



The Beehive

November 2007

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BE THANKFUL FOR OUR BLESSINGS

Saint Ambrose Families,

We have so much to be thankful for...each of us...every day. We live in a country that allows us to openly and freely express our faith without fear of reprisal. We live in a country where children can grow up to be whatever they put their minds to. In November, we have set aside two special days to reflect and give thanks. On 11 November, Veteran's Day, remember to thank a veteran for the freedom we have; it has been bought and paid for by their service to our country. On 22 November, Thanksgiving Day, remember to thank God for his bounteous blessings we find every day in our community, parish, and in the Saint Ambrose Catholic School. The staff and faculty at our school take such good care of our children, helping them find their interests and nurturing the concept that they can achieve great things.

At last report, our Pledge Drive was at \$35,000 with about 60 percent of the families having responded. On behalf of the PTO and the school, I thank you for your generous contributions to date. However, if we cannot reach our goal, this will affect our ability to support the school as we have in the past. I have included a roll up of our budget for this school year in The Beehive. It reflects projected revenues based on past years' performance, and anticipated outlays of the funds, based on known requirements and ways to improve our technology in the classrooms. We need to hear from the remaining families, to the best of their ability, to close the gap to achieve our \$50,000 goal. If, between the Pledge Drive and the Gala, we cannot meet the revenue we projected, the PTO will have to prioritize the budget items and determine where to scale back. I thank all of you for your great support through the years at Saint Ambrose and ask you to please continue.

Our two social events, the golf tournament and BINGO night, planned for October and November have been postponed. By April, we will all be itching to get out of the house and spend an afternoon on the golf course followed by a delicious dinner at a country club. So this winter, when the wind is howling and the snow is piling up, keep our golf tournament in your mind as the place we will meet to enjoy the warm weather. Our planned BINGO night has also been postponed until later in the year. We will team with the Ambrose Council of the Knights of Columbus and host a joint family night featuring BINGO.

Our social functions are dependent on volunteers stepping forward to work with and organize other volunteers. Some events take more time than others, but working in teams, we can achieve a lot without over-taxing any one person. To get some ideas of where your help is most needed, please contact Blanca Reilly, our Volunteer Coordinator, and she can help you find a place to donate your time and talent to help our school.

God bless you and keep you in His care.

Brian Frank

SPOTLIGHT ON MR. O'CONNELL BY LISA PHILLIPS

Mr. Dave O'Connell is in his first year of teaching at St. Ambrose School. He teaches Religion, Social Studies and Science to the 6th graders, and Math and Science to the 7th graders. His claim to St. Ambrose fame is that he taught English to a couple of Mrs. Yates's sons. He graduated from Stone Hill

College in northeast Massachusetts, and on the advice of one of his History professors, came to northern Virginia to pursue a masters degree in History at George Mason University. He met his wife at St. Leo's church at mass, and is the proud father of 4 kids, David (24), Jennifer (21), Michael (6th grade) and

Rachel (4th grade). The product of 16 years of Catholic education, Mr. O'Connell is thrilled to be shaping young minds as a middle school teacher in Catholic school.

Question: Tell me a little more about your background.

Mr. O'Connell: Well, I'm the last

THE "BUZZ"

Dear Saint Ambrose Family and Friends,

November promises to be a busy month as we prepare for the end of the first quarter, parent/teacher conferences, our Thanksgiving food drive, and of course, the Thanksgiving holiday. The students are engaged in various service projects including care packages for our soldiers, collection of candy for Christ House, and the collection of vitamins for the poor children in Columbia. They are actively involved in these projects and come to me with ideas on ways to serve. It is truly a tribute to their parents and teachers who have fostered such an understanding of the corporal works of mercy. Thank you for your generosity in supporting these projects.

I urge all of you to vote in the very important elections on November 6. Last week's *Arlington Catholic Herald* had an informative article describing the positions the different candidates have on areas that are important to Catholic voters and to those who support Catholic education.

The teachers enjoyed the day at the Diocesan Institute last Friday. The day included Mass, workshops, lunch, a chance to shop (many vendors have booths at the Institute), and an excellent keynote speaker, John Findlater. He was very uplifting and validating concerning Catholic education. He emphasized that not only do our schools offer a superior educational environment but that our children are learning the virtues and values of the Faith.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at parent/teacher conferences. The success of your children's spiritual and academic development depends greatly on the communication that exists between the school and the home.

Since this is my "November letter," I want to wish all of you a peaceful and happy Thanksgiving. Please keep our brave military men and women and their families in your prayers.

God bless,

Joanne Yates



**"I will praise
the name of
God with a
song, and will
magnify Him
with
thanksgiving."
[Psalm 69:30]**

OUR CONFIRMATION BY HANNAH COOKE, 8TH GRADE

On October 9, 2007, the 8th graders of St. Ambrose Parish made their Confirmation with Bishop Higgins from the Archdiocese for Military Services as celebrant. The young men and women looked both reverent and excited as they entered the church, thanks to the prayers and support each of them received from their parents, teachers, and catechists during their preparation for this memorable time in each of their lives. "We have spent many months preparing for the special Sacrament of Confirmation. It has been an exciting time for us as we anticipated the beginning of our acting as adults within our church. Now that we have been sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit we know we are prepared to bring Christ to the secular world, through our words, actions, and deeds." said recent confirmandi Rachel Hudson. "During these months of

prayer and study we have each grown closer to God," added Gina Singel. The excitement the students felt as they realized they were about to pass an important milestone in their Christian lives was truly evident as they all paraded into the parish church, in their red robes and glowing faces, to receive their Confirmation on October 9th.

On the Friday after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, the 8th grade class of St. Ambrose School took a special field trip to meet with the Papal Nuncio, visit the Vatican Embassy and the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, and eat lunch with local seminarians. It was a memorable experience for everyone who attended! The students had a special audience with the Papal Nuncio, Bishop Sambini, and were able to ask questions about his work, personal life, and memorable experiences he

may have had while acting as Papal Nuncio to the United States of America.

The 8th graders of St. Ambrose School also had a special tour of the Basilica, and a great explanation of the beautiful artwork that adorns our nation's national Catholic landmark in Washington DC. To make an already memorable week even more of a blast, the 8th graders were also treated to lunch with some local seminarians studying in Washington DC to become Catholic priests. Thanks to the hard work put in by Sister Cecilia to arrange the trip downtown, the 8th graders of St. Ambrose School had a truly memorable experience, making their Confirmation week not only holy, but fun and exciting too!

SPOTLIGHT (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

- Henry Adams

of 9 children from the south shore of Massachusetts, a little town called Plympton, near Plymouth. I grew up working in my family's business, the Lobster Shack in Middleboro. I learned how to sell lobsters when I was about 9 years old. My grandfather used to catch the lobsters himself, but eventually he began to just buy the lobsters wholesale, and we sold them in our seafood market. I handled hundreds of pounds of live lobsters every day. My whole family worked there, at least 10 years of their lives.

Question: Did you ever get bitten by a lobster?

Mr. O'Connell: Yes, and it hurts quite a bit. The claws have a little acidity to them so it really stings. The big ones are slow but the younger, smaller ones can really grab you and it is pretty unpleasant. That's why I am a teacher today, and not a lobster salesman.

Question: After you completed your education, did you immediately become a teacher?

Mr. O'Connell: No. My father took me on a trip to Haiti when I graduated from high school. We walked around the slums of Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, and it was a real eye opener for me. I decided that I wanted to do something meaningful

with my life. After I graduated from GMU, I went down to South America on a lay-missionary program for Notre Dame for 9 months. It was a great experience, very enriching, but very difficult. I learned a lot about the local culture, and I learned a lot about myself.

I taught at Holy Spirit and St. Leo's and I have also worked in private industry for both Nextel Communications and Northrup Grumman. I did a little systems engineering, but mostly I conducted engineering training courses on computer applications and software.

Question: What's the difference between teaching adults and teaching kids?

Mr. O'Connell: Teaching adults is more difficult. I have never enjoyed any job as much as I have enjoyed teaching children.

Question: How do you think your background helps you as a teacher?

Mr. O'Connell: Having lots of brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces...I am used to crowd control. I'm also aware of what children can get away with unobserved, since I am the ninth of nine children.

Question: How does it feel to be the only male teacher in the school? Do the other teachers ask you to open jars and kill spiders?

Mr. O'Connell: *Laughing...* I have been asked to get things that others can't reach, and to carry something heavy. I'm pretty used to it since I have 5 sisters. I know how to get the bath water for Barbie dolls, and stuff like that.

Question: I can't help but notice the prominently featured Boston Red Sox banners and newspaper articles in your classroom. Is it true that a student's willingness to support the Red Sox can have a direct effect on his or her grade?

Mr. O'Connell: Definitely, no question about it. Okay, not really, but I'm willing to say it to get them to study. I am a big Red Sox fan. I got to see a game with my family last weekend in Massachusetts. I think it was just as loud at our house as at Fenway Park.

Question: So what do you think is the most important thing that your students will learn in 6th grade this year?

Mr. O'Connell: I hope the most important thing they learn is compassion for each other and good, Christian ethics. I concern myself with academics, obviously, because I'm a teacher. But if I were solely concerned with academics I wouldn't be teaching in Catholic school. I figure the best thing to teach these kids is that you can model good, ethical behavior, have

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TEACHER'S CORNER BY MRS. ANN ROSAPEP

The spirit of kindness is certainly thriving at Saint Ambrose these days!

The Seventh Grade has just completed sending both "care packages" and Halloween cards to our soldiers serving overseas. Many thanks to the many members of our St. Ambrose Family who contributed to this wonderful work!

Now, the Seventh Grade is embarking on yet another work of mercy. This time, they are collecting vitamins with minerals, both for adults and children, to send to the

people in Columbia. It is often the case that Columbian children do not receive adequate nutrients in their diets. Please help by donating a bottle of vitamins if you can.

Meanwhile, the Eighth Grade is beginning a week long collection of bagged and/or wrapped Halloween candy commencing on November 1st. Please consider having your children donate any wrapped candies for the homeless families that are serviced by Christ House.

We teachers also continue to see daily kindnesses being performed



throughout our school. There are many Kindness Kudos sightings these days! This is certainly a reflection on both our great students as well as their parents.

SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED

fun and learn at the same time.

Question: What did you do with your summer vacation this year?

Mr. O'Connell: Watched a lot of baseball, played a lot of baseball. I play on a baseball team and a softball team. I coach my son's baseball team and help coach my daughter's soccer team. We do a lot of outdoorsy stuff – hiking, fishing, running around.

Question: How do you balance work and family?

Mr. O'Connell: My family always comes first. I really enjoy spending time with my family; hanging out

with them is my favorite thing to do, so it's easy for me to get in lots of time with them. It's been great to have my younger two kids with me here at school, too. Teaching is a difficult profession; it can take up a lot of your free time. I cut corners using my technology background, which saves me some time by keeping me organized and helping me with grading and logging grades. Those kinds of things give me more time with my family, which is great.

Question: What is great about St. Ambrose?

Mr. O'Connell: St. Ambrose is very welcoming. It is such a close-knit

community. The children are so open and well-behaved, but not so well-behaved that they don't have a sense of humor. There's a sense of accountability; people are so available and willing to help each other. There's not so much competition and angst among the kids about who has the latest and greatest "stuff". St. Ambrose is THE friendliest environment I have been in at a school, by far. This is my 3rd or 4th Catholic School, and this is an amazing community. I love it here.

INTERNET SAFETY—A MUST READ FOR PARENTS BY JOANNE YATES

On October 16th, we had a very informative parent information session on protecting our children while they use computers. Technology is an important, and even crucial, tool in our society, but it is dangerous if not strictly monitored. I am always amazed at the number of children who have complete access to the Internet with no parental supervision or safeguards. Computers should be kept in a location where parents can see the screen, there should be frequent checking of what the child is doing, and parents should educate themselves about filtering software. If you want more information about software filters, you can call your Internet provider.

The parent session also emphasized that parents should tell their children never give out personal information, never send pictures online, never give your password to anyone, never meet in person someone that was "met" online, and never respond to messages that make them uncomfortable. Parents should be told immediately about any threatening or obscene messages. The best safeguard is parent control, so it is important for parents to have an understanding of computers. I still

cannot figure out my cell phone or program the remote control but I made sure I knew how to check what my children were doing on the computer. Remember, monitoring your children is perfectly legal – even if they tell you that "you are the strictest parents and no one else's parents monitor computer use." Some frightening but important statistics include the fact that there are 300,000,000 users of MySpace and the authorities have arrested 90,000 predators (just a tip of the iceberg) in a very short time! MySpace and similar sites are something our children are using on a daily basis, roaming the sites and giving out all sorts of personal information – and yet we won't let them go to the mall by themselves! Other statistics that were shared were that 12 to 15 year olds are the most vulnerable as evidenced by statistics: 35% of that age group pretend to be older when talking with someone online, 31% have computers in their bedrooms, 30% with internet access. Also, over ½ of the age group interviewed had communicated with someone they did not know online, with 30% of that group talking about meeting the person. Most of you know about "groomers," or predators who target children online. They are very

devious (I can think of many other words!), in their correspondence, pretending to want to be friends, knowing the "lingo" of the young people so they can talk about current music, movies, etc. and working over a period of time to develop trust and glean personal information, and then finally arranging to meet the child. Signs that your child has been corresponding with such an individual are: spending an inordinate amount of time on the computer (especially late at night, early in the morning), looking at pornography online, receiving gifts (webcams, etc) in the mail, and turning off the computer when a parent comes in the room.

I hope that we can do this session again next year and that many more of you will attend. It is so important that we protect our children and teach them the prudent use of this wonderful tool. We are conducting Internet safety classes at school through ChildHelp and have had a session for the middle school so far this year. I am also considering having another session in the spring.

COUNCIL UPDATES



Capital Improvements: The Capital Improvements Council has had a busy month. The Technology Committee installed four brand new Dell computers with flat screen monitors, thanks to a generous donation from Kevin Boland, a

parishioner who read about our need for computers in the SADC newsletter. One additional new computer resulted from a donation from Eric Duong. These five new computers are much needed replacements for our computer lab and will reduce the expected price tag for the overall computer lab renovation project, which remains un-scheduled at this time. The Grant Committee has submitted 4 grant applications this month, for various classroom projects. Notification of awards is expected in the next couple of months. The St.

Ambrose Development Committee (SADC) golf tournament has been postponed until the spring."

Student Activities & Enrichment: Saint Ambrose offers a number of great extra-curricular activities for our students through a variety of clubs. Be sure to see the article on page 6 for information on just a few of the great opportunities for students.

ONCE UPON A TIME... GALA 2008!



Save the date because you will not want to miss the Saint Ambrose 2008 Gala. This year's theme, "Once upon a time..." reflects our goal to improve our Library and Reading Curriculum and will certainly be a night to remember!

Last year's Gala, "Reach for the Stars", gave all of us a wonderful evening to socialize with friends and family. More importantly, though, it allowed us to raise much-needed funds that went to supporting our wonderful teachers and specifically the Science Curriculum. If you'd like to see all that hard work and generosity in action, check out the electronic Active Boards in

some of our classrooms and see the remarkable difference they are making in our children's education.

The Gala Committee has already been hard at work developing great auction items. If you're looking for that special gift, this is definitely the place to find it. Or better yet. Let your family, friends, and neighbors know about some of the fabulous items that they can bid on. They will definitely thank you for it!

This year's Gala is planned for:

Saturday, February 2, 2008

Join us to see your favorite authors come alive, from

classics to contemporary. It promises to be an enchanted evening!

"A well-composed book is a magic carpet on which we are wafted to a world that we cannot enter in any other way."

—Caroline Gordon

**Be a part of the magic
on February 2, 2008!**

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND ENRICHMENT—JOIN THE CLUB! BY DEBBIE CAFFI

JOIN THE CLUB, as the saying goes. Well Saint Ambrose School has some wonderful clubs for students to become a part of.

THE CROCHET USA CLUB meets every Thursday after school and is open to Middle School students. The students learn to crochet, make crocheted squares and then stitch the squares together to make beautiful afghans. These afghans are then given to the injured soldiers at Walter Reid and Bethesda Medical Centers. Crochet USA has been blessed with additional help this year. Mrs. Mulhern and Mrs. Warnock are busy crocheting with us each week. Also, Dr. Gail Carome and Mrs. Konczal have joined us as well. We have four blankets ready to deliver next week to Bethesda. Our goal is to make sure they have them by Veterans Day. We are putting two more together, and starting a few new ones. We have some new 6th grade members, and would like to extend the invitation to others who would like to crochet at home or meet with us on Thursdays after school.



THE CHESS CLUB is going strong and meets every Friday after school for one hour of "mind challenging" matches. St. Ambrose Parishioner, Mr. Swoboda, always has new moves and tips for the students to improve their chess knowledge and ability.



NEW - THE DRAMA CLUB will start on November 7th and is open to 7th and 8th grade students. Mrs. d'Alelio will teach the members all about the theatre, back stage and on stage. They will learn what an actors life is like and what it takes to be an actor. Mrs. d'Alelio will share her time, talent, and her appreciation and love of the theatre with our middle school students. This club will also prepare them for what's to come in the spring: **SHAKESPEARE**.



CHRIST IS THE REASON FOR OUR SCHOOL

Keeping in the spirit that Christ is the reason for our school, the students are always busy taking care of those less fortunate through their involvement with service projects. The seventh grade is collecting chewable children's vitamins for Cartagena, Columbia. While visiting their son/brother, who is studying for a semester in Columbia, the Baxter family met a doctor who operates a clinic for very poor families in the barrios of Cartagena. With very few supplies to give her patients, many of whom suffer from malnutrition, Mrs. Baxter decided to ask the 7th graders to help. Also, the seventh grade, led by Christie Freund, Mary Carome and Lizzie Gasteiger, just finished collecting items for care packages for soldiers in Iraq. Students from all grades and their families donated cleaning supplies, food, treats, socks, puzzles and other items the soldiers can use. They packed the packages and mailed them last week, paying for the postage with the proceeds from a bake sale they held a few weeks ago.

The Thanksgiving food drive is coming soon. Saint Ambrose School will be collecting food for Thanksgiving dinners for needy families served by Christ House in Alexandria. Families can also donate money which Christ House will use to buy turkeys and hams for these families.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH—BLANCA REILLY!

Each month the PTO recognizes a special person among the many, many volunteers who selflessly contribute to Saint Ambrose School and the enrichment of our children's education. November's Volunteer of the Month is the person who has worked so very diligently in coordinating all of the many moving parts of our volunteer program—Blanca Reilly. Blanca was selected, in the words of President Brian Frank, "for her tireless efforts in working with us parents to fill important volunteer positions with our time and talents."

Anyone who has been called upon by Blanca to fill a much-needed vacancy, also knows that her one-of-a-kind positive energy really shines through in everything that she does. It is never easy to ask people to commit their time and resources, even for a great cause, given the hectic schedules that nearly all parents face these days. Yet, Blanca does so with such graciousness that it's just hard to say no! Thank you Blanca for your commitment and generosity in focusing all of our efforts to make Saint Ambrose the best that it can be.

"We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do."

- Mother Teresa

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

Thursday, November 1

- ⊗ All Saints Day
- ⊗ St. Ambrose Nt. at Fuddruckers 5-7:30pm

Monday, November 5

- ⊗ 11:30 Dismissal for Teacher Workday
- ⊗ Extended Day until 6pm

Wednesday, November 7

- ⊗ St. Ambrose Night at Fuddruckers 5pm–7:30pm

Friday, November 9

- ⊗ Report Cards Distributed Gr. 1–8

November 12 & 13

- ⊗ Parent–Teacher Conferences
- ⊗ NO SCHOOL for Students

Wednesday, November 21

- ⊗ 11:30 Dismissal for Thanksgiving
- ⊗ No PM Extended Day

November 22 & 23

- ⊗ Thanksgiving Holiday
- ⊗ NO SCHOOL for students

Give Thanks!

Over 250 Saint Ambrose family members gather each year for our Gala. A great way to recognize the hard work and commitment of our teachers is by advertising in the Gala Program! Placing an ad not only supports the school; it also is a fabulous way to say thank you for the many additional personal hours that our teachers give to our children each and every week.

See our Gala Section on www.stambroseschool.org to find out how!

PTO Budget

Our annual Pledge Drive helps to support the school and our teachers throughout the year. Currently, 56% of families have participated putting us at 73% of our goal. We depend on the generosity of our school community to meet our goals! Your gift is used to support the overall PTO budget for the year.

If you've ever wondered how your contribution is spent to support the education of our children, this is our budget for the 2007-2008 school year:

Revenue:	Fundraising	53%
	Gala	42%
	Other	5%
Expenses:	Allocation to School	38%
	Equipment-Active Board	13%
	Targeted Enrichment	12%
	Teacher Bonuses	12%
	Field Trips	8%
	Class Supplies	5%
	Cultural Arts	3%
	Teacher Continuing Education	2%
	Other	7%

Fuddruckers Night

Come and enjoy a night of laughter and great burgers at Saint Ambrose Night at Fuddruckers. This fun family night is a great way to socialize with your friends while supporting the Physical Education program and improvements for our gym!

Wednesday, November 7th
Fuddruckers Annandale



Gala 2008—February 2nd



Once upon a time...

*A Gala to Benefit
Saint Ambrose Catholic School*

- ⊗ Step into an Enchanted Evening of your Favorite Novels and Authors
- ⊗ Start your evening with cocktails & scrumptious hors d'oeuvres
- ⊗ Win Great Getaways during the Rockin' Live Auction
- ⊗ Enjoy one-of-a-kind cuisine from the Land Down Under with Outback Steakhouse

