



The HeartBeat

A Newsletter for Alumni & Friends of St. John Eudes School

Visit us at www.sjeschool.net

Back-to-School Night Focuses on Building Great School Families, Alumni, and Supporters Key to Success Economy Still Poses Challenge to School Development

When the kids go back to school in the fall, parents know that the annual SJE School *Back-to-School Night* can't be far behind. This year *Back-to-School Night* was held on Sept. 7 in Grill Hall, which was filled with enthusiastic parents interested in the coming school year. Mrs. Danowitz opened the meeting and invited our new pastor, Fr. Gérard Lecomte, CJM, to begin the meeting with a prayer (Fr. Gérard is a member of the *Congregation of Jesus and Mary*, or *Eudists*, founded by our patron saint, St. John Eudes). This was his first general meeting with the parents and Fr. Gérard prayed for guidance and inspiration for the parents, families, teachers, and administrators for the coming year.

Mrs. Danowitz then introduced the teachers and spoke about the school's new mission

"Our vision is not to have just a good school, but rather a great school."

statement (see the school's website for the full text of the new statement). She then invited Rick Crandall, SJE Parish School Board Chairperson, to address the parents. Mr. Crandall introduced the other board members and gave an outline of the financial status of the school and recent improvements (including the installation of the SMART Boards, the new science lab, the new iMacs in the computer lab, and implementation of the middle school iPad program). He cited new projects for the near future, including a security gate and fence that would provide additional security for the playground and school area. He noted, however, that due to the continuing status of the economy, it was more important than ever that families, alumni, and friends of the school support fundraising activities in order to maintain

the financial viability of the school program and continue developing its important programs.

Mrs. Danowitz then spoke about the vision of the school stating that, "Our vision is not to have just a *good* school, but rather a *great* school." She noted that while improvements in technology, security, maintenance, and communication have been made toward that goal, it is parents who will make a great education possible. She also noted that the school is moving toward implementing the new state mandated Core Curriculum Standards and will soon be including the requirements in the curriculum.

And, as always, the SJE Room Parents provided fantastic refreshments as the parents left Grill Hall to visit with the teachers in the classrooms.



PTSO President, Ricca Francis (right), discusses fundraising and volunteering opportunities with parents at the recent SJE "Back-to-School Night." With the economic recovery continuing to lag, fundraising for the school has taken on added importance. A new fundraising page has been added to the school website to help parents and supporters easily identify and participate in fundraising programs, events, and other opportunities. Alumni and friends are also asked to support the fundraising programs. Please visit the school website at www.sjeschool.net and click on the "Fundraising" link in the left menu area. You'll find some great opportunities and easy ways for alumni and friends to help the school!

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Highlights:

- **New Mission Statement Sets Updated Direction for School**
- **Students Sing Approval of New Music Teacher; Alumna Prizes Her Students**
- **Jog-A-Thoners Lap-Up 2,000 Cups of Water; Burgers & Weather Both Served-Up Hot**
- **Hollywood Coming to SJE; Spring Fundraiser to Be "Red Carpet" Affair**
- **Alumni & Friends Invited to Submit "Alumnus of the Year" Nominations**
- **2011 "Class Legacy Gift" Builds New Tradition; Gift is Shelved**
- **Golfers Tee Off to Improve Security**
- **We'll Miss You, Mrs. Suttles; PTSO One of Many Legacies**

Committed to Catholic Education: SJE Welcomes Outstanding New Teachers

The St. John Eudes School community has been blessed with the addition of three new exceptional faculty members for the 2011-2012 school year!

Mrs. Carolina Gunter joins SJE as the new vice principal and 7 & 8th Grade literature/language arts teacher as well as the 7th Grade religion teacher. Mrs. Gunter graduated from UC Irvine with a major in Criminology, Law and Society. After college, she went on to receive two Master's Degrees in Education, along with her teaching and administrative credentials. She began her teaching career in a K-8 parish school 15 years ago, and is excited to return to a Catholic school! She says, "My experience at SJE has been fantastic. My interactions with everyone here from employees to students and their families have been so positive – warm and welcoming. As a teacher, I am excited when I enter our learning laboratory (the classroom) each day. And as an administrator, I'm enriched by the collaboration with faculty and staff, and of course, with Mrs. Danowitz, who is teaching me so much (through her example and through her words) about what it takes to provide a quality, affordable community-based Catholic school education." The middle school students are just as excited to have Mrs. Gunter as their teacher. Ashley

Martinez, Grade 7, declared, "She's the best teacher anyone could have! Class discussions are very fun and enthusiastic!"

Mr. Alvin Castro is the new athletic director and physical education teacher. Mr. Castro is a graduate of Grant High School right here in the Valley, and received his B.S. in Sports & Recreation Management from De La Salle University, Manilla, in the Philippines. He also was a professional basketball player for the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA)! This is Mr. Castro's 4th year as a PE teacher, and he says he feels blessed to join the St. John Eudes family. He states, "I love it here at St. John Eudes. From the staff, the administration, and the parents, everyone is so nice and educated. My kids (his two daughters, Angelica and Angela) have only been here for a month, and I already see all the good transformation in them. I really like the community. The kids are wonderful and respectful." The students he teaches feel blessed as well. Matthew Stewart, Grade 5, says, "Mr. Castro is

awesome! He always says nice things to me and encourages me to do my best! He is a really good teacher."

Ms. Jaclyn Beardsley is the music teacher for St. John Eudes, and is an alumna of the school! After graduation from SJE, she remained active in the music ministry at the church. She recently



Some alumni may recognize our new music teacher, Jaclyn Beardsley '02. We are proud to have an alumna teaching at SJE. She is also the director of the SJE Parish Adult Choir. For more about Ms. Beardsley, and what she's been doing since graduating from SJE, see the article in "The Pulse" section of last January's HeartBeat.

graduated *summa cum laude* from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, with a degree in Music Education and a teaching credential. Her students are already effusive with praise. Kawika Austin, Grade 5, says, "She is really nice and makes music class fun. She plays a lot of games with us, and even gives prizes!"

When asked about these new teachers, Mrs. Barbara Danowitz, principal, states, "We are blessed to have our new faculty join us with their enthusiasm,

passion, and commitment for Catholic education and its future!" ***We welcome these wonderful new teachers to the St. John Eudes family!***

Jog-A-Thon 2011: The Tradition of Success (and Fun!) Continues

More than 300 students walked, jogged, or sprinted to raise money during the school's annual Jog-A-Thon fundraiser despite the



After a hard morning jogging, SJE students get a chance to survey the prizes in the Jog-A-Thon raffle. With a lot of great prizes, the raffle is a highlight of the day's activities and is a major part of the fundraiser.

very warm weather on Oct. 13. With the music playing and parents cheering them on, the students, wearing the official SJE

Jog-A-Thon t-shirts, jogged in shifts, with Kindergarten through 4th Grades running before the older grades took over the field.

A team of volunteers handed out cups of water and counted laps while the students circled the field. One new parent commented, "I am amazed at how the whole school is working together to make a difference. The kids are having fun, and the adults are volunteering

but don't feel like they are working. I am really happy we chose to come to St. John Eudes." Adding to the event's festivities was the In-N-Out lunch prepared on campus in their mobile burger kitchen.

Perhaps the highlight of the day was the raffle which included prizes like the iPad2, an American Girl doll wearing a St. John Eudes school uniform, an iPod Touch, a soccer ball autographed by women's soccer player Brandi Chastain, bikes, gift cards, and much more.

By the end of the day, the students had run more than 6,000 laps, drank about 2,000 cups of water and had raised money for the school. The success of the Jog-A-Thon is due to the dedication of the multitude of parent volunteers, Jog-A-Thon committee chairs, teachers, and students.

Great job, Mighty Eagles!



In Memoriam: Carol Hernandez, mother of **Julia Hernandez '93**, passed away on Aug. 25. Mrs. Hernandez was an active supporter of the school and participated in many events and fundraisers as a parent. Services were held in the church on Sept. 1. She was 68.

Diedre O'Neill ('96) was enrolled in the Gifted Magnet Program at Porter Middle School in Granada Hills and then attended Van Nuys High School where she was enrolled in the Math and Science Magnet program. After graduating from VNHS in 2000, she attended the University of California, Berkeley. In 2004 she graduated with a B.S. Degree in Psychology. After college, she worked at UCLA as a member of a research group which did case studies on people with autism, Alzheimer's Disease, and the traumatic brain injuries of veterans (done

in conjunction with the West Los Angeles Veteran's Hospital). She has now returned to UC Berkeley to take graduate courses for a degree in Gerontology. She is concurrently doing independent work-study as an activity coordinator for an assisted living facility for patients with Alzheimer's.

Patrick Prager '01 attended Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks and graduated in 2005. He is currently attending California State University, Northridge, and is majoring in Recreation and Tourism Management. While in high school, he became interested in martial arts. Along with attending CSUN, he is working as a karate instructor (having earned a fourth degree black belt) and participates in mixed martial arts competitions. He plans to open his own karate studio upon graduating from college.

In Memoriam



Sharon Suttles

Sharon Suttles, long time parishioner of St. John Eudes Church, and former Director of Religious Education and RCIA, died on Oct. 2, after a long battle with ALS, also known as *Lou Gehrig's Disease*. Her children are all alumni of St. John Eudes School and Mrs. Suttles was a very active supporter of the school. She was particularly involved with the establishment of the SJE School Parent-Teacher Support Organization and served on the committee that formed the PTSO at the request of then pastor, Fr. McNamara, and principal, Sr. Rosemary Bochniarz. She will be greatly missed by all those who knew her. Mrs. Suttles was 67.

If you wish to honor her memory, the family requests that you make a donation to the ALS Association (visit www.als.org to donate).

In a Lighter Vein . . .

A 1st Grade teacher gave her students the first half of some well-known proverbs and asked them to complete the sayings. Here is what they answered . . .

Children should be seen and not . . .
... spanked or grounded.

If at first you don't succeed . . .
... buy new batteries.

Where there's smoke there's . . .
... pollution.

The pen is mightier than . . .
... the pig.

It's always darkest before . . .
... daylight savings time.

Don't put off till tomorrow what . . .
... you can donate to St. John Eudes School today! (OK - this one is ours!)

Donations are tax deductible and help the worthy cause of providing a quality Catholic education to deserving children. Your donation to the Annual Fund, Adopt-A-Student Program, Endowment, or other general or specific gifts is greatly appreciated and will help us keep a Catholic education available to all our students. Please contact the School Office (818) 341-1451 or visit our website at www.sjeschool.net to donate. Thank you!

Quick Beats . . .

SJE School Has Been Selected for Special STEM Coaching

which is a professional development program that includes application coaching visits to the school (*STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*). An instructional coach will work with teachers in their own classrooms on implementing advanced strategies related to teaching STEM subjects.

Save the Date for The Golden Age of Hollywood

the PTSO's spring fundraising event. This gala affair will be held at the Woodland Hills Marriott on Saturday, Feb. 11, and include dinner, dancing, casino games, a silent auction, a live auction, the Grand Prize Drawing and much more! You won't want to miss this fabulous event where you can have great fun helping to support the school. For more information, visit the school website and click on "Fundraising" in the left menu. All alumni and friends are invited!

SJE School Continues Focus on Literature by Hosting Lisa Yee

on *Author Day*, Nov. 16. Lisa Yee is an award winning author of children's books. Author Day allows students to interact with a well-known author to develop their interests in literature and writing.

Nomination Forms for the 2012 SJE Alumnus of the Year Are Now Available

to recognize an SJE alumnus who would be a good example to our students of someone who has best applied the principles of "to Live, to Love, to Learn, and to Leave a Legacy" since attending SJE School. And alumni and friends are invited to submit a nomination for an alumnus who has inspired them as a life-long learner who has lived their faith. Forms (and more information) are now available at www.sjeschool.net. Nominations must be submitted to the School Office by Jan. 7. Give an alumnus the recognition they deserve – send in your nomination today!

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*A Community of Faith
is a community of learners
who recognize and nourish
God-given gifts.*



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Celebrating 45 Years
of Excellence in
Catholic Education

The HeartBeat

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Fall is a great time for SJE students to celebrate the season with events like the Harvest Mass, Trunk or Treat, Halloween, the Pumpkin Gallery, Orange & Black Day, trips to the pumpkin patch, and a number of other classroom activities.

Giving Back to the Future “Class Legacy Gift” Tradition Unfolds

What is legacy? Something left by predecessors to those who come after.

Last fall, 8th Grade room parent Kelly Akins had an idea: the graduating Class of 2011 could leave a gift for the use of the students who would come behind them. The school and parish quickly approved. Discussions began.

How to raise money for the gift? It was agreed that, in order to make it truly “their” gift, the 8th Graders would help with fundraising.

What should the gift be? One morning in Paula Montal Hall (aka the “Old Parish Hall”) room parents Molly Gaines and Ellen Abbene stumbled over a jumbled mountain of sports gear. The southeast corner floor had become a receptacle of nearly a hundred student bags, laying in wait for the commencement of after-school sports. Then what happened was: a beautiful convergence of time, talent and treasure.

In the spring of 2011, following three recess-time snow cone sales, a Dodger night organized by Mrs. Michele Altamirano, and through the carpentry skills of Mr. Roland Basset and Mr. John Chady, the Class of 2011 gift became reality.

The jumble of sports gear found a home on beautiful wooden shelv-

ing at the back of St. Paula Montal Hall, marked with a plaque bearing the names of the each student of the Class of 2011.

Ms. Cathy Stula, 8th Grade homeroom teacher, believes it is, “the first ever [SJE] class gift,” though she fondly recalls, “student councils [of past years] left gifts to the school: an American flag for the school flag pole, a Vatican flag, a welcome mat for the school office.”

The practice, its official name the *Class Legacy Gift*, now has markings of becoming a school tradition. This year’s 8th Grade banner declares them the “Peacemakers”; the parents and students are beginning to plan their legacy . . . what will the Class of 2012 leave behind?



The 2011 Class Legacy Gift is a practical and welcome addition to St. Paula Montal Hall and helps students keep their sports gear organized.

Quick Beats

(Continued from page 3)

Fr. Gérard Lecomte, CJM, Was Officially Installed as Pastor at a Special Mass

held on Sept. 18 in the church. Bishop Wilkerson officiated at the Mass which was filled to standing-room only with parishioners, school students and families, alumni and friends there to congratulate Fr. Gérard. Representatives of the school community took part in the installation ceremony part of the Mass by presenting Fr. Gérard with items that symbolize his duties and responsibilities as pastor.

Golf Tournament 2011 to Provide Funding to Upgrade Campus and Parish Security



There’s still time to sign up for the *St. John Eudes Golf Classic 2011* to be held at the Porter Valley Country Club on Monday, Nov. 7, with tee off at noon. Players, sponsors, volunteers and silent auction donations are needed. Help us raise funds to benefit the school and parish. Complete information, and entry and donation forms, are available on the parish website at www.stjohnneudes.org. Or contact tournament chairperson Bryan Suttles at (818) 438-8315 or by email to sjegolf@gmail.com.