

# Cross Talk

VOLUME 6

ISSUE 1

## Parishioners Serve Our Community



*Breakfast bags distributed by Aid for Friends were filled at a recent SOC meeting.*

Last February, a group of individuals gathered together to discuss forming a service organization for the men and women of Saint Helena Parish. We created an organization that would be a resource for people who wanted to volunteer

their time and give back to their community. For the first few months, we

worked to come up with a plan of action and pinpoint what we hoped to accomplish. We decided on the name SOC, which stands for Serving Our Community. Our mission statement is:

*SOC is a faith-based organization established as part of the St. Helena, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania Parish community to offer programs and services that provide aid to struggling families, the elderly, handicapped and other disadvantaged residents of St Helena Parish and surrounding communities.*

The next step was to discuss our concept with Father Nicolo. Father was most receptive to the ideas and information presented. He was also helpful, identifying additional service needs within our parish that the rectory, as the hub of the parish, fields weekly. With the support of our clergy SOC's board moved on to the first initiative which was working with Aid for Friends.

In September, SOC introduced the meal program which delivers individual meals for the isolated homebound in Philadelphia and the five surrounding counties. Aid for Friends furnished the parish with the freezer and all of the supplies that our volunteers need to freeze and store their meals. We are currently averaging donations of 100 meals plus soups per week. Meals are sent to our

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neighboring parishes for distribution to the needy.

Our first SOC meeting was held in October. SOC will hold meetings on the second Monday of the month in the school cafeteria. Attending SOC meetings is not mandatory. The meetings are provided as an opportunity to volunteer your time in a social setting.

Each month the board will plan a service project. At October's meeting, we filled and decorated 200 breakfast bags for Aid for



Friends. Each person who receives meals from AFF is guaranteed one hot meal a day. The breakfast bags are a nice supplement to that meal. At the November meeting we put together bereavement baskets. Several members have volunteered to visit with parishioners who have lost a loved one. The baskets were delivered as a small reminder that the people of St. Helena are thinking of a fellow parishioner during difficult times. In December we baked trays of cookies for the children at Silver Spring Martin Luther Residential School in Plymouth Meeting.

Volunteering for SOC depends on your availability - an hour a week, a month or once a year, whatever works for your life. SOC's goal is to provide assistance to individuals in the parish who are experiencing a difficult time in their lives. There will be opportunities to volunteer by providing:

- meals for people dealing with loss, injury or illness
- rides to doctors or treatment for someone who is unable to drive
- minor household repairs for the impaired

- tutoring for children struggling with schoolwork
- supplies for servicemen and their units serving overseas.

Volunteers for SOC can also assist local groups headed by St. Helena parishioners such as Starting School in Style (SSIS), which provides clothing and supplies for young women in need entering high school from the Norristown area, and Habitat for Humanity.

As a volunteer for SOC you will receive regular e-mails highlighting service opportunities within the community. Coordinator contact information will be provided in each e-mail.

SOC will be having a few fundraising events so that we have monies available to help those less fortunate. Our first fundraiser was held Sunday November 1, 2009, in the Social & Recreation Center. We sponsored a "Shopping Spectacular" from 12 :00 until 4:00 PM. The afternoon featured over 25 vendors whose wares included jewelry,



clothing, cash for gold, home goods and much more.

The response from the St. Helena community has been gratifying. More than 60 people who have agreed to volunteer and we always welcome new members. The SOC board is excited about the possibilities and opportunities that have come from the introduction of SOC. As St. Francis of Assisi said, "It is in giving oneself that one receives."

To be successful SOC needs not only volunteers to provide services, but also volunteers who let us know where the needs within the parish exist. If you know of someone who could use our help, please contact us via our website [www.sthelenasoc.com](http://www.sthelenasoc.com) or contact one of our Project Coordinators. We promise to honor individual privacy.

To learn more about SOC, please visit our website at [www.sthelenasoc.com](http://www.sthelenasoc.com); e-mail us at [sh.soc@gmail.com](mailto:sh.soc@gmail.com) or contact one of our coordinators:

Volunteers:	Micki Burns	267-240-3264
	Dorothy Mulhern	610-275-5282
Project Coordinators:	Nancy Harris	610-275-2378
	Lucille Kern	610-937-0625
Aid for Friends:	Noreen Brun	610-279-3642

## Meet Nicholas Semchuk

In our Church, the position of Pastor has enormous responsibilities. The Pastor is not only responsible for the spiritual well-being of the parish family and its sacramental life, he is responsible for all things temporal as well. In the last several decades, as the number of priests in the Archdiocese has dwindled and their average age has increased, the remaining priests have a greater burden.



With this role of the laity in mind back in 2001, our Pastor, Father Joseph Nicolo, put a notice in the Sunday Bulletin that he was seeking a Business Manager. Nicholas Semchuk applied and was promptly hired. Nick was extraordinarily well qualified for the position. A native of Manhattan, he moved to the Philadelphia Area when he was 9 years old. His father was Peter, a time study analyst, and his mother was Violanda, a homemaker who worked in New York's fashion industry. He was educated at Bishop Eagan High School and Temple University.

Nick also pursued post-baccalaureate work at Arcadia University and Bryn Mawr College. He was a doctoral candidate in English

at Bryn Mawr. From time to time, he has taught at Arcadia as an adjunct professor of English. He sees his studies in English and Religion as complementary, because in literature and religion, the great question is where does meaning lie.

In his working life, Nick was employed by the Budd Company at both its Hunting Park and Red Lion facilities. At Hunting Park, Budd built automobile components from fenders to unibodies, and at Red Lion, Budd was the nation's premier manufacturer of rail cars. At Budd, Nick was Divisional Materials Manager, responsible for purchasing, production control and receiving everything that went into an auto component or a rail car. At Red Lion, Nick was in charge of a staff of 300, and his procurement would exceed a million dollars a day from sources throughout the world. In its day, the Red Lion facility of Budd built light and heavy rail cars for transportation systems around the globe. After Budd was acquired by Thyssen, a German conglomerate, it exited the rail car business.

After he left Budd, Nick and some associates founded Advanced Transit Services, a fabri-

cator of components for railcars. Nick was President, and had approximately 120 employees, first at a Bridesburg location and then in the Naval Industrial Center in South Philadelphia. The company custom fabricated parts for railcar builders, railroads and transit systems in the US. For a time, he was also Vice President for Sales and Contracts for Kawasaki, a Japanese railcar builder that had operations in New York. Nick honed his skills in accounting and facilities management in all these positions.

After several years, Nick sold his business, and “retired”. That meant that he limited his activities to consulting in the areas of railcar manufacturing, business valuations and mergers and acquisitions. It was during this period of “retirement” that Nick responded to Father Nicolo’s announcement.

Nick sees his job at St. Helena as his ministry. He takes care of managing the temporal aspects of running a Parish with a growing school so that the Pastor can give more time to functions that only a priest can perform. Nick is responsible for the maintenance of the facilities and the support staff, financial affairs, human relations functions, and anything else he can do to help Fr. Nicolo. During his tenure, we have built a new church, chapel, Social and Recreation Center, and the Empress Room. We have completed additions and renovations to the Education  
[www.sainthelena-centersquare.net](http://www.sainthelena-centersquare.net)

Center. This was a busy time for Nick, involving meetings with construction managers, contractors, and architects. His duties are quite broad. If there is a leak in any of the buildings, Nick looks into it and seeks bids from contractors for repairs. He will do anything to help out, even set up for a funeral. He thoroughly enjoys working at St. Helena, and he enjoys the relationship he has with Fr. Nicolo. Nick works closely with Fr. Nicolo and respects his judgment and advice. Nick also oversees the operating and financial affairs of St. Rose of Lima Parish in North Wales. In his spare time, he takes an occasional consulting job, such as the one that took him to Korea for work on Septa’s new Silverliner fleet.

Nick and his wife Marianne, who will complete a M.S. in Instructional Technology at Chestnut Hill College this year, live in Ambler. Their children are Teresa, Michael, Christopher and Tyler. Tyler is a current student at St. Helena, and Christopher is a graduate of St. Helena. He has one grandchild, Lilliana, who is 6 years old, and is attending an Italian school in New York. Nick is proud to say that she is bilingual in Italian and English. When he is not working, he and his wife enjoy travelling. The temporal aspect of St. Helena Parish is a \$2.5 million a year enterprise and we are fortunate indeed to have such an experienced and talented manager looking over it. —Matthew Rieder

## Meet Phyllis Cissone

We all know the principal of St. Helena School, Sister Cathe Shoulberg, who is well respected and well loved by parents and children alike. But, how does she manage all of her responsibilities and keep everything running so seamlessly at SHS? Her secret is school secretary, Phyllis Cissone.

As Sister Cathe says, she could not begin to handle all of her duties as principal without Mrs. Cissone taking care of everything else.

Mrs. Cissone's career at SHS began quite innocuously 25 years ago. A stay-at-home mom, who volunteered with computer class at school (and there was only one computer for the school and faculty!), then principal, Sister Anna Mae, approached her about the secretary position. At the time, Sister Anna Mae asked her to work from 8:30-12:00. It took some serious consideration as her youngest child was only in second grade at the time; however, her children were very excited about the idea of mom working at school, so she took the job.

A few years later, when Sister Cathe came to SHS as principal, she asked Mrs. Cissone to stay on full time. They've been a solid team ever since. As Sister Cathe commented, "Phyllis is an extraordinary person who never gets flustered. She can assess any situation and take care of it without being told." Mrs.



Cissone's duties at SHS cover the spectrum: she assists Sister Cathe in a multitude of responsibilities involving the school and its students; is the main point of contact for families considering the school; helps the parents who volunteer during the school day; and, most importantly, she takes care of the students themselves – whether it be a scraped knee that needs a band-aid, or someone who forgot his lunch. When you ask her what she likes best about her job, she is quick to answer it's the children who are all so special to her.

When not working at SHS, Mrs. Cissone enjoys spending time with her husband and four grown children – she is also a doting grandmother to eight grandchildren. All of her children attended SHS, with her sons going on to Kennedy Kenrick High School and her daughter to Mount St. Joseph's where Mrs. Cissone is an alumna. During the summer she enjoys spending time at her pool and visiting the shore. She and her husband also try to get away during the winter holidays – last year they visited family in Wales. They are also active in the parish and years ago, her husband catered for Father Coates.

It is clear that Mrs. Cissone loves her job - she has "enjoyed every moment of being at St. Helena School." She is an invaluable member of the school family and a wonderful person to know. -Stephanie Donley

## Saint Helena School Fathers, Daughters Dance In “New York”



## Hospital Ministry

Here at St. Helena Parish we adopted the beautiful theme “One Family, One Heart, One Faith” which then became the impetus for our wonderful Parish Mission Statement. Inherent in the ideas expressed in this Mission Statement are the core beliefs that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, and living the Christian life means living in service to others.

As a Christian and a Catholic, each of us has a responsibility to continually reflect on all that we have been given and to find our own way of committing ourselves as One Family, to be a messenger of God’s love and presence in the world, with One Heart, to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and in One Faith, to live out and proclaim the Gospel message.

We are so blessed to be part of a parish community where service is alive and well and where there truly is a ministry for everyone whatever your gifts may be. One beautiful way I have found to serve is by taking Holy Communion to those confined to Mercy Suburban Hospital. As an Extraordinary Min-

ister of the Eucharist, we are commissioned, not only to visit the sick and pray with them but also to bring the Eucharist to them in the Rite of the Liturgy of Holy Communion.

Through this mission we are privileged to represent Christ in such an extraordinary way and to manifest faith and charity on behalf of the whole parish community toward those who cannot be present at the Eucharist. For the sick, the reception of Communion is not only a privilege but also a sign of support and concern shown by the Christian community for those who have been separated by illness.

I have personally come to the wonderful discovery that in a ministry like this, it is such a privilege to serve and the rewards reflected by the range of responses from those we visit continue to bring meaning to the message, “It is in giving that we receive”.

If you would like information on how to be part of this beautiful ministry, please call the rectory.

*-Dorothy Barry*

### ***Parish Mission Statement***

### ***One Family***

United as members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, we are committed, as one family, to be messengers of God’s love and presence in the world and to welcome and invite others to become part of this family and this mission.

# Faith, Friends, Fun and Food For Teens

The High School Youth Group is one of the latest additions to the ever growing list of Saint Helena ministries. It is open to teens in grades 9 through 12 and emphasizes faith mixed with fun and occasional food! The inaugural meeting was held in the Constantine Room on the evening of Sunday, October 4, 2009. The group's Moderator, Father Szparagowski, along with a core team of about 10 adult volunteers were thrilled to greet approximately 45-50 teenagers that first night.

The group meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month. Registration is free, and our own parish youth may invite friends, even if they are not Saint Helena parishioners. The adult core team convenes once a month to plan activities using web resources, collaboration with other parishes, and of course, their own great ideas. Opening night featured

## Opening night featured a liturgically-themed scavenger hunt

a liturgically-themed scavenger hunt in which teams scoured every nook and cranny of the church. Father Szparagowski used the occasion to contrast the trappings of the temporal world to the real fulfillment of the spiritual world.

As of this writing, the calendar of events included a bonfire and various community service projects, the first being a Thanksgiving food drive. Juniors and seniors are probably well aware that community service activities can be listed on most college application forms, and what better way to help the community than in the company of friends dating back to PREP and Saint Helena School days.

Let's pray that the initial momentum carries the High School Youth Group for years to come.

*-John Maloney*

### **One Heart**

Called by our Baptism to a life of service in the Lord, we are committed, with one heart, to live in charity, practice the works of mercy, and work for peace and justice.

### **One Faith**

Strengthened by God's Word and nourished in His Sacraments, we are committed, in one faith, to promote lives of learning, living and proclaiming the Gospel message, as we continue to grow in the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of all that embodies these awesome truths.

## CYO Sports For All Seasons

While reviewing past issues of *Cross Talk*, it occurred to me that although sports seasons were listed, there has never been a listing of sports by season. My experience as a CYO Board member has been that families new to the parish and parents of young children do not necessarily know a great deal about the Saint Helena CYO Program. The CYO Program is open to all parish children, whether in our school, PREP or private catholic

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school. This issue presents the perfect opportunity to describe and yes, brag a little about the program.

The Fall season starts promptly with the beginning of the academic year and includes Field Hockey, Co-Ed Soccer and Girls Volleyball. Registration begins in late May and remains open throughout most of the summer. Practices typically begin in mid-August, and games are played well into October.

The Winter season can be concisely described with one word - basketball. Tryouts

for the Varsity Boys and Varsity Girls teams occur in the first week of November. JV practices usually start a bit later. The Parish boys basketball team is a less competitive varsity team whose primary goal is to afford equal playing time to all. It is a perfect outlet for a

***The Winter season can be concisely described with one word - basketball***

boy who does not make the varsity cut or who is looking for an outlet for fun and camaraderie. Last, there is a High School boys basketball team for grades 9 through 12. Turnout dictates if separate 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade teams can be formed. In general, the basketball season concludes by mid-March.

Spring welcomes back our baseball, softball and track teams with practices starting in mid-March. Varsity Track is open to children in grades 4 through 8 and consists of three subdivisions based on age - namely Novice, Minor and Cadet. The competition consists of sprints, including relays, middle distance, the 1600 meter run and several field events. Members of the Pee Wee Track Team (co-ed, grades 1-3) participate in the 100 and 200 meter sprints, although for the very young, the 200 is more like a distance run!

## **Spring welcomes back our baseball, softball, track and volleyball teams**

For our high school students, there is a co-ed High School Volleyball Team (grades 9 -12). Most teams finish their seasons by late May.

For all CYO sports at the elementary school level, varsity comprises 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and JV, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades. The exception is track as described above. Some years, registration numbers allow us to field individual grade level teams such as a 7<sup>th</sup> grade varsity volleyball team or 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade JV basketball teams. In general, all who register make the team. Varsity basketball and varsity baseball are very competitive, and unfortunately, there are occasional cuts. JV sports are primarily instructional. The CYO Board's policy is that all receive equal playing time. Our coaches do a great job in making this happen.

Each team usually has at least two practices per week. No practices are held on Tuesdays when PREP is in session. Where possible, practices, as well as many games take place at the St. Helena Social and Recreational Center and on our athletic fields. For at least the last five years, Gwynedd Mercy Academy has generously allowed our Track team to use its top-notch facility for practice, and Ursinus College has been a gracious host for the regional track meets. Our baseball teams also use the fields at Wentz Run

Park, thanks to the Whitpain Township recreation staff.

Highlights of the CYO year are many. Our athletes attend CYO Masses in uniform and assume the duties of greeters, ushers, lecturers and cantors. Most of our teams are entered into various tournaments, including Saint Helena's very own Memorial Tournament. Now in its 6th year, it showcases some of the best basketball teams in the Archdiocese. Members of the track team are eligible to run in the legendary Penn Relays. Last but far from least, the CYO Community Service

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Corps offers our children wonderful opportunities to help those in need.

The CYO year concludes with a sumptuous banquet held in late May in the Empress Room. Awards are presented to the soon-to-graduate eighth graders. The evening comes to an exhilarating end with the much anticipated slide show.

For many of our children, CYO sports may very well represent their last experience in organized athletic competition, and the CYO Board strives to make it a quality experience and one most befitting a **Catholic** Youth Organization.  
*-John Maloney*

## Children's Liturgy

Your child can hear our Lord's message in a fun and meaningful way during 9am Mass on Sundays.

Pre-K and Kindergarten/First Grade children are excused during Mass to hear about God's love in a casual setting. Please join us, no registration required.

We also welcome volunteers, contact kushnerickjm@verizon.net.

### **CROSS TALK NEWSLETTER WINTER 2010**

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