

Cross Talk

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ISSUE 1

Sisters of Mercy Celebrate 150 Years of Service



Saint Helena School chorus performing at the Kimmel Center for The Circle of Mercy Concert.

As so many of you are aware, the Sisters of Mercy are celebrating 150 years of service in Philadelphia. The roots of the original Merion Regional Community, now known as the Mid Atlantic Community of the Institute of the Sisters of Mer-

cy, began in 1861 when Mother M. Patricia Waldron and nine other Sisters arrived at Assumption BVM Parish at Twelfth and Spring Garden Streets in Philadelphia to staff the parish school. Within a few days, the Sisters were teaching not only in the parish school but also in the academy (now Gwynedd Mercy Academy Elementary and Secondary Divisions) and the night school

Continued on page 2

In this issue...

SHS Youth Group	4
Knights of Columbus Breakfast	6
Photography Club	8
All Souls Mass	9
Pre K Fun	10

for working girls which they opened in the convent. They began visitation of the sick in homes, hospitals and inmates at the city prisons.

In August, 1863 Mother Patricia was presented with the possibility of renting a house at Broad Street and Columbia Avenue for six hundred dollars a year. With five dollars at her disposal, she signed the lease. St. Joseph Convent of Mercy became the first motherhouse of the Merion Regional Community. Eventually, the fledgling community would purchase seven row houses at the Broad Street site to house the professed Sisters, the novitiate, the ever-expanding academy, St. Mary's Home for Working Girls and, in later years, Mercy Technical Institute (now Mercy Vocational High School.) Much to the surprise and delight of Mother Patricia, Father Carter, pastor of the parish from which the Sisters had withdrawn, paid off the \$10,000 mortgage on the second house.

Another significant chapter in the history of the Merion Regional Community opened in 1884 when Mother Patricia Waldron rented a country house in Merion Station where the Sisters could go to recuperate from illness and get much



Richard and Carley Fusco, members of the SHS Chorus.

needed rest. Within a few months the Sisters purchased a house and land on Montgomery Avenue and a year later purchased an adjoining property on which two houses were located. The additional space was needed for the village school and Mater Misericordiae Academy (now Merion Mercy and Waldron Mercy Academies) which the Sisters opened a few weeks after their arrival.

Patricia Waldron dreamed of establishing a Mercy hospital in Philadelphia. In 1914, she mortgaged the city property to buy the land for Misericordia Hospital. When Misericordia (now Mercy Hospital of Philadelphia) opened so did another long chapter in the history of the Merion

Regional Community.

In the tradition of Catherine McAuley, Frances Warde and Patricia Waldron, Mercy reached out again and again during the twentieth century. Chapters in the ministry history of the Merion Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy have been written in India, Guam, Guyana, Thailand, Namibia, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Sudan, Peru and more than a dozen states of the United States. Sisters of Mercy are actively involved in education from pre-school through college, in numerous outreaches to persons in need of housing and health care, in retreat work and other spiritual ministries.

Our journey to become the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy began when the leadership teams of the regional communities of Merion, New York, Brooklyn, Dallas and New Jersey regional communities decided to venture together in a journey to become one community. On January 1, 2007, the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas was officially formed with administrative offices in Merion, PA. Our journey continues in Mercy and the Circle of Mercy grows bigger day by day.

During this year our Jubilee has been marked and celebrated in ever so many ways. One way was the Circle of Mercy Concert held on October 18, 2010, at the premier venue of Philadelphia, the Kimmel Center. Groups from our various ministries performed. Those participating were: St. Helena School Chorus; Gwynedd Mercy Elementary School; Gwynedd Mercy High School; Gwynedd Mercy College; St. Dorothy's Parish Choir; St. Jude Parish Choir; Mercy Health System Choir; Waldron Mercy Academy; Merion Mercy Academy; Mercy Vocational High School; project H.O.M.E. and The Sisters of Mercy Jubilee Choir.

Each group performed separately. However, the finale included all performers (over 550) joyfully singing the Circle of Mercy, conducted by the composer, our very own Sister Jeannette Goglia. It was truly a graced and sacred moment. This author respectfully asks that you hold the Sisters of Mercy, their Associates and Colleagues in prayer as we continue the work and vision of Catherine McAuley, the first Sister of Mercy.

Sr. Cathe Shoulberg RSM

St. Helena High School Youth Group a Huge Success

St. Helena High School Youth Group is a group of high school students from the parish that meet every other Sunday night to discuss current teen issues, participate in community service projects, and develop strong friendships and spiritual connections.

Even though the youth group is only a little over a year old, it has already become a huge success. Last year, the youth group held a food drive and bonfire, sold “crowns of thorns” for Lent, went bowling, hosted a picnic and movie



night, participated in a teen youth conference, and learned a lot about their faith.

Kirsten Beyer, Gabby Boscaino, Colleen Loftus, Matt McNamee, and Grace McInerney, along with Janice Boscaino and Kathy McNamee, went to Franciscan University at Steubenville for a teen youth conference this past summer. The conference was three days long and included many interesting speakers and fantastic music. All participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience and are

‘Last year my parents wanted me to attend youth group. But now it has become my decision, and I look forward to it every other week.’ –Greg Beyer, Grade 10

very excited to take more teens with them for the conference this summer.

Our youth group has already had some very enjoyable meetings this year, and we are looking forward to many exciting upcoming activities as well. On Sunday, October 24th, our youth group cooked spaghetti and meatballs in the school's cafeteria for Aids for Friends. Over eighty meals were prepared, and it was a very rewarding experience for all. During the month of November, our teens sold Advent wreaths and calendars after Mass. We hosted our food drive on No-



vember 20th, along with our bonfire on November 21st. started last year, many of us did not know each other well, and throughout the past year we have become more than friends, we have become a family. Many of our members attended St. Helena School for grades K-8, and went their separate ways for high school. Our youth group has been able to reconnect those friendships as well as create friendships with teens who did not attend St. Helena School for grade school. Strong relationships with our adult leaders have also been established in the past year. Overall, our youth group has been an incredible experience for so many teens in our parish.

When our youth group first

-Kirsten Beyer and Gabby Boscaino



Knights of Columbus Communion Breakfast Features Former Eagles GM

In the often tough and gritty world of professional sports, every now and then one finds a true gem like Jim Murray. On Sunday, October 17, Murray was the featured speaker at the 1st Annual Men's and Young Men's Communion Breakfast sponsored by the St. Helena Council of the Knights of Columbus. Although most of those in the Empress Room had never met Jim Murray before, it is safe to say many felt as if they have known him for years.

Former long time General Manager of the Philadelphia Eagles, Jim Murray in many ways is the quintessential Philadelphia area Irish Catholic. Born and raised in West Philly, he was a member of Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, attended its parochial school and continued his education at West Catholic High School and Villanova University.

The guests, including Jim's wife Dianne and long-time friend and mentor Father

O'Brien, enjoyed Paravati Catering's bountiful breakfast

and the company of fellow parishioners. Afterward, Murray skillfully wove story after story with the common theme of helping others, a perfect segue to the readings at Mass and the visiting missionary priest's homily. He reminded us that our time is precious. An inspirational account of a terminally ill young man who drew strength, faith and love from his affliction really brought the point home.

Many of Jim's anecdotes were quite entertaining. One of my favorites was how Jim, accompanied by colorful owner Leonard Tose, flew out to California to convince Dick Vermeil to accept the job





tivities. Perhaps it was their influence that led Tose and Murray to co-found The Eagles Fly for Leukemia in 1972 and spurred Murray to go on to establish the first Ronald McDonald House in 1974. As one might expect, there was a funny story behind all of this.

of Eagles head coach. Murray sold Vermeil on the Philly fans, pointing out their intense loyalty.

Jim described this attribute as a natural corollary to the loyalty to our Catholic faith, our country, our families, and yes, our sports teams that was instilled and nurtured in many of us during our parochial school days. The mutual affection between Vermeil, the first coach to take the Birds to the Super Bowl, and the Philly fans exists to this day. Vermeil still maintains a home ("The Ranch") in rural Chester County and is active in the community.

Over the years, Murray came to know legendary NFL Hall of Fame owners Art Rooney, George Halas and Wellington Mara, all of whom were Catholics and were well-known for their charitable ac-

Tose asked Murray for ideas on how to promote the fledgling charity. Murray enlisted Eagles greats Chuck Bednarik and Tommy McDonald to appear before the kick-off of the next Sunday afternoon's game. He also persuaded Channel 10 to run a "crawl" to solicit pledges.

As luck would have it, by the end of the first quarter, a poor Eagles team was losing to an equally bad Forty-Niners team, and the phone pledges, meager to begin with, foundered miserably. To give some perspective, Murray wryly noted that the

Continued on page 8





Eagles fans cheered if they won the coin toss. Tose then shifted gears and asked Murray to contact all of his business partners and acquaintances, and a world-class charity was born.

As the minutes flew by, one quickly realized that the stories could go on for hours if not for days. Long time Eagles fans had to feel a bit nostalgic when Murray mentioned names like Norm Van Brocklin, Timmy Brown, King Hill, Jack Concannon and Roman Gabriel. Although humor was generously sprinkled throughout Murray's tales, he always came back to his theme of personal charity. Thanks go out to the Knights of Columbus for bringing such a genuine, likable and successful Catholic gentleman to Saint Helena ... and to make it an even better day, both the Phillies and Eagles were victorious!

John Maloney

Saint Helena Photography Club

One of the most recently organized and fun Ministries here in our Parish is the Saint 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.

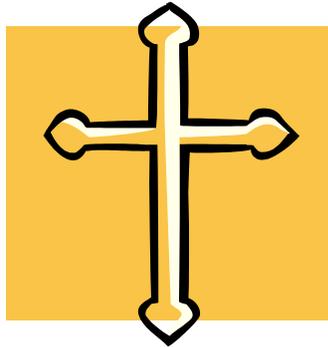
"A picture is worth a thousand words" and you are invited to provide your picture to beautifully illustrate those words. The Photography Club needs photos, on an ongoing basis, of all Liturgical and Social celebrations, Holiday and Seasonal events, both inside and outside our magnificent Church and campus. 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 theresacssmith@verizon.net.

All Souls Memorial Mass

On Tuesday, November 2, Saint Helena held a memorial Mass for the deceased members of the Parish at 7 o'clock in the evening. Monsignor Nicolo and Father Szparagowski concelebrated the Mass with the special intention being for those who had died in the past year. Before the Mass began the names of all those who passed away during the last year were read out to the congregation. This special reading gave great comfort to all who had lost a loved one during the year. It made them feel a special kinship during the Mass. The Mass was truly beautiful and brought a sense of peace to everyone. The Adult Choir provided a wonderful enrichment to the tenor of the Mass. Their selection of hymns was an inspiration to all those present. The ability to participate in such a Mass is a truly helpful step in the grieving process. Everyone left the Church with the feeling that their loved one had been truly remembered in the Mass.



Saint Helena has a very well thought out way of helping one through the grieving process. At the time of death one is caught up in an unbelievable flurry of activity: arranging the funeral, planning the Mass, fielding phone calls, accepting visitors and flowers and so on. In the midst of all this a wonderful thing happens – there is a visit from Msgr. Nicolo or Fr. Szparagowski who visit to offer their condolence and the love & prayers of the Parish. Along with a Prayer Shawl/

Blanket from our Prayer shawl Ministry and a Bereavement Basket from Serving our Community Ministry. Then Michele Gerstemeir, our Bereavement Minister, will come to your home and help with the selection of the readings and music for the Mass. In some cases, she will even sing a hymn if you are unsure of which one you would like. Then on the day of the Mass she will be there to make sure everything runs smoothly. It is indeed very comforting to know she is there to take care of things. Once again, the grieving process is helped by the reaching out of St. Helena Church.

Barbara Neff

Learning is Fun for Pre K

The smallest and sweetest members of Saint Helena School have their own little nest, the Pre School, in the Convent behind the school. It's a special place where the children feel safe and loved by a caring staff of teachers. "I feel that what St. Helena provides is a well-balanced Pre K program with an emphasis on academics – fully aware that in this stage of development, children learn through play," observes Saint Helena School principal Sr. Cathe Shoulberg, RSM. Mrs. Barbara FitzPatrick, who teaches a four year old class, comments, "There are so many things that we teach

the children. It is amazing to see how far they have come from September to June, but because this is, for so many of them, their first experience in a school environment, I will have to say our most important lesson is that school is FUN! "

"We provide the children with a "hands-on" approach to learning, be it Religion, Reading, Science, Math and Social Studies," adds Sr. Cathe. "They love going to the art room and library and in their classrooms have an opportunity to explore the world of technology. But I do have to say, one of their favorite activities is gym class! Being part of the "Big School" really gives the children a sense of belonging to a larger community. When they come over, everyone from the staff to the eighth grade makes a huge fuss over them to make sure they feel welcome and at home.

"Our biggest asset is our Pre K teachers – they are simply magnificent!" praises Sr. Cathe. "You won't find anyone more patient, creative or loving – they have truly created a "Home away from home". One





of those teachers, Mrs. Theresa Poulos, says: "The most important thing I teach the children is to treat

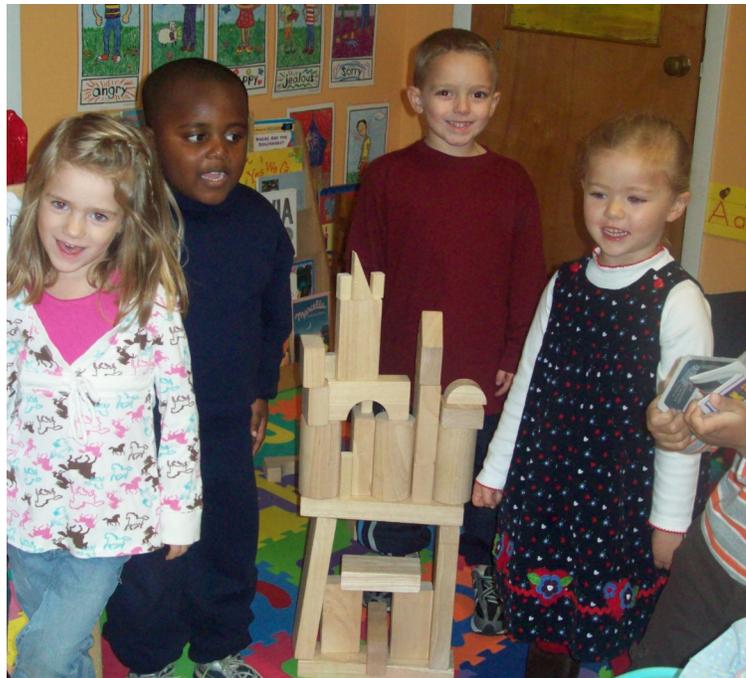
each other the way they would like to be treated."

"What makes my job rewarding is the children," continues Mrs. Poulos. "They are always happy to see you every day and they are excited and eager to learn." Mrs. FitzPatrick adds: "I love my job! There are not too many places where your job allows you to sit on the floor and read a good book, hold hands while taking a listening walk, or greet everyone with a big "good morning" and a smile. Life is better than good in Pre-K - it's stellar!"

"Our Pre K makes our school complete!" concludes Sr. Cathe. "We know that we are providing a safe, loving and warm learning environment for our children to learn, and blossom into the persons God intended!" That said, it's no surprise that the school is filled to capacity with eighteen children in each of the three classes. Each class has a teacher and an aide. The three year old class goes from 9:00 – 11:30, five days a week. The two four year old classes go from 9:00 – 2:30 (with the option to attend the extended day till 6:00 PM).

For more information about Saint Helena School's Pre School program for 2011, contact the school at 610.279.3345.

Liz Cummings



MOMMY AND ME



Hey Moms! Are you looking for a FREE dynamic play group?

Mommy and Me meets on the second and fourth Friday of the month. Mommy & Me is geared towards Moms with newborns and children up to preschool age. Come, join us! If you have any questions, please contact Becky Bushner at 484-684-6118 or bushners@comcast.net. Hope to see you and your little ones there!

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St. Helena Parish, Center Square
1489 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell, PA 19422
610.275.7711; fax: 610.275.7610

Dorothy Barry: Facilitator/Reporter
Elizabeth Cummings: Editor/Reporter
Barbara FitzPatrick: Graphic Designer
Anita Russo Huber: Proofreader
John Maloney: Reporter
Barbara Neff: Reporter
Matt Rieder: Reporter/Scribe
Stephanie Donley: Reporter
Photographers: Andrea Loughlin, Mary Catalino,
St. Helena Photographers

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Mrs. Madeleine Fitzgerald
Mrs. Tracey Wilton
Ms. Gina Malony

For more information, contact Dorothy Barry 610.275.3689.

**St. Helena Parish
Center Square
1489 DeKalb Pike
Blue Bell, PA 19422**