

Cross Talk

VOLUME 7

ISSUE 2

Saint Helena Garden Club Improving Our Grounds and Our Future

The Garden Club is instrumental in maintaining the church grounds and keeping up with the ever-changing flower beds of perennials and annuals. At the helm is Theresa Smith, and she is steering the church and its facilities towards a more beautiful and gracious environment. Gardeners are artists in their own right, with visions and insight of what could be. The Garden Club consists of both men and women, young and experienced; they bring a great deal to the table.



Theresa Smith surveys the Grotto area prior to its renovation.

One of their biggest undertakings was that of the Grotto last fall. With the help of a bus load of Villanova students, O & F Farms, and Msgr. Nicolo's support they were able to get the Grotto area cleared and plant a substantial amount of shrubs and perennials. It is the hope that this space will receive the

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attention that it did many years ago as a highlight to the area. People came from all over to pray and give thanks. The Grotto is a huge commitment but well worth it. It is understood that our church and community is not just for today but for many tomorrows.

These are just small steps that are leading our parish into the right directions for generations to enjoy.

By Barbara FitzPatrick



Artist renderings of the Grotto area.

You can be a part of the wonderful ministry. You do not have to know a lot about gardening, just the will to help. Families or a church ministry group could adopt one of the gardens to care for during the spring, summer, and fall months. The gardens need to be weeded weekly or as needed and watered at least twice weekly. The areas available to be adopted are the flower beds at the: front of the church, front of the rectory, St. Joseph Statue, St. Theresa Statue, St. Helena Statue, Sacred Heart Statue, Blessed Mother Statue, Way Side Shrine Gardens, Church Sign on 202, Father Higgins' Grave, Grotto, front of the school, front of the Convent, front/side of Bell Tower, right side of the Church, left side of the Church, outdoor Stations of the Cross. Please call Theresa Smith at 215-646-7636 if you are able to help.

Meet Aaron Quinn

In November of 2010, Theresa Smith of St. Helena Garden Club needed help with the flower beds in front of the Church. She asked a young friend and neighbor to assist her, and he readily agreed.

Aaron Quinn is the son of Jim and Peg Quinn who live in the Parish. Jim works for the Delaware River Port Authority, and Peg teaches at Montgomery County Community College. Aaron has spent most of his life in the Parish and is a graduate of our School. After graduating from Wissahickon High School, he earned AS and BS degrees from DeVry University in Electronic Technology.

For the last decade, Aaron has operated as a sole proprietor in many varied fields. He is involved in landscaping, painting, power washing, electrical work and home theatre installations, among other things. He picked up his landscaping skills from experience as an employee of a landscaper, and from self-study. He also had plenty of practice with the plantings at his parents' home.

When he started his current project at St. Helena, he met with Monsignor Nicolo and Theresa Smith, and they collaborated on a design which involved transplanting flowers and shrubs from the front beds to other locations, and many new plantings. At a meeting this past February, the Garden Club decided on the kinds of perennials they would like to see around the campus. With that guidance in mind, Aaron makes recommendations for shrubs and the location of the plantings, and passes along the recommendation to Theresa. Theresa and Msgr. Nicolo confer, and when the plan is set, Theresa contacts Justine Ocelus at O & F Farm. O & F Farm has been extremely generous in donating annuals, perennials, trees and shrubs.

Aaron supplies the actual work in planting the new ornamental plants. So far, they have plans for the beds in the front of the Church, the areas of the Wayside Stations and areas in front of the Empress Room.

The work is challenging. The closer you get to the Church, the worse the soil is. The area immediately in front of the Church is clay with stones. When they were working on the two beds in front of the Church, they broke two tillers. During that preliminary work, O & F supplied workers and equipment to remove a portion of the turf in front of the church. The major portion of the turf was removed by Aaron and Garden Club members by hand.

Now, the new plantings are young. It will take a few years for the plants to fill out and the beauty of the design to be completely evident. Recently, the Garden Club, with Aaron's help, mulched the front beds with several cubic yards of mulch Msgr. Nicolo purchased from O & F Farms. Several members of the club, their friends and family members pitched in to get the job done.

The next area to be tackled is the area around the Empress Room. For the island in the parking lot near the Empress Room, the plan calls for trees and Burning Bushes. Aaron does this work without pay in his free time. He admits that this project is much more work than he anticipated, but he is determined to see it through.

Aaron describes himself as a "handyman". He does electrical work, landscaping, power washing, house painting, and audio visual setup solutions. If you would like to reach Aaron about a project you have, contact him at aaronquinn@hotmail.com.

By Matthew Rieder

The Usher Ministry

The usher ministry at Saint Helena is like a good investment ... the return is much greater than the initial outlay. The main responsibilities of an usher are seating congregants, taking the collection, distributing the weekly bulletin and seasonal hand-outs after Mass and providing assistance as needed. None of these activities is very time-consuming, nor do they require an usher to forsake active participation in weekend and Holy Day Masses.

Thanks to our beautiful and spacious church, finding seats for people is generally easy, even at Christmas and Easter Masses. Of course, the extra seating in the Narthex and overflow seating in the Empress Room help a great deal, but if we rewind our memories a mere eight years or so, who can forget people practically spilling out of the front doors of the old church into the chilled Christmas Eve air? Ushers were especially thrilled with the move to the new church. Conversely, other Christmas Eves were so mild that the ushers had to prop open the doors with concrete planters.

According to Head Usher Herb Mace, there are fifty-four men and women on the current roster, and the typical number of ushers at a weekend Mass is eight. While this number may seem more than adequate, there are times when people are casually

recruited from the pews to help with the collection.

Some of the "return" noted above comes in the form of wide-eyed children placing envelopes, bills or change into the collection basket. Some are very tentative while others opt for the slam-dunk. Also rewarding are the smiles and pleasant exchanges of friends and familiar folks as the usher hands them the bulletin on their way out.

Other tasks are less apparent, such as ensuring that there are people for the Presentation of the Gifts, packing the food items that children bring to the foot of the altar before the Offertory, closing doors, pointing people to the rest rooms and lost & found, and directing those who may inquire about joining our parish to Monsignor Nicolo or Father Szparagowski. Last, it is especially gratifying to answer visitors' questions about our beautiful church and to hear their many compliments.

The Usher Ministry is certainly not the only "good investment" at Saint Helena. All of its many ministries are well worth the time and effort.



By John Maloney

My Life, My Story

Growing up in a family of storytellers has delighted my sensibility to the concept of story and created in me the awareness that for each of us our life is our story. If we decide to adopt this metaphor we come to the realization that, as Author and Editor-in-chief of our own life story, we have enormous power, not only to shape our destiny or “story line”, but also to create ourselves in the starring role, the very best version of ourselves and ultimately, to write in our very own happy ending!

As a lover of stories from my earliest memory, I have found immeasurable pleasure in the joy of books—the cadence of a well turned phrase, the magic of an image brought to life, the beauty and strength of the story’s real heroes, and the preponderant triumph of good versus evil, trailing all the way back to the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.



This love of story deepened through the years as I came to realize, as a mother and pre-school teacher, that sharing the gift of story became one of life’s greatest pleasures. So, too, as we live out our own story, can we take the opportunity to step back, as Creator and Director, as often as we choose, to objectify our view of our own emerging role and see if we are still on track for becoming the character we had set out to be. It allows us also to view the impact of our story on the larger cast of characters and find places to edit as needed.

This metaphor of writing and living our own story, of choosing our own destiny, manifests itself most dramatically when we honor the passing of a beloved relative or friend. In the midst of our grief, we find great comfort in the repetitious telling and re-telling of their life, their story, chapter by chapter, as we rejoice in their own triumph of good over evil.

What a gift it would be if each of us could find the power in our own story, however rough the draft, to create our own authentic ode to joy! May each of us be inspired to take hold of the unwritten chapters of our life and flood them with our own beautiful footnotes, our own triumphs of good over evil, and ensure, once and for all, that when our last page is turned, we have written in our own “happy ever after”!

By Dorothy Barry

May Fair 2011

What is every student's favorite day of school? If you had answered, "The last day of the school year," then you were never a student at St. Helena School. All St. Helena School students know that the favorite and most memorable day is May Fair. This special day is a time-honored tradition of games and activities sponsored by the St. Helena Home and School Association. It takes months of planning and is monitored by the many generous parents of the school community and the faculty.

If you have never experienced May Fair, it works this way. Children purchase tickets and use those tickets to play games and purchase food. There were certainly plenty of games from which to choose this year! Students could try their hand at the Cap Toss, the Coke Bottle Toss, Crazy Cans, Apple Cherry Dart, Ring the Bull, Instant Wheel, Candy Wheel, Milk Bottle Toss, Mini Golf, Muffin Pan Toss, Basketball Shootout, Rubber Duck



Pond, Tip a Troll, Twin Hoops. Every child is a winner because redemption tickets are given for everyone who plays a game.



These tickets are then used to choose prizes at the Prizes/Redemption Booth, and the prizes are endless -- basketballs, stuffed animals, Slinkys, inflatable jumbo baseball bats, and much more.

If the games did not offer interest, students could have their hair styled, nails manicured, and face painted. They could dye a T-shirt, dress up in costume at the photo booth, or make a sand creation. May Fair also offered culinary favorites of popcorn, nachos with cheese, soft pretzels, hot dogs, water ice, and cotton candy. After a pre-ordered lunch of a turkey hoagie or cheese steak, the students gathered in the St. Helena Recreation Center for the traditional Tombola Prizes. These were donated by generous parents or purchased by the SHS Home and School Board and included movie theater passes and lots of gift cards.

As a final treat, some brave teachers entertained the students by demonstrating their dance skills with the Wii Just Dance. It was a grand time! Even the rainy weather did not dampen the children's spirits this year, as you can see from the many smiling faces in the photos of the day.

By Denise R. Britt

Summer 2011



Saint Helena High School Youth Group Keeps Busy and Spreads Smiles



St. Helena High School Youth Group continued to participate in numerous events the past few months. Teens continue to meet every other Sunday to discuss Christian teen life and participate in community service events.

Around Christmas time, about ten of the Youth Group members went to Regina Nursing Home to sing Christmas carols to the elderly. Many residents of the nursing

home joined in, and it was a very nice way to start the Christmas season! Both the teens and the residents enjoyed the night.

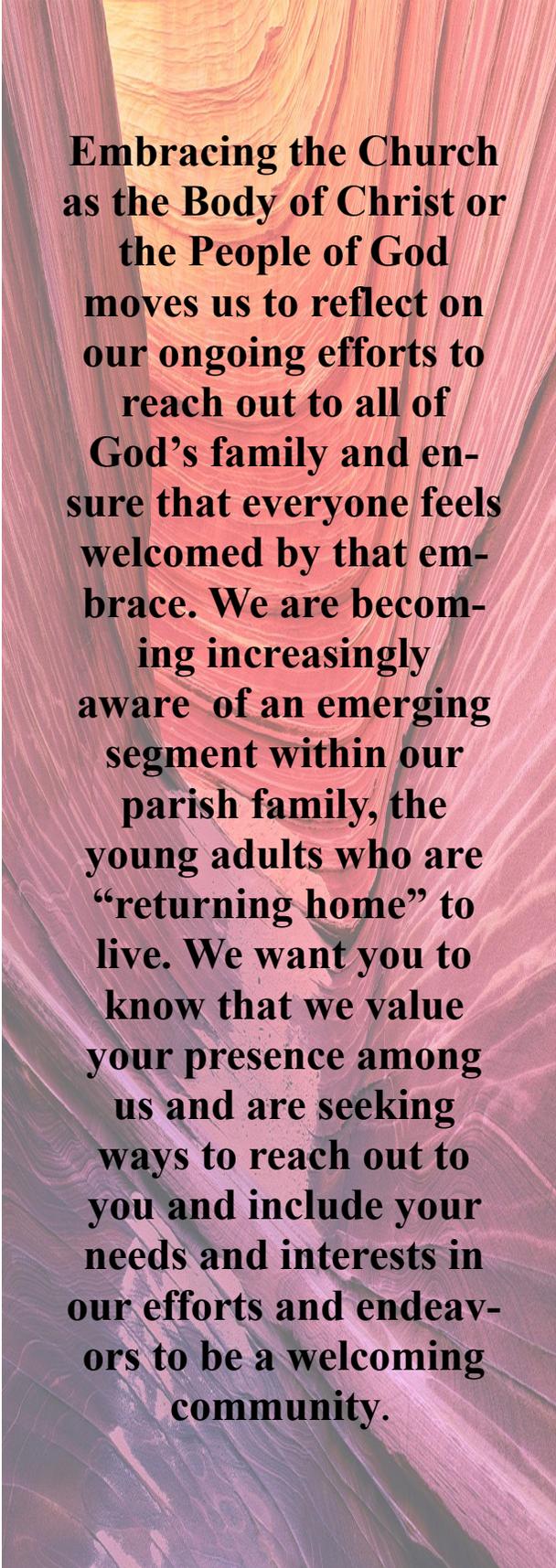
In January, many members of the Youth Group spent a night creating blankets for newborn babies. The blankets were donated to A Baby's Breath, a home that helps single, expecting mothers. The blankets made were well received by A Baby's Breath, and the teens really enjoyed making them – even the boys had fun! The Youth Group also made

crosses that were sold during Lent; many thanks to those who supported the Youth Group in those sales! The Sunday before Palm Sunday, a few women came and helped teach the teens how to braid palms. It was an enjoyable experience for all of the teens, and they hope to be able to do something similar again next year.

Four members of the Youth Group participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life on May 21st-22nd at Wisahickon High School. Kirsten Beyer, Greg Beyer, Gabby Boscaino, and Matt McNamee all enjoyed raising money in a 24-hour walk to help find a cure for cancer. Kevin McCall played guitar live at the event, and did a fantastic job! This summer, four teens from the Youth Group attended the Steubenville Youth Conference at Franciscan University in Ohio.

On Wednesday, May 11th, at 7 PM, many teens and adult leaders in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia were honored in a Mass at the Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Two members of St. Helena Parish, and the Youth Group, were honored. Kirsten Beyer received the St. Timothy award, which is given to teens in their junior or senior year of high school. Father Szparagowski received the Companions on the Journey award. This award is given to Youth Ministers who help to spread Catholic teaching to youth. The Youth Group would like to thank Father Szparagowski for all that he has done for our teens. Have a safe and blessed summer!

By Kirsten Beyer



Embracing the Church as the Body of Christ or the People of God moves us to reflect on our ongoing efforts to reach out to all of God's family and ensure that everyone feels welcomed by that embrace. We are becoming increasingly aware of an emerging segment within our parish family, the young adults who are "returning home" to live. We want you to know that we value your presence among us and are seeking ways to reach out to you and include your needs and interests in our efforts and endeavors to be a welcoming community.

Saint Helena PREP



The theme for the seventh and eighth grade PREP classes is ‘being a Christian teenager in today’s society’. The classes are an application of the first six years of the PREP program. Some of the covered topics are Prayer and a Personal Relationship with Jesus, Heaven and Hell, other Religions and their Influence on Catholicism, Prejudice, Standing up to Peer Pressure, Reading the Bible, Abortion, Poverty, Human Sexuality, Relationships with Family and Friends, and Moral Decision Making.

One of the many highlights of the 7th and 8th grade PREP program is the night that the high school students return to relay the

experiences they have had in high school. We all know how difficult it is to be a Christian teen in today’s society. The high school students bring the theme of our class to life. Twenty to thirty former students, 9th through 12th grade, give up an evening in their busy schedules to describe how the lessons they learned in PREP have influenced their thinking and decision making. They discuss academic and social situations which the younger students will face in the years to come. Even the high school students don’t like to miss this animated discussion! The students represent Wissahickon, Archbishop Carroll, Germantown Academy, St. Joe’s Prep, Gwynedd Mercy, Mount St. Joseph’s

Saint Helena

PREP continued...

and La Salle College High Schools.

We are proud of the fact that former students often make a point to tell the students that their PREP teaching has allowed them to stand strong against the pressures faced in high school. We are very appreciative of the time these former students take to give back to the PREP program. We have had countless high school and college students who have told us how they have benefited from our class.

The seventh and eighth grade class is a non-sacramental class and is voluntary. We have been fortunate to get some highly motivated students who are able to participate in a discussion format. The class started over twenty years ago with 8 students and attendance now is between 20 to 30 students – one of the larger post-Confirmation classes in the Archdiocese. We welcome any 7th or 8th grader to sign up with our program.

By Sue Hammond



Saint Helena Photography Club

One of the most recently organized and fun Ministries here in our Parish is the St. Helena Photography Club. According to one of the newest and most enthusiastic members, “The qualifications are simple. If you have a camera and the batteries are working, you’re in”. Just come to Church with your camera and your own creative instincts, ready to capture and bring to life a special moment or memory with your own personal photo.

“A picture is worth a thousand words” and you are invited to provide your picture to beautifully illustrate those words. The Photography Club needs photos, on an ongoing basis, of all Liturgical and Social celebrations, Holiday and Seasonal events, both inside and outside our magnificent Church and campus. When you see a good picture, just snap it, and send it on to the Club Ministry Leader, Theresa Smith. It’s that simple! Theresa looks at every photo, labels it, and sends the best ones on to the Parish Office to be archived for future issues of the Weekly Bulletin, Annual Resource Booklet and Parish Newsletter, Cross Talk. What a fun and special way for you to use your time and talent to contribute to our photo treasury and help us to footnote and immortalize our beautiful story!

The St. Helena Photography Club extends a warm invitation to all shutterbugs and camera buffs, to consider joining this fun Club and enhancing our efforts to capture, illustrate and preserve our precious legacy!

For more information on becoming a member, please contact Theresa Smith at 215-646-7636 or at theresacsmith@verizon.net.

PARISH LENDING LIBRARY



We have started a Parish Lending Library of Catholic spiritual reading. If you have any Catholic spiritual reading (not technical reading or magazines) and would like to donate it, please drop your books off at the Parish Office. Once approved, they will be placed on the shelves in the Information Room for borrowing. Thank you for your generosity. Our library is now beginning to grow!

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