

ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOOL PARISH BULLETIN

March 2023 • Vol. 10 • Issue 2

INSERT

Highlighting recent news from St. Augustine Catholic School of interest to St. Augustine Church parishioners, visitors and friends.

VETERAN TEACHER TRIES TO REACH EACH STUDENT

Reaching students where they are forms a key component to Mrs. Barbara Greyson's teaching philosophy.

In her fifth year at Saint Augustine, Greyson serves as the fourth grade teacher at the Ward 1 school. This year, there are 17 children in her classroom.

While she remembers her childhood as one where she and other children loved having books in their hands, she understands that many children learn more visually, so she integrates audio-visual components, such as slides on her classroom projector, into her daily class plans. When she teaches Math, she prefers to show problem solving using her classroom whiteboard.

"Kids are much different than they were 10 or 20 years ago," she said, a refrain heard from many K-12 educators. "Kids expect things to happen quickly," she commented. "We used to sit and read a book. We just had books," in the days before notebook PCs and smartphones, which built in a certain degree of patience, she said. "We were fascinated by books."

The New York City native has served as a teacher for more than 20 years and has learned the importance of reaching each child, knowing them well. Such an approach involves understanding the "strengths and



weaknesses" of each child, including understanding the temperament of each pupil entrusted to her care. She can then develop methods and techniques that can enable her to best reach each child.

She appreciates the "creative thinking" that comes with teaching social studies, while in Science class, she likes to use hands on exercises to help her students learn. For example, during a late February field trip to Skate Zone, a roller skating rink, enabled them to learn about Newton's Law of Gravity, the scientific process of physical movement, and about the physics of roller skating.

Interviewed right after Black History Month in February had ended, she had just taught her students about the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman, who was born into

slavery in Maryland's Eastern Shore, before escaping to freedom in the north, before coming back to help many others to liberty, despite the great risks to her own well-being.

Her students, many of them first-generation Americans, are fascinated that a historical, larger-than-life figure like Tubman lived in nearby Maryland.

This year is the first one where Greyson will witness a graduating eighth grade class walk the St. Augustine Church altar to receive the diploma, having taught many of them five years before. She enjoys seeing her students grow taller and mature. "It's like they become men before your eyes," she said of the male students, as their voices deepen with the onset of puberty. "They give you a hug," she said of her former students who stop by her classroom.

Mrs. Greyson rarely is absent from school and has formed a tight bond with her intermediate cluster teachers, Ms. Taylor Stewart (third grade) and Mrs. Cheryl Hanton (fifth grade). "We check on each other," she said. She appreciates the encouragement that Mrs. Hanton, St. Augustine's most veteran teacher, with more than 40 years of classroom experience, gave her during her early weeks and months on campus.

2022-2023 School Year Theme:

"Walk by faith, not by light," (2 Corinthians 5-7)

MAJOR DONOR DINNER PROVIDES ANNUAL UPDATE ON SCHOOL PROGRESS

One of the proofs of Saint Augustine Catholic School's success, according to the school's Governance and Strategic Planning Committee chair, is the ability of its young alumni to go mano-a-mano in debates with students in top high schools.

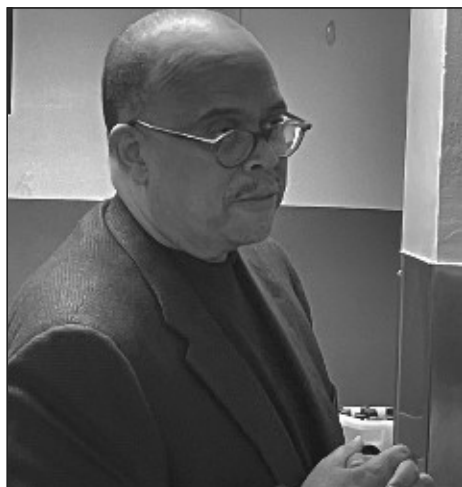
"To have the moxy and confidence in an academic setting is particularly important, especially for Black children," said Lawrence H. Parks II '76, speaking at the Major Donor Dinner on March 4 at the Saint Augustine School cafeteria.

During a 30-minute talk, he recalled the story of a Saint Augustine alumna who is studying at Georgetown Visitation, who engaged in a debate in a social studies class with the daughter of a high-level White House official with both students engaging in other in a spirited debate. He recalled an anecdote about a school alumnus who showed his class on a whiteboard how to derive a mathematical equation, impressing the teacher.

"People want to poach a little bit," Parks said of competitive high schools and their desire to admit high-performing Saint Augustine eighth graders. He compared the young alumni to runners with batons in a relay race: if they perform well in high school, they can pass the baton to students who are behind them in school, having established a good reputation for St. Augustine at the high school. He noted that Catholic colleges and universities, in particular, are starting to offer full-ride academic scholarships to St. Augustine's young alumni.

About 35 donors of St. Augustine, including dozens of parishioners, attended the Saturday evening event, a three-hour buffet dinner.

Saint Augustine's forming a strong spiritual and academic foundation for its students, in addition to their social



cohesion, results in many returning to the school for high school service projects, for the annual Christmas performance, and other events, according to Parks.

Parks has three acts he encourages of young alumni. The first, "become a priest or nun," in addition to "(finishing) your education." The third mandate, once the young person is established: "you've got to contribute financially."

One guest of honor was Fr. Maurice Sands, who is the executive director of the Black and Indian Mission Office, an apostolate headquartered in Foggy Bottom that was founded by St. Katharine Drexel, the wealthy Philadelphia heiress who founded the Blessed Sacrament Sisters and Xavier University in New Orleans and dedicated her life to evangelizing among African-Americans and Native Americans.

A second guest was Mr. Kenneth Nickels, who has gotten involved with Saint Augustine School through his late wife, Dr. Marilyn Nickels, editing and publishing the memoirs of the late Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner, a botanist who was a St. Augustine parishioner. In Dr. Nickels' name the Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner STEM Fund supports the STEM program at the parish school.

Speaking of Saint Augustine School's need to build its enrollment, Parks said, "We need to figure out our competitive niche," given the school's competing with public schools, charter schools, Catholic schools, and independent schools.

The school is practically full in the middle school (Grades 6-8) but has a lot of openings in PreK through second grade, in part because of declining birth rates. He sees some potential in the increasing population density in Meridian Park and Ward 1, where St. Augustine is located, and he thinks that St. Augustine's faculty mixture between veteran teachers and younger ones is ideal.

Another challenge is that in some families of students, both parents are not necessarily in step with each other about the importance of a Catholic education. When they have near-term financial pressures, some parents are also not fully understanding the long-term investment that paying tuition at a Catholic school involves.

During a brief talk, Rev. Patrick A. Smith, pastor at St. Augustine, let the dinner attendees know that the Ward 1 councilmember, Ms. Brianne K. Nadeau, had agreed to sponsor legislation to rename the 1400 block of V Street, "Saint Augustine Way," with the city council planning to take up the legislation. Fr. Smith also said that the school was working on getting the necessary approvals to install solar panels on the roof of the school building, to complete a plan that the current eighth graders had devised several years ago.

Sister Emmanuella Ladipo, HHCJ, the school's acting principal, and Bill Murray, the school's development director, also spoke at the Major Donor Dinner, which is a longstanding annual event.