



ASCENSION CATHOLIC SCHOOL

601 Van Buren
Oak Park, IL 60304

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First Eucharist 2011





Ascension School News

I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer.

Phillipians 1:3-4

Mrs. Sklaney Retires after Four Decades



Maryann Sklaney, who has spent her entire career teaching Ascension children to read, will retire at the end of this school year.

“Sister Michael hired me in August, 1970,” Mrs. Sklaney remembers. “I went into her office for the interview and came out having signed a contract to teach fourth grade. A week before school started she called me into the office and said that she had to move me to first grade.” First grade is where she has been ever since.

Patricia Pesce, who has been at Ascension nearly as long as Mrs. Sklaney, says of her colleague, “Maryann is a very dedicated teacher. When I was in graduate school I used a student in her classroom for a study I was doing. Maryann knew what each child’s strengths and weaknesses

were in reading and exhausted herself to find what each of them needed to become a successful reader. She had a ring binder that tracked the progress of each one of them and left no stone unturned in finding a method that would work for a particular student.”

Mrs. Pesce also values the years of service that Mrs. Sklaney has given to Ascension. “Longevity helps build continuity and stability in a school, and Mrs. Sklaney has been steadfast in her contributions here. Every teacher has a gift; I think that Maryann’s is the clear sense of responsibility she feels for each child’s literacy.”

Mrs. Sklaney has seen many changes at Ascension, has been here through at least eight principals (“I’ve sort of lost track but they were

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Ascension's 2011 Calendar

Graduation
Wednesday, June 1

Ascension Sunday: June 5
8:30 to 12:30 am

Alumni & Friends Golf Outing
Friday, June 24, 2011
Beginning at 9:00 am

Class of 1961 Reunion
Saturday, June 25, 2011

Gold Alumni Brunch
Sunday, June 26, 2011
10:00 am

Centennial Planning Meeting
Sunday, July 17
10:00 am

Class of 1956 Reunion
Saturday, September 17

Class of 1966 Reunion
Saturday, October 8

2 Action Plan 2015 Update: Math

Ascension School is in year two of Action Plan 2015, a long range plan to position the school for a strong start to its second century. The five areas of focus that the Action Plan leadership identified are climate, math, science, facility and leadership. What follows is a report on the progress made in the area of math.

Schools across the country are focused on revitalizing their math and science curricula so that the United States remains competitive in the international marketplace. Ascension is among those schools.

Principal Mary Jo Burns invited parents, faculty members, parishioners-at-large, and educators from other districts to be part of the conversation. “We are asking high school teachers how they would like to have students prepared for high school math. We know that they, in turn, are teaching so that their students are prepared for college. This is a big project. The analysis starts from the top down but then the change has to come from the bottom up. We have to take this information and figure out what it means about the work our first, second and third graders should be doing.”

John Sikora, school parent and Assistant Director of the Regional Office of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, is the head of the math subcommittee for the Action Plan. He gives this summary of the work of the committee: “We have reviewed and analyzed the last three years of Terra Nova testing and recent high school placement results. We are gathering information on the math programs at several area Catholic grade schools and information on how our teachers ensure continuity in math instruction from grade-to-grade.”

Ascension began dividing eighth grade students into two math and science groups two years ago. This year, a group of eighth graders are taking algebra. Mr. Sikora says the committee is exploring the merits of expanding the algebra instruction.

The Ascension faculty adopted new math textbooks this spring and are enthusiastic about the change. Mark Gartland teaches fourth grade at Ascension. “The new math series has an online component which we

haven’t had before for kindergarten through fifth grade. Children who need help with a lesson can refer to the online resource; this should be good news for parents. This series also does a great job of integrating pre-algebra concepts which will make a big difference in our overall goal of producing students who are better prepared for high school.”

Finally, the committee is looking into ways to reduce or eliminate the summer “brain drain.” “The amount of remedial work that is done every fall, in every school, is staggering,” says Beth White, third grade teacher. “Students lose so much ground every summer. We hope we can find a creative way to address the problem.”

The math subcommittee will meet with the Action Plan leadership on June 12 to discuss their efforts so far. Mr. Sikora says, “Our committee serves a purely advisory function, so if we do make suggestions, it will be up to Ms. Burns and the administration to implement them.”

Mrs. Sklaney continued from page one

each unique individuals”), and has taught two generations of many families. “I love teaching the children of former students,” she says, “and the siblings of former students. What a blessing, to feel connected to the whole family.”

She remembers roller-skating in the gym, as do many of our alumni; and teaching with some extraordinarily gifted people, in particular Ev Collins, Sister Bernadette and Sister Pacelli.

“I’ve had a wonderful time at Ascension, and the faculty has been a second family for me. There were some years at home that were unhappy for me, and the people I worked with helped tremendously.

Mrs. Sklaney will work part time at the Oak Park Public Library, happy to be with books and with children. She

hopes that she’ll be able to come back to Ascension someday to help children who need a little extra attention reading.

When asked what she’ll miss, Mrs. Sklaney paused a bit to collect herself. “I love being a Eucharistic minister at school Masses,” she says. “I love looking into the children’s eyes; I’ll miss that very much. We don’t get upstairs (to the classrooms of the older children) very often. At Mass, I have the chance to see my students from five or six years earlier and I see how they’ve blossomed. I love that. I’m so glad to have had the chance to be part of their lives.”

Ascension will honor Mrs. Sklaney at a reception on Sunday, June 5 at noon in the Pine Room. For more information, call 708-434-1541

Join us and our event sponsors:



Ascension School Alumni & Friends

Golf Outing 2011

Friday, June 24, 2011

Big Run Golf Club

Lockport, IL

Schedule:

9:00 1st Tee Times

Individual Play

Cocktails & barbecue following golf

Cost per person:

\$85 Golf and Barbecue

\$25 Barbecue Only

Gold Alumni Brunch

Sunday, June 26, 2011

10:00 Pine Room

Reservations

Reservations for singles or multiple players up to a foursome can be made below. Please list the names and contact information for those in your party.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Name (Contact person) _____ | | Class of (if applicable) _____ | |
| Email _____ | | Telephone _____ | |

Please include these golfers in my group:

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Name _____ | Address _____ | Class of _____ | Telephone _____ |
| Name _____ | Address _____ | Class of _____ | Telephone _____ |
| Name _____ | Address _____ | Class of _____ | Telephone _____ |

Preferred tee time:

9AM-11AM
 11AM-Noon
 Noon-1PM
 no preference

I have enclosed payment in full for this group with:

Visa
 Mastercard
 Check # _____

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Credit Card # _____ | Signature _____ | Date _____ |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|

Please fill in this form and include payment for all members of your golfing party. Thank you for your participation and support!

Golf and Barbecue @ \$85
 Barbecue only @ \$25
 Raffle tickets \$5 - 6/ \$25
 Donation
 Total enclosed

Send this form to:

Alumni & Friends Golf Outing
 Ascension School
 601 Van Buren
 Oak Park, IL 60304

Register online, or call
 708-434-1558 for the best
 choice of tee times!

Looking for a way to serve this summer? Join the Ascension community for a **Volunteer Day** on **Saturday, July 16, 8:30 am to 1:00 pm**. We'll be doing some deep cleaning, some painting, some hauling and maybe some demolition. We will have work for skilled and unskilled laborers, ten and older, and we'll reward you with a hot dog when we are finished! Please call 708-434-1541 if you have questions.



Ascension is planning the "new auction" for its eighteenth annual event, to be held on Saturday, November 19. For the first time, auction guests will take part in a sit-down dinner, with wine. The auction will be held in the school gym and will be conducted by David Goodman, one of the premier charity auctioneers in the Chicago area. "We look forward to some very exciting changes in the format," says Jean Berg, who has been part of the auction production team for ten years. "This is a move to the 'big leagues' for us and we're challenged but very enthusiastic." The new auction format will include an MC, honorary chairs, and honorees. If you'd like to help, please call the Advancement Office, 708-434-1558.



In the January edition of Ascension School News we asked that you help us identify the tall young man in this photo for whom we had only a nickname, "Big Stooage." We did not deliberately misidentify the year, or misspell names, but we were thrilled to get many phone calls pointing out our errors. (The ball says 1944, we said 1946, and since Dick Dunne and Jerry Dunne are brothers they probably spell their last names the same way!) We didn't even have the nickname right -- he was "Big Stoop" and his name was Bill Sullivan. While we regret the errors, we did love hearing from so many alums -- the best part of any day. Please call often: there is so much more that we don't know! Tell us at 708-434-1558.



Ascension School is a ministry of the faith community of Ascension Parish, committed to providing an excellent education in the spirit, tradition and value system of the Catholic Church. Essential to this ministry is the active partnership among students, parents, faculty, staff and parishioners.

Ascension School provides a curriculum that meets the present needs of its students and prepares them for high school, for higher education and for a lifetime of learning.

Ascension School helps each child to grow in awareness of the child's individual talents and unique place within the family of God.

Ascension School's mission is to strengthen its students' understanding and practice of their faith; to allow them to grow in faith; and to work towards creating, through their service, a compassionate and just community. This mission is guided by a philosophy of love, kindness and respect for each individual, while celebrating our bond in gospel values.

In June 2012 we will begin the celebration of the Ascension School centennial. The plans so far include two specific areas: a year of heightened focus on our very local history and events to celebrate some specific aspects of that history.

Students at Ascension will begin to work on special projects in January 2012, with an eye to helping the extended Ascension family learn more about the history of our community.

"We're excited about the opportunities for students to be part of this milestone," says Annie Boockmeier, one of Ascension's kindergarten teachers. "What a great 'teachable moment' this is for children at all grade levels."

"Ascension has long been known as a close-knit community, one with families who stay for generation after generation," says Lynn Fredrick of the Advancement Office. "We want to acknowledge the legacy of those families. We've always been known for music -- we had a renowned opera singer perform at the first Mass in the church -- so music should figure into our plans. And we'll have two large-scale events, one to open the year in June 2012 (most likely a family-oriented picnic) and one to close it in June 2013 (probably a formal dinner.) We hope that alumni will return for at least one of those weekends."

An arts festival, tentatively scheduled for January 2013 will include specially commissioned music for Ascension musicians, past and present; dramatic readings of alumni memories; display of visual art pieces by Ascension artists, past and present.

Another area we hope to explore is the history of Ascension houses. What Ascension family lived in your house before you? After you? Mary Jo McEnery ('78) has been thinking about this for years. "I grew up on a totally Ascension block and I know that a generation before us different Ascension families were in those same houses. Local history is fascinating. We hope to have the histories of

dozens of homes in the neighborhood for the centennial."

Marybeth Cullen Granholm ('69) is working in the alumni office to plan the anniversary year. "We are still in the dreaming stage but we won't be there much longer. If anyone has ideas that they would like to

see implemented during the centennial they should contact us very soon."

How you can help: We need help at the alumni office updating the database, working on the alumni website, putting the final touches on the centennial plans. We will need help with mailings, with invitations, with designs for print materials and memorabilia. We need photographers, videographers, writers, artists and musicians.

We need underwriting support for the arts festival, including the commissioning of a piece for the Ascension Strings Orchestra. We need help with the construction of good quality display cases for our history exhibits.

The next centennial planning meeting will be held Sunday, July 17, at 10:00 in the Parish Center, 808 S. East Avenue. Please join us for a light breakfast and conversation. And please, let us know you are coming by calling Marybeth at 708-434-1541.

Centennial Planning Meeting: Sunday, July 17 10:00 am Parish Center

All Ascension alumni who graduated in 1961 or earlier are invited to the fourth annual Gold Alumni Brunch on Sunday, June 26, following the 9:00 am Mass. Invitations have been mailed to 936 alumni for whom we have addresses. If you have not received an invitation, there is an error in our database. Please help us correct the error by contacting Marybeth Cullen Granholm, ('69) in the Advancement Office at 708-434-1541.

We hope you'll take advantage of the opportunity to visit with old friends, check out your new old school, peruse the memorial bricks we have planted and learn more about the plans for the centennial. We will be conducting interviews, filming, if you are willing, and recording stories. If you have photos of your days at Ascension, please bring them so that we can scan them for our archives.



Each year we are thrilled to add to our photo archives by scanning the pictures that alumni bring to the brunch. Please share the wealth! This photo has unfortunately been separated from the information that accompanied it. Can you tell us who these people are, or identify the house?

4 Remembering Kathy Adams

In June it will be fifteen years since the Ascension community lost Kathy Adams, school mom, School Board member and teacher. Those of us who were not at Ascension in the 1980s and '90s only know Mrs. Adams through stories of those who loved her, and through those events that she brought to our school and through which her spirit lives on.

We thought it was time that more learned about her dedication to Ascension and to her students in particular. Everyone with whom we spoke replied with difficulty, still grieving the loss of a special friend, but each of them had wonderful stories to tell.

Editor's note: Sue Kunkel, who shared some memories with us for this story, died after a very brief illness in May of this year. All of us at Ascension send our deepest sympathy to Sue's family and friends on their loss.

Pat Grimaldi Pesce, Ascension's art teacher since 1974, says that Mrs. Adams made a profound difference in the school. She writes:

"Kathy Adams was a true artist and a wonderful teacher. Most important for me, she was a friend. Kathy and I first got to know each other when she helped me with a lesson on clay. I needed an extra set of hands and she provided that. At the time she had young children. When her children were all school age she came back to teach at Ascension.

"She was tireless in trying to help troubled children. She never lost patience and seemed to have a sense of what could help them. Together we came up with an idea to start a collection of work done by 8th graders. This is how the masterpiece gallery came to be. Kathy realized the value of the arts in the school curriculum. She felt it gave students the chance to express themselves and problem-solve: to create a piece of art that they saw through to the finished

work. This did wonders for the confidence of many students. Kathy believed that a well rounded education included all of the arts.

Kathy served our community in many ways, as a parent, a member of the school board and a teacher. I think about Kathy all the time. I believe that her presence is very much alive in our school today."

Lana Geselbracht taught with Kathy at

Ascension and knew her as a parent first, then as colleague and a friend and a mentor. Lana remembers:

"Kathy was on the Board when the conversation about fundraising first included asking the students to help. She felt that the run-a-thon format was a 'win-win' proposition, raising money and giving the eighth graders responsibility to help count laps, collect money and work on the event spreadsheets. Kathy also started the Christmas Boutique, again offering eighth graders the opportunity to serve the community and also to help younger students. She felt that older students should be role models for younger children. Students looked up to Kathy and did not want to let her down.

"She was a champion for the underdog kid. She would have kids sitting on her front porch; children would go to her for personal, parental, school problems. She flew "under the radar" and helped every child whose life she touched."



Mrs. Kathy Adams

Sue Kunkel was Mrs. Adams' neighbor. "Kathy Adams was my dearest friend and I am so grateful to have known her. In 1967 she became my next door neighbor and since we had kids the same age we were inseparable." Sue remembers Kathy's talent in art and that she was a good interior designer. "Dave, Kathy's husband, was an editor for CBS and was traveling when an addition was being put on their house - Kathy managed the whole project by herself. She was capable and very talented."

Kathy was a generous soul. Even when she was very sick she still had notes and gifts for her students. She helped everyone around her "bloom where they were planted" and used that expression on notecards that she produced with her drawings of flowers.

Dave Adams remarried in xxxx. He and his wife, Mary McEnery, continue to honor Kathy's devotion to Ascension's young people through the Kathy Adams Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded annually to students of the parish who may not have the highest grades and test scores but are good kids who do service for others. Dozens of Kathy Adams Scholarships have been distributed since 1987.

The fund is now administered through the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation. Five \$1,000 scholarships will be granted this summer to students who graduated from Ascension School or are members of Ascension Parish.

To contribute to the fund so that Kathy's influence can still be felt at Ascension, please visit the Ascension alumni website, www.Ascension-Schoolalumni.com.

Liz Mariferen ('97) was one of many students who had looked forward to having Mrs. Adams for their eighth grade year. Although Kathy died when Liz was in seventh grade, her effect on Liz was tremendous.

Mrs. Adams saved me. I had a really rough time during my junior high years and started suffering from depression. We had Mrs. Adams for Religion class and she asked us to write journal entries which she would then read and comment on. No matter how trivial my problem was, she took the time to write (sometimes whole paragraphs) to reassure me I was normal, or things would work out, etc. She really helped me realize my potential as a student and strong human being.

Mrs. Adams painted a picture of tulips and made it into greeting cards. After she passed away my mom framed the card for me. It has been everywhere I have lived and sits on the windowsill next to my bed now. The "bloom where you are planted" quote never had as much meaning as it has this last year since I moved to Colorado. In this year I have faced some feelings that are just like those from junior high. (Maybe junior high is always with us!) I glance at this sentiment and am reminded of who I am and where I have come from. Mrs. Adams still reminds me from Heaven that I am an incredible person and can handle whatever is thrown at me.

Mrs. Adams was taken away too soon and I was unable to tell her how much she meant to me and how lucky I was to have her in my life. But I think she may already know...

We welcome your stories or memories about Mrs. Adams. Please send them to us at alumni@ascension-school.com and we will post them on the alumni website.

Class of 1961

Saturday, June 24
6 pm Pine Room
contact: John Tourtelot
drummerjohn500@yahoo.com
or Sue Armstrong
suz47@att.net

Class of 1956

Saturday, September 17, 2011
Contact: Kathleen Sweeney
sweenkthl@aol.com

Class of 1966

Saturday, October 8, 2011
Contact: Mary Pollard Hustad
mary.hustad@delta.com
John McHugh
jmchugh5@cinci.rr.com
Sue O'Brien
sobrien@kintlaw.edu
April Ross Moon
april.moon@bairdwarner.com

*Is this a reunion year for your class?
Contact the alumni office at
alumni@ascension-school.com for
help. Planning a reunion is fun and
painless. Really!*

The Class of 2011

Siri Stølen Anderson
Christopher Gerard Atwood
Samuel Adam Barron
Maeve Kathleen Bowling
John Bracco
Kelly Lynn Canoy
Jack Austin Chaney
James Patrick Cullinane
Alexander Edward Daughtry
Madeleigh Dean Dossey
Thomas K. Duff
Natalia Estrada
Ryan Joshua Fish
John Patrick Fitzgerald
Conor James Foley

Margaret Therese Frumkin
Gabriel Alfonso Gonzalez
Marguerite Rose Healy
Emma Louise Hess
Catherine Helene Houle
Ashley Melvena Howard
Kevin George Jaster
Bridget Mary Johnson
Jordyn X. Johnson
Jarrell Jones
Kiernan Michael Kelty
Eric Andrew Koeller

Andrew Thomas Kraft
Kelcey Lorraine Leeming
Genevieve Diane Lotus
Liam Gallagher Mackey
John Patrick Mackie
Ross Bernard McMahon
Andrea Ruth Patete
Patrick Jordon Quaid
Samuel James Quirk
Kimberly Quiroga
Cecilia Halpin Rahn
Taylor Nicole Schejbal
Emma Roan Seavey
Kathryn Elizabeth Thiese

Jack Flanagan Traficano
James Edmund Turek
Noelle Elizabeth Van
Linden
Maya Angele Van
Lysebettens
Kristin Marie Westervelt
Michael Patrick Winters