Fall/Winter 2024

St. Mary School News

St. Mary School nurtures the development of the whole child: spiritually, academically, emotionally, and socially. St. Mary School provides a strong, accessible, and rigorous Catholic education to the students of greater Grays Harbor and their families.

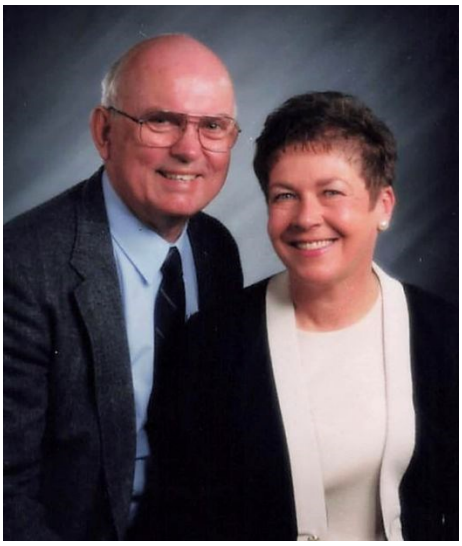
A Publication for Alumni, Families, and Friends of St. Mary School

Bruener Gift Creates Lasting Legacy

Quiet, humble, and faithful are some of the terms friends used to describe longtime community and St. Mary School supporters Ted and Liz Bruener. When the Brueners named SMS and three other community organizations as beneficiaries of their estate, it was typical of their low-profile giving. What wasn't typical however, was the size and scope of their gift and the long-term impact it will have on the school.

Liz Bruener, who died in 2020, and Ted Bruener, who passed away in February of this year, left a sizable amount of their estate to create the Theodore and Elizabeth Ann Bruener Endowment Fund at the Grays Harbor Community Foundation. The beneficiaries of the endowment include the Grays Harbor College World Class Scholars Program, the school districts of Lake Quinault and Hoquiam, and St. Mary School. Each of these groups will receive an annual distribution of funds from the endowment to be used for specific purposes. In the case of SMS, the funds can be used for capital improvements, technology, and educational supplies.

"The Bruener's more than generous legacy gift has left us speechless and oh, how I wish we could thank them in person," said Principal Carrie Marlow. "The endowment will give us the ability to provide current and future generations of St. Mary School students with the most up to date school building, classroom technology and instructional materials we have always strived for, but struggled to provide due to financial constraints. Once again, the Lord has blessed us and we are more grateful than words can express."



Ted and Liz Bruener

Ted Bruener was a Harbor native and a 1952 graduate of St. Mary School. Classmate and longtime friend Gordy Scure has many good memories of time he and Ted spent together at SMS.

"Ted was a quick thinker," Gordy said. "Also, I remember when we were on the St. Mary's basketball team together. Ted was one of the tallest people on the team, so I would try to get him the ball and he could always get it in the bucket."

Ted and Liz spent a great deal of time at their home on Lake Quinault and were parishioners at Our Lady of the Olympics there. They considered the Lake Quinault community home and especially enjoyed Coffee Hour and socializing after Mass. Liz would often rave about all of the homemade treats from the many bakers and could be found collecting the recipes from other parishioners.

SMS Hospitality Liaison Maria Boling knew the Brueners well and remembers their excitement and

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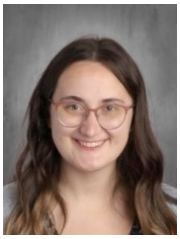
New Staff Share History with St. Mary School

This fall, St. Mary School welcomed five new members to its faculty and support staff, although many of them have prior connections to SMS.

Teaching the 1st/2nd multiage class is returning SMS alum **Brooke Bogdanovich**. The other new full-time teacher this year is **Abriana Orozco**, who is stepping into a teaching role in the 5th-grade classroom this year after working last year as a classroom aide. The 2nd/3rd multiage class will have the support of **Heather Osoy**, who joins SMS this year as a classroom aide. We're also pleased to welcome **Britta Jackson**, a current school parent, as our new music teacher. In addition to her music classes, Britta will also be teaching 2nd and 4th grade religion. Lastly, **Ezri Carroll**, another SMS graduate, is supervising the after-school Extended School Services (ESS) program. Ezri is also the granddaughter of Technology Education Resource Director, Jolie Carroll.

Clockwise from right: Brooke Bogdanovich, Abriana Orozco, Ezri Carroll, Britta Jackson, Heather Osoy.



Grants Bolster School Programs, Facilities

Over the past six months, St. Mary School has received several generous grants that will support and enhance the school's programs and facilities.

In July, the school was awarded a $10,000 grant from the Grays Harbor Community Foundation to revitalize the school's after-school (ESS) program. This funding enabled much-needed updates to the ESS room, including fresh paint, new cabinets, a TV, and a variety of games for students to enjoy An added bonus is that the room is also used for music classes, and music instructor Britta Jackson was able to help decorate the room to be more bright and cheery for both programs.

In September, SMS received a $25,000 grant from the Garneau Nicon Family Foundation, which will be directed toward upgrading the school's aging heating system. These funds will be combined with previous grants from the Fulcrum Foundation and the Grays Harbor Community Foundation, giving the school a good portion of the money needed to move ahead with a new system.

St. Mary School also benefited from a surprise donation that came just in time for the start of the school year. The Grays Harbor Community Foundation reached out to the school when they learned that Immanuel Baptist Church in Hoquiam had leftover playground wood chips from a grant they received. With transportation help from Rognlin's Inc. and local supporter Jonathan Wright, the wood chips were moved from Hoquiam to the school, where SMS parents Shane Pettit and Jose Membreno spread them around the play equipment.

"SMS is so fortunate to have access to so many generous grant partners both in our community and beyond," said Principal Carrie Marlow. "The grants we receive are an integral part of our ability to move forward with Strategic Plan goals, such as a new heating system and facilities and program updates. Each grant received is truly a blessing!"

School Snapshots

► **SMS students Cyler Edwards, Hartlon Swift, Satanta Capoeman, and August Lutz prepare to take part in in a drumming exhibition as part of Native American Heritage Month.**

◄ **SMS students rode on and walked behind a locomotive in the Loggers Playday parade, courtesy of Tim Quigg and Quigg Bros. Inc.**

Pettit Family Values Connections with SMS Community

Two of the most common misconceptions families have when looking at St Mary's School are that they have to be Catholic and that the tuition is unaffordable. When parents Shane and Trish Pettit were seeking a faith-based education for their children, those were exactly the questions that they had about SMS.

“I didn't think that they allowed non-Catholics to go here,” said Trish Pettit. She added that she was “really excited” when she later found out from a neighbor that the school welcomes students of all faiths.

And with regard to the tuition? “You're thinking it's going to be outrageous and it's really quite reasonable,” Trish said. Shane added that although coming up with the money wasn’t easy, “when you stack it against the education, the start you're giving your children, it becomes 100% worth it. It's a no-brainer.”

The Pettits are now in their eighth year at SMS, with son Ethan in sixth grade and daughter Maddison in fourth grade. Both parents have been very involved in school activities. Trish has served as chairperson of both the school commission and the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and is still involved in both, as well as the Lion Award Committee. Shane, meanwhile, has used his skills (and his tractor) to help install a new drainage system under the playground, spread wood chips on top, and even drive the kids train each year at Oktoberfest. He also coordinated this year’s Veterans Day assembly at SMS, bringing a fellow Army Reserve member with him to talk about their experience serving and answer a wide range of questions from students.

“I really love the fact that we have those volunteer opportunities,” Shane said, “Not just for the benefit of the school, but it allows the parents to come together. And so I get to know parents, and it creates a whole other community that in a public school would never exist.”

The Pettit Family: Shane, Trish, Ethan (12), and Maddison (10).

Trish added that the community helps in other ways as well. “I feel like I'm a part of something as a St. Mary's parent, with other parents with the same goals for our kids, and we work as a team. I feel like even with the teachers here, we're working together, because we want to see our children achieve at a high level, not only in education but just to be good humans.”

Shane, Trish, Ethan, and Maddison Pettit after Shane’s Veterans Day presentation at SMS.

Both Shane and Trish expressed that the process of becoming “good humans” is full of steps forward and back and that they have enjoyed seeing how the older students practice being role models for the younger ones.

“I have the opportunity this year to start going to Mass with the kids to watch Maddison in the Mass Choir,” Trish said. “And Ethan has a kindergarten “Mass buddy” and he's in charge of making sure that his buddy is quiet and that he's behaving correctly. He takes it very seriously and it's funny to see him come kind of full-circle because when he was that age, Ethan had a hard time staying quiet.”

In terms of things they would like to see added or expanded at SMS, Trish said that she wants the PTO to do some fundraising that would go toward providing small tokens of appreciation for teachers, support staff, and even students. Shane mentioned the possibility of expanding Oktoberfest to reach more of the community. It’s clear that even though their students are now in the upper grades, the Pettits are not looking to rest on their laurels.

Asked if they had any message for the community of St. Mary alumni, parishioners and other supporters, Shane spoke forcefully:

“I love that it makes St. Mary's so much more because we have them. When they see a child out in public with a St. Mary's shirt on, they come up and make a comment and that makes me feel part of the community and that you can get nowhere else.”

Teacher Feature

Cara Fabini: Sharing the message of God's Goodness

Cara Fabini, the 2nd/3rd multiage class teacher, is in her second year at SMS and is known for her calm, positive demeanor. We asked Mrs. Fabini to share some of her background and her thoughts about teaching at St. Mary School.

What is your background, and when did you know you wanted to become a teacher?

I am a native Midwesterner born and raised in the suburbs of Chicago. I knew I wanted to be a teacher since the fourth grade (if my dreams of being a ballerina didn't pan out :-). My teachers, especially my fourth grade teacher, Miss Frederick, saw the good in all of her students. She made learning fun and made each of us feel like we had value and a place in this world. I wanted to be just like her.

Is there anything about your faith journey that you would like to share?

As a child, I believed in God and always had a sense of His presence, but it wasn't until I began attending my best friend's youth group in high school that the good news of the Gospel became more personal. I was really struggling with my identity and my purpose. I was adopted and battled feelings of being unwanted and that something was wrong with me. I remember sitting in the pews listening to Psalm 139 for the first time; hearing that I was a child of God, that He created me, knows me and has a plan and a purpose for me, began changing my perspective on everything. I wanted to know more.

In college I had the opportunity to not only develop my skills as an educator, but to grow in my faith as well, by attending the local Catholic church with friends from an interdenominational organization called Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. I was also a part of a club that reached out to international students which the Lord used to spark my passion for international missions, especially Latin America. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to spend time in Guatemala, Brazil, and Nicaragua. I love serving in that capacity and very much look forward to the Lord opening those doors again in the future.

Tell us about your career as a teacher and how you came to SMS.

In God's goodness, He allowed my very first teaching position to be at my childhood school teaching 3rd and 4th grade among many of my former teachers. How cool is that? Five years later, I accepted a position at a Christian school and taught there for twelve years. To make a long story at least a little shorter, in 2013, the Lord led my family to this beautiful part of the country by way of my husband's job. He is a mental health counselor in Taholah. I was blessed to work at Lincoln Elementary for ten years. Especially during my last few years there, I really began to miss teaching in a Christian environment. Most of all, I missed being able to pray with my students and to tell them that they are loved and valued by their Heavenly Creator, that even when times are tough and things don't seem to make sense, that God is good all the time.

Being friends with some of St. Mary's staff and current and former families, I knew not only of their Christ-like character, but of their love for this school and its mission to be a light in our community. Last year, with prayer and support from my family, I took a leap of faith and applied. Fortunately for me, the leadership team hired me. Yay!

How has your time been at SMS so far?

I cannot express enough how very blessed I feel to be a part of the St. Mary School community. It is a privilege to be a member of such a fun, tightly knit, incredibly committed, hard-working, capable, and Christ-centered team of staff members, families, and clergy. From the very beginning of my time here, I have felt welcomed and encouraged. Thank you so much for that. Lord willing, I look forward to many more years of serving beside you.

Cara Fabini (center) with fellow teachers at the "Christ in the Classroom" retreat

Note: Fr. Michael Barbarossa joined the Grays Harbor family of parishes and missions as pastor on July 1, 2024. Fr. Michael was previously pastor of St. Rose Parish in Longview.

A Message From Fr. Michael

I recently received a letter from my fifth-grade teacher. She spoke about her family and the changes in her life since she moved to Central Washington. She also shared a little about her journey of faith. It was a joy to hear from her, but it was not a surprise. Some of my closest friendships are with classmates and even former teachers from my grade school years. It brings me a lot of joy that we have been able to keep these connections alive. I am the proud product of a Catholic education, from my elementary years at St. Vincent de Paul in Federal Way to my high school at Kennedy Catholic in Burien and college at Gonzaga University. There are many ways my Catholic education has enriched my life, but one of the most important is the way it has formed my ability for relationships and prayer. St. Vincent de Paul School not only taught me the essentials of our faith, but also reinforced the loving support I received from my family. There was a security and peacefulness to my grade school experience and that, I believe, taught me implicitly something about our God. Pope Benedict XVI once said that “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty ideal but the encounter with a Person who gives life a decisive direction and meaning.” The essence of Christian faith is a relationship with Jesus. If we want our young people to be able to enter into that relationship with God, we must build on the foundation of strong human friendships. Catholic education allowed me to encounter Jesus Christ in a way that was credible and nurturing, because I could see His faithfulness and kindness mirrored in the lives of the faculty, staff, and student community. For these reasons, I am excited to begin my time as pastor of St. Mary Parish and School. In my first five months here, I have joined the children for lunch and visited them in their classrooms. I can see in this community that same strength of relationship that was so formative for me. It is my hope and prayer that I will be able to give direction and encouragement to this all-important task of helping our youth encounter Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Fr. Michael

Help Needed Finding Alumni & Friends for 100 Year Anniversary

In just over two years, we hope to gather hundreds of current and former students, staff, parishioners, and community members to celebrate the 100th anniversary of St. Mary School. A steering committee has been meeting regularly to plan this momentous occasion and has laid out a preliminary framework for the event.

When: Saturday, September 19, 2026 (with additional events possibly on September 18 or 20)

Where: St. Mary School and St. Mary Church, both indoors and outdoors

What to Expect: The festivities will begin with a special Mass at St. Mary Church, celebrated by the archbishop and/or one of the auxiliary bishops. Following the Mass, activities will shift to the school, featuring:

> **Inside:** School tours, memorabilia displays, entertainment by current students, a presentation on school history, and "school lunch" in the cafeteria
>
> **Outside:** kid-friendly games, burgers and hot dogs, and a tent on the playground to ensure fun regardless of the weather.

Additionally, there are discussions about hosting an evening gala dinner at the school, complete with gourmet food and a special program.

There are two important ways you can help with this event:

1. Fill out the form below or online to share your information with us (all information will be kept confidential) Scan the QR code at right, or go to https://tinyurl.com/SMS-100 to complete an online form
2. If you are an alumnus, send us a list of everyone in your class that you can think of, whether or not you have contact information and whether or not they are still living. Teachers and staff names are also helpful.

Stay tuned for more updates as we prepare to celebrate this incredible milestone together!

St. Mary School 100 Year Anniversary Contact List

Name(s) _____ Email _____

Address _____ _____

City, St, Zip _____

Please list your connection(s) to St. Mary School and (approximate) years if known

❑ Alumnus—Graduation Year: _____ ❑ Family of alumnus—Grad Yr _____

❑ School Faculty/Staff—Position(s)_____ Approx. Years

❑ Clergy / Parish Staff—Positions(s) _____ Approx. Years _____

❑ Parishioner / Community Member _____ Approx. Years_____

If you are an alumnus, please share the names of any/all classmates you can remember. If you have contact information for them, please include it but even just a name and graduation year is helpful. Feel free to write names on a separate sheet and mail with this form, or email to: advancement@saintmaryschool.org

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Please mail completed form to St. Mary School, 518 North H ST, Aberdeen, WA 98520

Bruener Gift Creates Legacy *(continued from page 1)*

fondness for all children.

"Having lost their only child, Mr. Ted, when he was 15, Liz and Ted, had a genuine and positive interest in life's milestones and accomplishments of local children," Maria said. "If your son, daughter or grandchild, was on the playfield, in the classroom, having a birthday or graduating, Liz and Ted always believed in them and celebrated right along with you. I also remember when my son, Will, was at St. Mary School and invited Liz to be his guest for 'Special Friend's Lunch' during Catholic Schools Week. Liz enjoyed every minute of that tradition and had a great time touring the SMS classrooms and seeing all the students. That day brought her great joy. The Bruener's were cheerleaders for youth and education. With their legacy gift, Liz and Ted will continue to cheer loudly for all young people in Grays Harbor for decades to come!"

Donations and memorial gifts, June 16 to November 30, 2024

In Memory / Honor

In Memory of Linda and Erica Arthur
The Quigg and Lucas Families

In Memory of Lynne Berry
Steven Isaacson
John & Gail Quigg

In Memory of Ted and Liz Bruener
John & Gail Quigg

In Memory of Catherine (Katie) Byrns
Fred and Linda Hulbert

In Memory of Bob Delahanty
Joseph and Yvette Novak

In Memory of Mary Drake
Jean Druzianich and Family

In Memory of Josie Haynes
Steven Isaacson

In Memory of Reverend Jodene S. Hawkins
Steven Isaacson

In Memory of Tom Hulbert
Fred and Linda Hulbert

In Memory of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Isaacson, Sr.
Charles Isaacson

In Memory of Catherine Mackey
Oliver and J'Neil Mackey

In Memory of David Mayr
Oliver and J'Neil Mackey

In Memory of Thomas "Tucker" McHugh
Steven Isaacson

In Memory of Deanne Pascoe
Kathryn Speakes
Sandra Tometich

In Memory of Shirley Rajcich
The O'Connor Family

In Memory of Betty Zepeda
Charles Isaacson
Steven Isaacson
John & Gail Quigg

In Honor of The Isaacson Clan
Kathleen Mud McHugh

In Honor of Gail Quigg
Joanne and David Burdick

In Honor of Jody Rikalo Gerber
Ann Heikel

Designated Donations

Oktoberfest
Anonymous
8th St. Ale House
Basecamp Outdoor Adventures
Bennett's Fish Shack
Brooklets
Dashmesh Petroleum
F/V Martin
Fill in the Blank LLC
Frontagers Pizza
Happy at Home Pet Sitting
McHugh's Furniture
Pacific Paradise
St. Paul's Altar Society
Taproom
The Arcade
Throwback Threadz

Scholarships
Charles Isaacson
Elizabeth Isaacson

Teacher Fund
John & Gail Quigg

Undesignated Donations

Angel Allas
Suzanne and Stephen Hierholzer
Mary Maclean
Kitty O'Connor
Mike and Mary Ann Quigg
Genevieve and Chet Richardson

Considering a gift? St. Mary School has gift opportunities to support student scholarships, technology, teacher compensation, our endowment, and more. For more info. contact Pete Scroggs: 360-580-7714 or advancement@saintmaryschool.org

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Accreditation Team Observes Faith and Commitment During Visit

One of the more rigorous requirements for Catholic schools is to maintain an "accredited" status showing that they meet all the standards for operating at a high level. St. Mary School has spent the past year and a half compiling a "self-study" of the school's strengths and opportunities as part of the re-accreditation process.

This process culminated in November with a three-day visit from an accreditation team, comprised of principals and teachers from other Catholic schools in the Archdiocese and led by former superintendent of schools Kristin Dixon. Upon arrival, team members visited classrooms and met with school leaders, teachers, students, and parents to confirm that the material in the self-study matched what was really going on in the school.

At the end of their visit, the team presented a summary to school faculty and staff affirming that they agreed with the school's list of goals and mentioning many positive things that they observed during their visit. Kristin Dixon said that she had heard SMS described as the "Pearl of the Harbor," and noted that pearls become polished and valuable by going through irritation just as SMS has endured challenges to become better. Other team members pointed out things such as the strong Catholic identity they found at SMS, the commitment level of the teachers, and the appreciation that school parents have for the education their children are receiving.

The next step in the process is for the accreditation body to review the team's findings and hopefully recommend that the school be accredited for another 6 years. Meanwhile, SMS will start working on a plan to implement the goals identified in the self-study as part of their continuous improvement process.

"The whole re-accreditation process has been a journey of affirmation and reflection; affirming what we do well and reflecting on how we can improve," said Principal Carrie Marlow. "We now have an approved action plan for how we move forward and the positive feedback we received from the Visiting Team has been fuel for our path forward. Our future is very bright!"

The accreditation visiting team at the end of their time at St. Mary School in November.