languages, etc. but it is essential for us to communicate our Catholic identity. What makes us different from other fine educational systems in the area? It has to be that we promote and encourage our school communities to live the Gospel message.

In June 2005, the United States Catholic Bishops issued this statement in support of Catholic Schools: "We are convinced that Catholic Schools continue to be "the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people who are the future of the Church."

By equipping our young people with a strong Catholic education, deeply rooted in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and rich in our traditions, rituals and the liturgical celebrations of our faith, we will help our students live lives of courage and compassion.

Congratulations to all our Tidewater Catholic Schools – the Good News in Education!

Sr. Patricia O'Donnell, IHM
Principal, St. Gregory the Great School



For this edition of the CECN each school submitted essays by their students titled "My Catholic School Experience." These essays are written by students who truly care about the value of a Catholic education.

Christ the King

Many people take their education for granted. Many teachers take their students for granted. Forthethreehundred plus students and teachers of Christ the King Catholic School, there is a sense of community in which everyone



works together and no one takes their gifts for granted. Christ the King is a school that focuses on academic success accompanied by pride and dedication. The legacy of our caring community shows that hard work truly does pay off - the motto of our school.

Education is the cornerstone of a successful future and education begins with teachers. Teachers come in many forms, such as role models, priests and elders, but at Christ the King School, students are taught by people who are all of these things and more. By taking an active part in Masses, field trips and school sponsored activities, the teachers of Christ the King School create an open environment for learning and valuable life experiences.

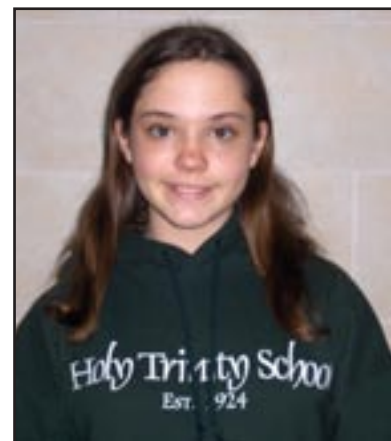
- Jordan Hess, 8th Grade

Holy Trinity

My name is Devon and I have had good experiences in a Catholic School. I have been attending my school since I was four years old. I will be thirteen on May 23rd of this year. The teachers are very helpful and nice. My Mom and Dad say that Holy Trinity, the Catholic school I attend, has a better education than any public school. Our Principal, Mrs. Nofplot is very nice, smart, and helpful too. If we need any help from her she will help us. All of the teachers are willing to help us too. This Catholic School is a really good school. My parents like it so much that they say that I will probably attend it until I graduate next year. The clubs are fun, but educational too. Every Wednesday we go to Mass across the street at our church.

I love going to Holy Trinity School. It is the only Catholic Middle School I hope that I go to.

- Devon Variano,
7th Grade



St. John the Apostle

Hello! My name is Megan Grasman and I am in the seventh grade at St. John the Apostle Catholic School. I have been at St. Johns for all 5 years that the school has been opened and I have enjoyed every moment. St. John's is a terrific school full of great students, and dedicated teachers and staff. I have enjoyed all the fun after school activities, such as; student council, cheerleading, feild hockey, tennis, Destination Imagination, and choir. They also provide other activities, like; basketball, a chess club, safety patrols, cross country, golf, and a yearbook commitee.



St. John's has not only taught me the importance of doing well in school, I have come to a deeper understanding of my Catholic Faith and love for God. St. John's has taught me the importance of "love they neighbor" and treating others with kindness and respect.

St. John's also provides fundraisers to help fit the needs of the poor, sick, and charity groups. As a member of the SCA I have had the oppoortunity to be involved on an organizational level with some of the works of charity and have seen first hand the difference they make in our community. I am so thankful and very blessed to be part of such a caring, giving, and religous environment at St. John the Apostle.

- Megan Grasman, 7th Grade

St. Gregory the Great


St. Gregory the GREAT School

Reflecting back over these three wonderful years at St. Gregory's, I now realize two things. One would be how unique this school really is. You may think that Catholic schools would have a routine and the students would be like robots but, that is not the case at this school. First of all, the curriculum is based on morals and being the best, not only Catholics, but young adults we can be. That shows me this school is not just making us ready for high school and college. It's also preparing us to face the moral and religious choices that will strengthen our relationship with God. Most importantly to me, the teachers are dedicated to making sure that we understand their subject and they do a great job of making any activity enjoyable.



Samantha Vadnais with her "first grade buddy", Gabriel Staicer.

The second thing I realize is how special St. Gregory's is to me. It has really given me a taste of what high school and sometimes college might be like. Most people would think that wearing a uniform and having a lot more homework than other schools is foreign and strict. If you actually think about it, we are privileged to wear that uniform and even have a better education than most. Moreover, if you really think about it, in the long run, this school has helped each and every one of us through hard times and good times. St. Gregory's has been there when relatives or even parents have died, or when you had something published in the paper. Little things like that make St. Gregory's, not only just a school, but a huge family. My huge family. I am so grateful to be able to attend St. Gregory the Great School. Samantha Vadnais, 8th grade

 5343 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
Visit us on the web—www.stgregory.pvt.k12.va.us

Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School

An outsider may view the concept of Catholic education as a community which is not open to freedom of expression and beliefs. My years at Catholic schools have taught me otherwise. Bishop Sullivan CHS is a close-knit community in which freshmen and senior students can have a valued friendship. On top of that there are many genuine one-of-a-kind people that make up the Bishop Sullivan CHS community. To the uninformed, it may seem like our school isn't very diverse, that being made up mostly of middle-class Roman Catholics defines who we are. This is not the case. I've realized that I am able to learn new things every day from my fellow peers and staff. Our community is made up of a diverse group of people with various interests, strengths, and backgrounds. At Catholic, I never feel physically overwhelmed by the size of the school. Bishop Sullivan CHS is "just right" in its number of courses offered, difficulty of classes, number of students, and extracurricular activities. Unlike public school, you don't feel like a small fish drowning in a vast and daunting sea. Also it isn't tiny like some area schools where not getting along with two people basically means you're stuck to fend for yourself.

At Bishop Sullivan, the growth of every student's individual passion is fostered. Time and money is spent to widen the opportunities for students to get what they want out of their high school experience. In recent years, the Barry Robinson Theater and Fine Arts Center was completed, and very recently the new Indoor Sports' Field Dome celebrated its grand opening. As far as education goes, the curriculum can be challanging for those who seek it and that is the ideal situation for a prep-school environment such as ours. Thanks to the educational standards at Catholic, I feel that when I venture off to the university of my dreams, I will be prepared to overcome any barriers. In conclusion, Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School is a wonderful experience that I look forward to every day.

- Gabriella Moses, 11th Grade



Newsletter created by Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School.
Please direct any questions or comments to Brendan Hoyle, Director of Public Relations
• 757-467-2649 • hoyleb@chsvb.org

St. Matthews



I walk into my Religious class and look at the far side of the room. There on a shelf are about twenty bibles, all lined up neat and orderly. They stand out from the rest of the classroom I think because they are one of the things that make us special compared to other schools. We are allowed to have bibles, crucifixes, and pray in the middle of class without having to worry that we'll get in trouble like that teacher

who got fired for wearing a crucifix to her school. It's like one of my teachers exclaims by putting on her bulletin board, "St. Matthew's is cool; we're prayer conditioned."

I feel extremely strong about this because as a Catholic I feel that my religion is part of who I am, and I would really hate to go to school every day, leaving part of me at home. My religious beliefs are something I like to have with me and be able to talk about with everyone around me, everywhere I go, not just at church on Sunday. Going to St. Matthew's has provided a safe, happy, and good moral-based atmosphere for me throughout my life. I truly feel that St. Matthew's has helped me become the person I am today. It's like something I learned in my religion class just today. "Our nature (human) makes us what we are. Our person makes us who we are."

- Kelly Dunsmore, 7th Grade

St. Pius X

In my Catholic education, I have experienced the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Reconciliation. In Baptism I was made a member of Jesus' family, in Eucharist I receive Jesus' body and blood which makes me stronger in heart, body, and soul. In Reconciliation, I am cleaned of my sins and forgiven. I have learned I can be assured of my place in God's kingdom by following the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, and the Works of Mercy. I can also make good choices and be respectful to others and myself as well.

In having my Catholic education, I have some rewards. I can achieve my goals, be successful in my dreams and job, and receive love and happiness too. By teaching others God's word, I also receive pride in what I do.

- Anna Chang, 5th Grade



St. Pius X School
Catholic Schools Week Open House
Sunday, January 28th from 10am to 1pm

Star of the Sea

I'm a sixth grader and have attended Star of the Sea school since kindergarten. What makes this school special is our teachers and students. Our principal and teachers are good role models, and keep school interesting and exciting, especially during Catholic Schools Week which we celebrate with a pep rally, student appreciation day, and days we don't have to wear uniforms!

On Catholic Physical Fitness Day we compete against other Catholic schools in track and field events. We run the President's Fitness Test mile on the boardwalk in the fall and spring. Afterward we stay at the beach and build sandcastles. This is one of my favorite days of the year!

Star of the Sea has a performing arts program. Practice is after school with your friends. When you put on the play it is like a present for your parents and friends.

Every month we celebrate mass and before Easter, we have Stations of the Cross. In May, we have a special procession outside. During the holidays we share special times with our younger prayer partners. Our Back to School picnic when we all get together is also very special.

Star of the Sea school is a great school. I am learning what I need to know and how to be a good person and a good Catholic. I am also making many friends for a lifetime. It is great to be a student at Star of the Sea!



- Jacqueline Velo, 6th Grade

Portsmouth Catholic

I like Portsmouth Catholic for lots of reasons. I like the teachers, the buildings, the playground, and the people here. The teachers are great! They're really nice, and they help you understand things. We have a new gym and middle school classrooms. What I like most, though, are the people! If you're new, you make friends almost instantly. They also support you.

We have a student council, too. Students are elected by their classmates, and they are the "voice" for that grade. The council sponsors non-uniform days, bake sales, and other fun stuff including a social for the Middle School.

Another thing we have that public schools don't are Religion classes. We learn about our faith and pray in the mornings, at lunch, and in the afternoon. Also, all of the students take Spanish. Our Spanish teacher is informative, and we learn a lot. Eighth grade and sometimes seventh grade can take high school credit classes, like Spanish and Algebra.

We have lots of opportunities here, and we learn a lot. We have great friends and great teachers! Portsmouth Catholic is wonderful!

- Katelyn Lacey, 6th Grade



CHS Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School

4552 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

757-467-2881
www.chsvb.org

Christ the King
St. Gregory the Great
Holy Trinity
St. John the Apostle
St. Matthew

St. Patrick
St. Pius X
Portsmouth Catholic
Star of the Sea

The Catholic Education Community

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Norfolk, VA
Permit # 100



Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick Catholic School is an absolutely awesome place. The staff, faculty, and students are really nice and caring, we have great academics, and you feel like an individual all the time. Overall this school is GREAT!

At my school everyone is welcoming. My friend is a new student and she toured the school before she came and she loved it. Everyone welcomed her. Sixth and seventh grade students get to help tour new people.

I also like all the students. They are all really nice and try to be friends. The students care about their school. They help out with younger students and they always lend a helping hand to others.

My favorite thing here is the teachers. The teachers really know their students. They know what sort of things you like to do and who your family is. I like that about them. It makes me feel more welcome. I also like my principal, Mr. Hammond. He knows all the kids and is such a good role model. He is helpful and knows a lot about Jesus and his stories. Our teachers and staff are great!

There is happiness all around Saint Patrick's. Everyone cares about you and you just feel special in every which way. I belong to an awesome school. I am so lucky!

- Calli Zarpas, 5th Grade



Hampton Roads Catholic Schools

Check out the new website at www.hrcatholicsschools.com.



Students from all ten South Hampton Roads Catholic schools join together for a photograph in the courtyard at Bishop Sullivan CHS.