



St. John the Baptist School
KENMORE

St. John the Baptist School Alumni Association

THE ADVOCATE

The SJS Alumni Association advances and promotes the health and vibrancy of St. John the Baptist School, its administration, staff, students and the school's educational mission.

Spring/Summer 2017

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Upcoming Events

VOICE OF ANGELS CONCERT

Friday, April 28th 7 PM

St. John's Church

SPRING FLING & MEAT RAFFLE

Friday, May 12th 5:30 PM

Klauder Hall

The Advocate Contributors & Staff

Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87
Editor, *The Advocate*

Kevin Sarkisian, '87
Technical Development,
The Advocate

Linda Garrity
Vice Principal/Director of Media
St. John the Baptist School

Calling all alums and friends! Join us for St. John's newly revamped SPRING FLING and MEAT RAFFLE featuring the SLOAN MARKET! The event takes place on Friday, May 12th in Klauder Hall, with doors opening at 5:30 PM and raffles starting at 7 PM.



Eighth graders Kat Esford, Giana Rich, and Grace Schlau (left to right) busy in the rectory assisting with the Spring Fling mailing in preparation the event

Home School Association president and St. John's alum Jamie (Hetzelt) Wells, '94 and her husband, Darren are joining forces with the professional meat callers to host an evening you

won't want to miss. And, you'll be greeted at the door by familiar, friendly-faces including St. John's beloved, veteran teacher and alum, Debbie (Topliffe) Grosskopf, '74.

Event chairs Jim and Pat Mertz have assembled a phenomenal crew of parishioners, alums,

and school parents for the event. "Many will recall our Monte Carlo Nights from years past that the parish sponsored," said Parish Trustee Jim Mertz. "We're so excited to be switching things

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Students host Q & A with the Bishop

The Most Rev. Bishop Richard J. Malone held a "talk-back" this spring with our intermediate and junior high students. The bishop celebrated Mass with the students, families, and faculty, focusing on the various vocations and opportunities that life has to offer! Centered upon this theme, the bishop then hosted a 'question and answer' session with students.

For over an hour, the curious youngsters posed a myriad of questions—from his experience in elementary school and his calling to the priesthood to his favorite foods and sports teams. Even his pet dog Timon was discussed with 7th grader Caroline Cook seemingly impressing the bishop when she recognized that his canine friend was named after Buffalo's first bishop, John Timon. The group found common ground in their love for pizza and other foods. The students were also



Sixth grader Emily Mical poses question to Bishop Malone

thrilled to learn that Bishop Malone is now a converted Buffalo Bills fan—having been a long-time Patriot's man from his well-established New England roots. The personal exchange of these antidotes and comparisons brought smiles and laughs

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From the Editor...

Tech and Today

By Amy Surra Schraufstetter, '87

Top ten observations of this mom raising two children in the tech age:

10. The house is very quiet when we are all home
#Retreatingwiththeelectronics
9. Pings, alarms, Facetime calls and songs play over and over again
#GottogetitrightonmyMusicallyAccount
8. The meaning of the words LIKE/LOVE have taken on a completely different context #Acceptance
7. There is no talking, just texting with emojis as a way to express how we feel #Writealetter
#Pickupthephone
6. YouTube is the new video store
#WhathappenedtorentingDVDs
5. Xbox games is how we stay entertained
#Pacmanisdead #Whathappenedtokickball
4. My questions never get answered
#Noseoutofyourphone #Eyestome
3. When we do talk, we talk in hashtags or abbreviations #Godhelpourfutureworkforce #IDKisnotaword
2. iPhones and iPods are attached to us at all times
#Thenewageblankie #Nakedwithoutit
1. Days are captured via pictures #Instagram, posts #Facebook, and snaps #Snapchat. Social media is the way we communicate.

I'm sure many parents raising children of elementary years can relate. I often think back to my days at St. John's and then think how incredibly different our society is today. While I know technology continues to play a vital role in how we communicate, operate businesses and become employable, I often yearn for the good old days.

My childhood days were filled with outdoor play, conversational dinners with family, and play-dates arranged by phone. Yet, my boys are engaging in activities centered around iPods, Xbox or a social media account as the new version of their down-time.

This worries me, frankly. One misinterpreted text can ruin an 11 year old's day. Even with restrictions in our home, my children can become consumed by it all. When it's a no electronic day, they wander around with no idea of what to do #Figureitout.

Will they be prepared for the future ahead of them? Sure, they'll have no issue staying abreast of tech-

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BANNERS OF LOVE



Do you remember your First Communion banner? Our 3rd graders will celebrate their First Holy Communion on Saturday, May 6th with their vibrant banners adorning the church. What a time-honored symbol of their faith. May God bless our first communicants and their families!

Bishop: So many ways to bring Christ's message to the world

Continued from Page 1

among all. However, students carefully listened to Bishop Malone's message regarding their future.

"He really encouraged students to be open to the various opportunities life brings," says Principal Cynthia Jacobs. Bishop Malone told the students that passions formed at a young age can become the basis for a life-long venture. He spoke of his desire to become a priest—in part because he always knew he wanted to work with people in a special way. "Although he came to his vocation relatively early in life," Jacobs said, "It was that underlying call to work with people that sparked his religious vocation."

Jacobs said the Bishop encouraged all people to certainly be open to religious vocations, but moreover to be aware and develop whatever choices are planned for the future. "Bishop Malone recognized the work of the laity in the church—people working in our parish communities, teachers in our Catholic schools, folks associated with Catholic Charities and so forth. There are so many ways to contribute to today's church and bring Christ's message of love to the world. I'm thrilled my students had the opportunity to experience this side of Bishop Malone and get to know him on a more personal level!"



Many thanks for your tremendous support.

Annual Appeal 2017

Alumni Spotlights

Charlie LaDuca, '65



Chautauqua County Sports Hall of Famer, Charlie LaDuca, '65 has plenty of words of wisdom for our St. John's students

today. An accomplished baseball/softball player and coach, he says it was Catholic school education that has shaped his life, giving him purpose and meaning each and every day.

"The older I get, the more I feel God's place in my life," he said. "He will guide you through the rough times. He has a plan for you and everything that happens is part of that plan. If you accept this, your life will be rich and full." LaDuca fondly remembers his days at St. John's. He was a boy scout, a member of the choir and especially loved recess on the playground. He has special memories of Msgr. Klauder and Fr. O'Leary, as well as the sound of crashing bowling pins from the alley that long ago occupied the school cafeteria.

LaDuca said he learned the values of hard work and discipline as a child which are the main reasons he has been successful in life. "I had hard working parents of faith who kept me on a straight path in life. St. John's reinforced all those positive character qualities," he said. LaDuca obtained an undergraduate degree in Education from SUNY Brockport, but teaching jobs were hard to find. He loaded trucks in Tonawanda and ran a Montgomery Ward store in Dunkirk where he won the National Store Manager of the Year award. He entered the teaching field at age 35, as an Elementary Physi-

cal Education teacher at Pine Valley School in South Dayton, NY. He taught there for 27 years.

During his 22 year coaching career at Pine Valley, the varsity baseball team won 12 league, 5 Section VI, 3 Far West Regional titles and one State Championship. "Winning the NYS championship as a high school baseball coach was certainly memorable," he said. He also says being inducted into the Chautauqua County Sports Hall of Fame this past February is something he will never forget. LaDuca is a 4-time Jamestown Post-Journal Coach of the Year and fittingly, the baseball field at the school is named in his honor. In addition, his decorated career includes induction into both the County Grape Belt League and Cardinal O'Hara High School halls of fame.

A current Fredonia resident, LaDuca is now retired and enjoys being an assistant baseball coach at the local high school, as well as owning a small wood baseball bat business. He is also the founder of the Chautauqua Men's Senior baseball league and continues to enjoy his passion for the sport of baseball.

As an accomplished player and coach, he encourages the youth athletes of today to work hard and stand up for what is right. "Take responsibilities for your actions and don't make excuses. You and you alone determine your success or failure" he said. "There will be failure along your journey and those that keep getting up after being knocked down will be successful. The world is a beautiful place. It is full of opportunity. Go for it!"

Joe Van Valkenburg, '74



One can never be certain what will come from life's early experiences and that is certainly the case for Joe Van Valkenburg. How-

ever, it is with unparalleled clarity that this Class of '74 grad attributes his time in junior high as providing him with a foundation of faith and a desire to experience God through others.

"It was a culmination of all my experiences that led to ministry," said Van Valkenburg, who has worked for 23 years with Campus Ministry at Canisius College, his 1988 alma mater. "I delayed going to college until I was 26, working in the ambulance business from age 14 to 35. I began as a dispatcher and then transported the sick and injured when I turned 18. We answered 911 calls in the City of Buffalo."

Van Valkenburg realized that in the end, it wasn't the shootings, stabbings, fires or hostage situations that matter most. Or even the calls that end up on the national news. Rather, it was being gentle and compassionate for someone who was afraid and alone. "As I matured in my faith, I realized this. These are the calls that sustain you and that you remember. They make a real difference. God was present, but it takes a lifetime to develop this rich relationship with God," he said.

Although the ambulance work was great, it had its limitations. "Moving into Campus Ministry allowed me to reach and empower more people, which has been more rewarding because of the volume of people I am able to touch," Van Valkenburg said. He has found when he respects the things that are important to the students he is working with,

he's able to ask them to be involved in the ministry programs that mean the most to him, including St. Luke's Mission of Mercy and other homeless programs. His ministry is centered on the Corporal Works of Mercy: feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and so on. "We give dignity to the poor and homeless when we show up and serve them, and they give dignity to our lives because of our association. It's mutual!"

Van Valkenburg attributes his drive to this commitment to his experiences with his St. John's junior high teachers. "Mrs. Fleming in 7N and Miss Ballou in 8N were my 7th grade teachers and simply had a love and dedication to their work and students. They were fabulous!" he said. "It wasn't a job. It was their vocation, a ministry. It's no wonder why I love my work and do the same in my life!"

Looking back, he recalls these wonderful examples and says his work in life has never been a job, but rather a vocation. He also recalls Bishop Cunningham being a young priest at St. John's at the time while he was an altar boy. "He was a great example of faith for me and our lives have intersected quite often since that time," he said. "He's been a great friend in the Lord, and our relationship and friendship started at St. John's!"

Pegula Sports & Entertainment recently bestowed its One Buffalo Community Award to Van Valkenburg, citing not only his personal commitment to his work, but also his ability to inspire countless others to assist with his mission. "Find a job you love and you end up enjoying your life. Bring your faith and God in whatever you do," he said. "As I look back on my career now, I see how God had a hand in all I've done. And for me, it all started back at St. John's School!"

May you Rest in Peace Mrs. Cambria

Elaine Cambria is a woman who touched the heart and transformed the lives of many. Although she lost her battle to A.L.S. this past February, her legacy remains deeply imprinted at St. John's School.

Born in 1938 (Brooklyn, NY), Elaine was a product of Catholic education. She attended St. Joseph's High School and then St. Joseph's College, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Education. She came to Buffalo in 1961 and married her husband, John. The couple celebrated 55 years of marriage and together raised two girls and four boys in Tonawanda, where they were parishioners at St. John's Church.



Our Kindergarten students all smiles holding the new addition to their wing

"Elaine is a treasure. It's so hard to find the right words," says Principal Cynthia Jacobs, who met Elaine fourteen years ago when she became principal of the school. "I vividly recall meeting Elaine. It was the first time meeting the faculty (at an end-of-the-year faculty gathering) and Elaine was the very first person to come up to me, introduce herself, and welcome me into the St. John's family. She immediately made me feel welcomed and at ease and I saw that same warmth given to the families and children she welcomed to our school each year."

Elaine joined the faculty at St. John's in 1979, spending the majority of her years teaching Kindergarten, although she did loop into the Pre-Kindergarten program a couple times during her career. "I'm always amazed on the first day of school or at our Open Houses as people approach Elaine," explains Jacobs. "As their bringing their own children to school to begin Kindergarten, they'll enthusiastically say, 'Hi Mrs. Cambria! Remember me?! You taught me twenty-some years ago in 1984!' What really amazes me is how she not only readily recalls her students, but

will then ask about the siblings or recall a specific story that occurred in the classroom. She genuinely liked her work and loved her students!"

Instilling timeless attributes such as respect and character were some of the cornerstone principles Elaine quietly promoted. "Whenever I (or any adult) walked into the classroom, Elaine would cue the students to

stop their activity or lesson and greet me," Jacobs said. "The students would explain what they were doing and it gave them a sense of pride in their actions and reverence to the adults." She said Elaine modelled good manners and Christian attitudes to the

youngsters each and every day she was with them.

Principal Jacobs states that *The Elaine Cambria Memorial Scholarship* has been established by her family in conjunction with the school to honor her legacy. This fund will assist families who would seek to educate their children in the Catholic tradition at St. John's School. Additionally, the Home School Association has donated a street-sign captioned, "**Mrs. Cambria's Way**" recently placed in the school above the Kindergarten wing.

Each year, Elaine had her students present their mom's with a poem entitled, *When You Thought I Wasn't Looking*, about the lessons children learn just by watching. "She knew these words might help us feel special and appreciated," commented a friend. "The truth is that we were all looking and watching and learning from her because her life and the way she lived it was the best possible

example of love, strength, kindness and devotion!"

Roseann (Spillman) Cook, '88, parent of three children at St. John's said Elaine was an absolute blessing to her children who are now in Grades 7, 4 and 2. "She was the epitome of a true Kindergarten teacher. She created an environment where children played and learned, all at their own pace," she said. "Even after my girls graduated from Kindergarten, she was always ready with a hug whenever she saw them. If you were part of her class, you were one of her children forever."

It's impossible to quantify the way in which Elaine touched so many people in such uniquely different ways. But it was her understated beauty that always found a meaningful connection to bring dignity, acceptance, and confidence to a student, a parent, or a friend. This is only one of the many reasons she has made such an indelible footprint on the hearts of so many. She will forever remain an integral spirit to St. John's School and community!

***Donations are currently being accepted for the Elaine Cambria Memorial Scholarship. Kindly contact Michelle Salemi at msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com for information.**



Mrs. Cambria with Charlie Kowalski, Charlie and Caroline Hawthorn (left to right), now 5th grade students, wearing their Kindergarten memory T-shirts during the traditional walk to Anderson's which always celebrated the end of the school year with a special ice cream treat!



Jennifer Parrino
SJS Class of 1997

Voices of Angels Concert

Voices of Angels features a melody of performers, including our very own SJS alums, that will truly delight you with their musical talents, featuring instrumentalists and vocals ranging from inspiring traditional sounds to contemporary favorites.

This **free concert** is open to the public and promotes our *Angel Wings Scholarship Program*. Please extend this invitation to friends and neighbors.

PLEASE JOIN US

This Friday!
April 28, 2017

Performance begins at
7 PM at

**St. John the Baptist
Church**

Raffle: Tickets now available at rectory

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up this year by bringing in a professionally run Meat Raffle with the folks at Sloan Market.”

Mertz went on to comment that this event is a great way to not only fulfill our parish’s budgetary needs—which is essential to maintaining our vibrant community—but it’s a terrific opportunity to bring everyone together for an enjoyable, entertaining evening.

Each \$30 Spring Fling ticket permits entry for two. “This not only includes admission to the Meat Raffle and complementary pizza, beer, and soft drinks for the night,” explains Mertz, “but it automatically enters you into the parish’s \$10,000 cash raffle!” He indicates that various cash prizes totaling \$10,000 will be drawn and awarded throughout the evening. Also available during the evening will be “spins on the meat wheel,” bell jar, split club, and fabulous door prizes.

Tickets are available now. Kindly contact the rectory office at (716) 873-1122 for more information. Guests must be 21 or older to attend. Please join us for an evening with your St. John’s friends and family. Looking

GEARING UP FOR GOLF!



These second grade students Gavin DiGuiseppe, Gabriella Cannarozzo, Ryan Covelli and Makena Sankey (left to right) were spotted admiring the stunning design of this hand-made quilt. It’s the feature item in a special drawing at the Golf Toumey’s Scholarship Dinner. Special thanks to friends of St. John’s Annette & Marty Gruber, who generously crafted and donated the quilt. Tickets are available at the main office and at the rectory (\$1 donation/

Column: Continued from Page 2

nology advances. However, what about those very basic skills – communication, writing, problem solving, integrity, commitment? We seem to be losing those core values in a society centered around immediate access, instant gratification and a sense of entitlement.

Don’t misunderstand. There is a lot of good out there. What would we do without Google, our GPS and all the great apps for adults and kids alike? Take St. John’s for example. Our classrooms are full of technology tools with teachers who are eagerly integrating their usage.

So, the goal each day is to #Findthebalance recognizing technology will continue to impact the way we live. Parenting this generation is a real struggle. It’s the hardest job we’ll ever have and our children are the biggest prize of life.

In spirit of this column #We’reinittogether.

A Message from our Principal Mrs. Cynthia Jacobs



For forty-three years, I have been privileged to have a career in Catholic education, including serving as principal of St. John's for the past fifteen.

It has been an honor to share in the lives of the children and families while celebrating my faith. I am truly grateful!

It is with this tremendous appreciation that I would like to re-

spectfully share some news with you. At the end of this school year, I will be retiring as principal. Words simply cannot express my sincere appreciation for the kindness, faithful support, and prayers of the St. John's community, including you, our tremendous alums. We simply would not be where we are today without you!

It never ceases to amaze me when an alum comes back to tour. Nearly everyone wants to view the "wall of class photos"

that lines the school's main hallway. Other favorite destinations include the 'old milk cooler' near the school's main entrance (which remains operational today) and the (relatively new) connector that links the school to Klauder Hall (which always includes stories about trekking over to gym fighting the elements outside). Above all, it's visiting a favorite classroom to discover that although much has changed (like the current technology upgrades) even more

has remained the same—including the desks, the hardwoods, and the amount of love held within these walls.

In closing, thank you—for the love of St. John's School and its magnificent spirit that is a reflection of YOU, our alums! Your stories, affection, and support help ensure tomorrow's memories. It has truly been an honor to safeguard our rich traditions while serving as principal. May God continue to bless our St. John's community!

Golf Tournament & Scholarship Dinner

September 9, 2017

Golf Tournament
at Sheridan Golf Course
Tee Times 8 AM – 1 PM

Scholarship Dinner & Auction
including live music & happy hour
at Klauder Hall
Festivities Begin at 5:30 PM



Reserve Your Spot Today

For Reservations Contact Michelle Salemi

✉ : msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com

☎ : 716-877-6401

Join us for the day, the evening, or both!



St. John the Baptist School
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UPCOMING REUNIONS

CLASS OF 1962

~ 55th Reunion ~

Saturday, June 24, 2017

Make Your Reservations Today!

CLASS OF 1967

~ 50th Reunion ~

Saturday, September 16, 2017

Date Has Been Set....Details To Follow!

For more information, contact:

Michelle Salemi, Director of Advancement

St. John the Baptist School Alumni

We want to hear from you!

Update your contact information today:

http://www.stjohnskenmore.com/reconnect_today.html

LIKE us on Facebook for the latest alumni news & school happenings!

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-John-the-Baptist-School-Alumni-Kenmore-NY/101552446556655?ref=hl>

Michelle Salemi, Director of Advancement
1085 Englewood Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14223
Phone: 716-877-6401
msalemi@stjohnskenmore.com



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