

# Saint Benedict School

# Connections

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## INTERSCHOLASTIC READING COMPETITION



Saint Benedict School students have the opportunity to participate in the Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8 Interscholastic Reading Competition which is held in the fall and the spring each school year. Our readers compete against other participating public and non-public schools from our area. The teams' coaches set the requirements for these students to read assigned books from a compiled list of 42 books for each competition. The students are required to make a list of characters, write a set of ten questions and answers, and write a brief summary about each book read. They also take an Accelerated Reading quiz on the computer for each book read. Even though the students are required to read at least four to five books per list, they go above and beyond the criteria set for them. Closer to the competition, the teams meet weekly to discuss the books they have read. As movies are available that are based on the books, students develop higher-level thinking skills by watching the movie and comparing and contrasting it with the book they have read. These are strategies used to enhance their skills for the competition, but also to benefit the students by strengthening their comprehension, vocabulary and fluency of reading skills by being exposed to various literary styles.

Parent volunteers enhance the program by helping the advisors, chaperoning, and acting as either a scorekeeper or moderator during the event. All parents are invited to attend

the competitions and to travel with their school's teams.

The Fall Junior High Competition was held on Tuesday, November 15, and Fall Elementary Competition was held on Thursday, November 17, at the Roosevelt Junior High School in Altoona. The STB Bearcats, our junior high team of 10 seventh and eighth grade students, received second place awards. The STB Sweet Tarts, an elementary team of 8 fourth, fifth and sixth grade students also received second place awards. Red ribbons were given to each individual student and a larger one was given to the School. The STB Eagles, an elementary team of 8 fourth, fifth and sixth grade students received the first place award and earned the highest points of all forty-six teams representing both public and non-public schools that evening. Blue ribbons were given to each individual student and the team received a trophy for the School. The trophy and School ribbons will soon be permanently displayed in the School.

The spring competitions are tentatively scheduled for April at the Meyersdale Area Schools in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania.

Team advisors, Mrs. Mary Solnosky and Mrs. Kimberly Lallemand, first enrolled teams in the IRC five years ago. They have noted that each year the students have earned more points at the competition and they are excited to see the students' hard work rewarded with their placements and visual signs of recognition. They encourage all students to continue reading and thank the parent volunteers for their help.

### Parent and Student Initiative Enhances Program

At the beginning of this school year, the pre-kindergarten students conducted fund-raisers of Stick-ees and Home Interior candles. They raised a little over \$2,000. With this revenue, our School has ordered new coat racks/cubby units for the pre-kindergarten classroom. This is where the students will be able to put their supplies such as crayon boxes, slippers, etc. The monies raised were sufficient enough for the School to also purchase cork strips to put up in the room to display children's art work, and needed art supplies. Mrs. Annette Holtz the pre-kindergarten teacher, is still browsing school catalogs to see what else can be purchased to enhance the program.

The pre-kindergarten parents and students are very supportive of these efforts and they are looking forward to utilizing the new materials. Likewise, Mrs. Holtz is very excited and patiently waiting for the orders to arrive.

We thank all of you for your generous support in helping us to continue to enhance the Saint Benedict School pre-kindergarten program.

# Serving God's People through Love, Support and Prayer

This Fall, the students, faculty and staff of the Saint Benedict School Community seized the opportunity to demonstrate their Faith in action.

In the wake of one of the most devastating hurricane seasons in the history of the United States, amidst unimaginable destruction, the School Community pulled together and gave aid to the victims of recent hurricanes.

After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast region, Mrs. Annette Holtz, pre-kindergarten teacher, decided that the students needed to know that they could help and make a difference in the lives of children who were affected by the hurricane. She took the lead in implementing a "Fill the Bucket" campaign. The entire School Community participated in this fund raising activity. The students contributed coins daily for a three week period and in the end were able to send over \$311.35 of their money to the Catholic Charities. These funds were used to assist hurricane victims. When asked what she thought about the efforts of the students, Mrs. Kathy Lamont, Principal, responded, "The children brought in zip lock bags of coins in each day. You could tell that they were using their own resources to help other children. It was striking."

Justine Nealen, a 5th grade student at Saint Benedict, said "It was good to know we were helping kids who

maybe lost their parents. Maybe their parents died or maybe they would be able to find them later. It felt good to know we helped (those children) get them food, water and homes." Ethan Bearer, an 8th grade student at Saint Benedict School, had this to say about the experience, "It felt good to help people who lost their homes."

Through their actions, the students fulfilled the Corporal Works of Mercy. They gathered funds to send to support hurricane relief efforts, and in doing so, they fed people who were hungry, gave drink to people who were thirsty, clothed people who needed clothes, and sheltered people who were homeless. The actions of the student body also reflect the Saint Benedict School mission by witnessing the message of Jesus Christ, and serving God's people through love, support and prayer.

This activity continues a long history of helping others. Just last year the School participated in gathering supplies for "Mom's House," a local charity that aids young mothers. Are parents pleased when they see the School responding to others' needs? "I think parents are very supportive of what the School does," responded Mrs. Holtz. "The aid the students provided to Hurricane Katrina victims is wonderful. I'm so happy to see the School continue its legacy of giving, generosity and community support," said another parent.



As Saint Benedict School students returned to classes this past August, a tragedy was unfolding in the southern United States as Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast. Naturally, the School Community responded by collecting money to send to the unfortunate victims of the hurricane. The students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight collected loose change totaling \$311.35. The money was forwarded to Catholic Charities.

One young lady and her little brother exhibited total selflessness in their efforts to contribute to the fund.

Prior to the news of the hurricane, Brianna Fox (grade 2) decided that while her mom and dad had a garage

## Values Instilled in Children

sale, she would set up a soda stand. With the help of her little brother, Robert (PK 4), she would raise some money to "save up" to one day buy a violin. Sales were good, resulting in Brianna and Robert earning \$34.41. Brianna knew that this was a good start to acquiring her very own violin.

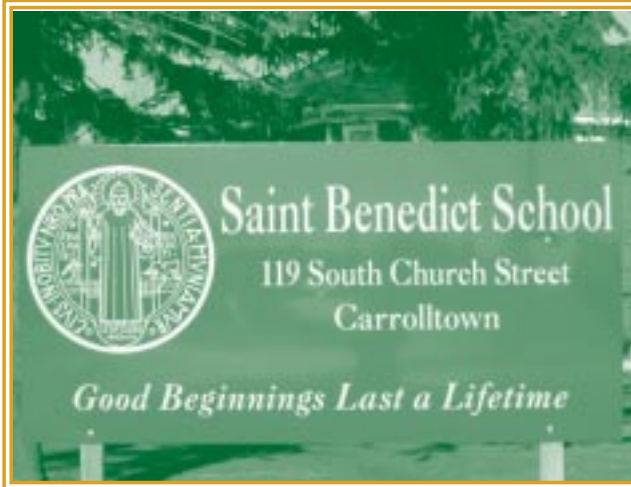
Meanwhile, the words and images of the devastation resulting from Hurricane Katrina started to saturate the media. Robert and Cheryl Fox talked with their children to help them understand the effects of this monstrous hurricane. After some time, Brianna approached her mother and announced, "I have a great idea." She had decided to give the money that she had raised at her soda stand to the

School's Hurricane Katrina fund.

Cheryl Fox was so moved by her daughter's generosity that she wrote a letter of gratitude to Kathy Lamont, Principal of the School. The letter stated, "I firmly believe that her (Brianna's) kindness is due to the wonderful values that the Church and staff at Saint Benedict have instilled in Brianna (and all the children). I can't thank you, Father Vincent and your staff enough for all you have done and the wonderful values that you have taught. I feel honored that my children are part of the School." The Saint Benedict School Community, likewise, is honored to have the Foxes as part of our family!



# Advertising the School



About 10 years ago the Saint Benedict School Community erected three wooden, outdoor signs that were placed along the highways, as well as at the driveway entrance to the parking lot from Main Street.

These signs served as a means of advertising the School. Unfortunately, after being exposed to the elements for an extended period of time, the wooden signs deteriorated and needed to be replaced.

In seeking three new outdoor metal signs for the School, an appeal was made to the Saint Benedict Parish and School Communities to assist with the financing of this undertaking. The appeal was met with success.

Saint Benedict School is grateful to the following individuals who purchased the new signs:

(1) anonymous; (2) Mrs. Mary Jane Sutton, In Loving Memory of George, Michelle and John R. Sutton; and (3) Mr. and Mrs Patrick and Mary Ann Leyo and Family.

The Saint Benedict School Community is equally grateful to those who gave permission for a new sign to be erected on their property: Mr. Thomas Buck, Carroll Road in Patton; Mr. Michael Covell, Theatre Road in St. Benedict; and Mr. Neil Sharbaugh, Plank Road in Carrolltown.

We offer our thanks to each of these benefactors for their generosity and kindness to Saint Benedict School, and we assure them of our prayers.

## Drama Program Being Introduced

### *An Interview with Mrs. Debbie St. Pierre*



**Q:** Is the School introducing a drama program?

**A:** Yes!

**Q:** Where did it originate?

**A:** I wanted to have another way to have the students share their talents, and Mrs. Lamont liked my idea of creating a Drama Club and putting on a performance.

**Q:** Which students would be involved?

**A:** Since this is the first year, only grades 5-8 will be able to participate in the Drama Club. Hopefully in the years to come, we may be able to branch out to some of the younger grades.

**Q:** What talents can be tapped into?

**A:** Students who are shy may become more vocal. Those who can sing, dance and play instruments will eventually be able to use their talents in the productions. Students who do not want to be on stage can help with scenery, costumes, props, concessions, and ticket sales. So hopefully, we will be able to get students involved in extra curricular activities who normally would not get involved in sports or reading competition, for example.

**Q:** Are students interested in such a program?

**A:** When I mentioned a Drama Club, I was truly amazed at how many students want to be involved. Even those who did not want to be on

stage were excited about it. Out of the four classes we have about 80% who want to be involved.

**Q:** Are their parents supportive of the School engaging in drama?

**A:** With the few parents that I have talked to about this program, they feel that this will be good for the students.

**Q:** What can we expect to see this year?

**A:** I am hoping to put on a small production this spring and to take the students to see a play.

**Q:** Next year?

**A:** If all goes well this year, I hope to put on a bigger production next year. (Maybe a musical if I have enough interest from the students and the help of our wonderful music teacher, Miss Yanzetich.)

**Q:** How is the project being funded?

**A:** Fundraisers of course! We have had one fundraiser so far, and I am planning a few more, one before and one after the holiday.

**Q:** Will the 'public' (parents, grandparents, friends) have an opportunity to see a production?

**A:** Absolutely! Without them, the students would be putting in a lot of hard work just to perform for me. I want everyone to see how talented our students are.

# Students Share in Saint Vincent Treasures



Several times each year, our School's seventh and eighth grade students take field trips to a bigger school. There are many more students at this school, the students are much older than even the eldest eighth grader, and classes are held at all times of the day - from 8:30 in the morning to 9:00 at night. Of course, this school is not an elementary school like Saint Benedict. It is Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, and best Benedictine liberal arts college in the nation.

Saint Vincent offers programs for undergraduate and graduate students as well as for seminarians. In fact, Saint Benedict Parish is staffed by monks from Saint Vincent Archabbey. Before coming to Saint Benedict to serve as pastor, Father Vincent attended Saint Vincent College and Seminary and worked at Saint Vincent Basilica Parish as parochial vicar. He is always happy to share the treasures that the Saint Vincent campus has to offer.

On their Fall trip to Saint Vincent,

seventh and eighth grade students took part in a variety of fun, educational and spiritually fulfilling activities. Saint Vincent was the first monastery established by the Benedictine monks in America, and our students experienced the rich traditions that take place in the Basilica when they prayed mid-day and evening prayers with monks from the Saint Vincent community. Additionally, the students visited the campus art gallery, which - appropriately - was showing works that dealt with the history of Saint Vincent Archabbey and College.

The students also appreciated the opportunity to explore the campus on their own and to utilize its many amazing facilities. Seventh grade student, Caleb Vescovi, enjoyed playing football against the eighth graders on the very same fields that the Pittsburgh Steelers practice on when they hold training camp at Saint Vincent each July and August. Melissa Sopata and Becky Venesky liked swimming in the school's

indoor pool. Still other students took advantage of their free time by walking the campus' beautiful exercise trail. Finally, our students finished their day by dining in the cafeteria that serves thousands of students, teachers, and other members of the Saint Vincent community every day.

Overall, the trips to Saint Vincent are always fulfilling for everyone involved. Seventh grade teacher Mrs. Debbie St. Pierre hopes that these trips help our school's oldest students develop an appreciation for the religious life and get them thinking about their own futures. Although none of the seventh graders currently think they will attend Saint Vincent College, they have plenty of time to change their minds. In the meantime, Saint Benedict School's seventh and eighth grade students will continue to take regular field trips to Saint Vincent, where they can pray, play and get a feel for what life is like on a busy college campus.

## Saint Benedict School

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