

THE CRUSADER

A PUBLICATION OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS REGIONAL SCHOOL

SUMMER/FALL 2012



A Tale of Two Teachers



PLUS
Middle School Students Shine in Seven Brides for Seven Brothers
Aquinas Girls' Basketball Coach Leads Team to Victory

LETTER FROM SISTER



DEAR PARENTS, FRIENDS AND ALUMNI,

In this issue of the *Crusader*, we express our gratitude to Mrs. Gretta Wheeler and Mrs. Jo Clausen, who have a combined total of over 50 years teaching at Aquinas. Their years of teaching here bore an unmistakable stamp of dedication and discipline, of high expectations and achievement; and Aquinas will forever bear the mark of the witness these teachers gave. Last issue we celebrated the receipt of the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award from the Department of Education; Aquinas students have proven that they rise to whatever academic challenge set before them—and that is thanks to teachers like Gretta and Jo.

This magazine celebrates everything that St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School has to offer: Catholic catechesis worthy of the new evangelization, a stellar science, technology, engineering and math program, the largest and best sports program in the diocese, a one-of-a-kind middle-school musical program, and excellent teachers who devote decades of dedication to their students.

Looking back on everything that has made Aquinas what it is today, I would like to thank our faculty, parishioners, parents, and patrons. It is your generosity that has enabled Aquinas to offer this world-class education—thank you.

As a school, Aquinas endeavors to instill in our students an excellent education, steeped in academic rigor and theological knowledge. You have entrusted us with your children's hearts and minds; Aquinas forms both so as to educate a whole person since 1977. Like the patron of our school, St. Thomas Aquinas, we place the highest importance on nurturing young minds brimming with knowledge, hearts burning with love of God, and souls destined for Heaven.

I thank you for entrusting us with your children and I look forward to the 2012–2013 school year.

In Christ,

Sr. Maria Goretti, O.P.

Sister Maria Goretti, O.P.

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School of Excellence**

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A Tale of Two Teachers



On the first day of fourth grade, Gretta Wheeler makes her students two promises. “We are going to work really hard every day, because this is what education will be like for the rest of your life. But we are going to play, too, and we are going to play very, very, hard—because we are going to play as hard as we work.” The playing she speaks of are the many special events that fourth grade celebrates: from All Saints Day to St. Lucy’s Day, National Pig Day, St. Joseph’s Day, Public Times and a host of other days and celebrations. Gretta is the force behind the many traditions that Aquinas fourth graders look forward to, where the students put what they’ve learned from books on real-life display. Students get to dress up, make crafts, food, bread, and learn the traditions of each day they study.



Gretta Wheeler was born in Philadelphia but, like the families of many Aquinas students, her family travelled around the country a lot. When she was in fourth grade her favorite subjects were reading and history. Her least favorite subject was math because “in the spring I got mumps, measles and chicken pox and my appendix burst so I was out of school for six weeks,” she says. “When

I got back, Sr. Mary Alice welcomed me back with open arms—and the quarter exam for math and fractions. I failed the exam and went home in tears. ‘No one expects you to know how to do it; you’ve been sick for six weeks,’ my dad said. But I was embarrassed for getting an F on the report card. God in his sense of humor has put me in fourth grade for 28 years and now I love fractions.”

Left: Gretta Wheeler (left) is congratulated on her Diocesan Teacher of the Year award by Jo Clausen (right).

Mrs. Wheeler started teaching in public schools in St. Louis, and then went to New Orleans to get a Master’s degree and teach

Special Education. Married to a member of the military, she travelled to several states and countries, teaching at Department of Defense schools before she arrived at Aquinas 28 years ago. She has been nominated five times for *Who's Who Among American Teachers* by former students or parents. In 2003 she was nominated for the NCEA Distinguished Teacher award, and last year she won the Diocesan Distinguished Teacher of the Year award. She was awarded a Washington Post Education Foundation grant for "Public Times—a Kinesthetic Kaleidoscope of Colonial Living" and her class projects have been recognized many times by several newspapers. One of her students won first place for the state of VA in the National Invent America Contest; and years later two students won at the national level for Brainstorm America, USA—Dare to Dream Scholarship Contest.

There is no question that fourth grade bears the stamp of Gretta's 28 years of teaching here and her unbridled enthusiasm for sharing her joy of learning with her students. When she reads about something another school is doing, Gretta works to introduce it to Aquinas. 'Earthkins,' the day that fourth graders paint pumpkins to resemble a globe, came to be because she read that a high school was doing just that. "We would do the lives of the saints every day and then I would read something somewhere about a tradition and I would think 'fourth grade can do that.'" This was how St. Lucy's Day, with the Swedish tradition of baking bread, dressing like the saint and celebrating her feast day, was born. As she puts it, she brought "my own excitement of learning to my class." Certainly throughout her 28 years at Aquinas, Gretta has always found a way to bring what she has learned to life for her students.

Aquinas fourth graders celebrate several educational holidays, the most time consuming and involved of which is "Public Times"—a two day celebration of colonial life. Students



"I think my number one job is to teach them that life is a learning process and it's a very exciting adventure."

dress up in period attire, eat colonial food, play games from the time period, learn metal working, soap making, wood carving and other crafts, and memorize passages from the Founding Fathers. As a fourth grade student put it, "Public Times is like our own mini Williamsburg." Mrs. Wheeler said, "I remember when I first started in the classroom and the children were peeling apples on the floor, saying 'I never thought apple sauce took so much work to make!' I was making a mob cap

Above: Gretta Wheeler helps two fourth grade students during a crafts project as part of "Public Times," the two-day celebration of colonial life.

Mrs. Wheeler

was one of my most memorable teachers from my days at Aquinas. She was also a great inspiration in my love of Social Studies. Having Mrs. Wheeler as my Social Studies teacher in the fourth grade was a blessing—being able to learn from such an enthusiastic teacher was very beneficial to me. Whenever I look back on that year, I think of all the things she helped me accomplish during and even after her class. That year, I placed first in the school's geography bee, and was one of the youngest contestants. I owe much of that to her. Her kind, caring, and enthusiastic attitude made her loved by many. I remember our field trip to colonial Williamsburg and how as we toured around, she helped us to see the importance of it. My favorite memory of that day was touring through the magazine and loading the cannon. Thanks to her inspiration, I've built on my love for Social Studies and am currently enrolled in the Center for International Studies and Languages at C.D. Hylton Senior High School. I owe much of my love of the subject to her and I thank her for all that she has done for me. I wish her the best of luck in the days that lie ahead.

—John T. Fitzgerald, Class of 2011



with a pattern I thought was large enough, and when the girls pulled the string, the mob cap disappeared! But the girls were so sweet, they said 'Don't worry, Mrs. Wheeler, it will fit on my American girl doll!' Then there were the recipes we tried that looked and sounded good, but the children didn't like the taste or texture, and toy crafts we tried that were real duds. Eventually we had the recipes the kids liked, the crafts, woodcarving and metalwork that worked." Throughout the years, Gretta has amassed a sizeable collection of colonial artifacts to use on these days with her students. One of her favorite birthday presents from her husband, wooden hoops from Williamsburg, comes out every year at Public Times for her students to play with.

People often ask Mrs. Wheeler, "Isn't it boring after teaching the same thing for 28 years?" Her answer is characteristic: "It's never boring because I'm always looking for better ways to teach the content! Every class is different; they have different personalities, needs, abilities, enthusiasms, and interest areas. I think my number one job is to teach them that life is a learning process and it's a very exciting adventure. They will never stop

learning and neither will I. Children today might have three to six different careers when in the old days you joined a company and retired there. Since people move from job to job and career to career, I want the children to believe that nobody should limit the possibilities of what they can do." She advises her students and former students to listen to their inner voice when they want to try something new. Failure is part of learning and it doesn't mean learning is over. "There will be a lot of voices out there that will say 'you can't' and 'you won't succeed' and 'don't try.' And yes, you may fail—but failure isn't the end, failure asks you how to change to succeed. Failure is a challenge: I have to adapt, I have to change, I can learn from this experience and I will be better the next time I try it."

For Mrs. Wheeler, teaching at Aquinas was not just a job, it is her life. She never lived anywhere for 28 years before, and "I hope that I contributed to making Aquinas what it is today. Aquinas will always be a part of me." There is no doubt, both from the quality of Gretta Wheeler's students, and from the institution of her many fourth grade traditions, that she has contributed an incredible wealth to Aquinas. The students, parents, faculty and administration are extremely grateful for the 28 years that Mrs. Wheeler has spent teaching here. In her retirement, Mrs. Wheeler says that she "will always be teaching in one way or another." She is enjoying reading to (and no doubt, teaching!) her grandson from the same books that she read her own children.

Above, Left to Right: Cecille Combs assists Megan Albert with baking rolls in the kitchen on the Feast of St. Lucy. Sister Maria Goretti, O.P., Principal, and Jo Clausen. Jo Clausen teaches third grade.



Jo Clausen always knew that she was going to be a teacher. "I was always the one at family gatherings that ended up taking care of the little ones, so by the time I was nine or ten, I knew that was what I wanted to do," she says. After going to college in MD, she taught in NJ, KY, and then went to Germany where she taught in DOD schools for four years. She taught in a Christian school in Korea for a year and



“Aquinas has always had a very helpful, supportive community and faculty—no matter who needed what, someone was always willing to try and help in some way...”



in public schools in Texas for four years. As a military wife, she moved a lot and taught and substituted in several different states and continents. Undoubtedly, after teaching in so many different schools, she did not guess that she would stay at Aquinas for 23 years. But her time at Aquinas was marked by something very different from her other teaching experience: a sense of community that felt like family, both between teachers and students, as well as among the faculty.

During her time here, Jo has seen the school building itself change a lot. Aquinas was not the 43,000 square foot facility it is today, and she taught during the time that the new wing

and a second floor were added. “When they were doing construction, the second and fifth grades were in trailers and my first grade was down in the science lab (over 30 kids). We used to have computer lab in the closet.” The changes in technology during her 23 years here have been significant, “the second biggest change are the ActivBoards in the classrooms, the new computer lab with 32 brand new computers, and the changes that technology has made to education.” But with all the changes, there has been one constant: “Aquinas has always had a very helpful, supportive community and faculty—no matter who needed what, someone was always willing to try and help in some way. The amount of parent support that the school has generated over the years has been phenomenal.”

Mrs. Clausen spent her first seventeen years at Aquinas teaching first grade, and the last six years she has taught third grade. The best part of teaching, she says, is that moment when the light bulb goes on in the student, “when someone gets something you’ve been trying to instill or teach—when you see the growth, whether academic or personal, when their maturity kicks in.”

Aquinas has benefitted tremendously from Jo Clausen’s decades of teaching and her dedication and service to Aquinas.

When I think about St.

Thomas Aquinas Regional School, I think about the teachers and staff that make it a family. Everyone in that school has a special place in my heart, but few have left an imprint. When I had Mrs. Clausen as a teacher, I didn’t know then that she would impact my education forever. I still think about how she stood on two desks one day and taught my class the difference between antonyms and synonyms. Her loving yet very firm ways of teaching have helped my sister and I in ways very few teachers have.

Any student that has received the opportunity to have Mrs. Clausen as a teacher is extremely lucky. I was one of the few that had her for first and third grade. I didn’t realize at the time how lucky I was to have the best teacher I will probably ever have in my life, twice! But now I’m in seventh grade, and my sister is graduating from high school, and we still find ourselves using the many different techniques she taught us to remember the simplest things, like nouns and verbs. As a person, I feel very happy to have her in my life; but as a student, I couldn’t be more grateful. I truly believe Mrs. Clausen will stay very dear in the hearts of all the students she has touched. With a heart full of gratitude and love, we have to say farewell to one of the pillars that has shaped St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School into what it is today. Mrs. Clausen, may God bless your life for all the guidance, for all the love, for all the time and effort you have given to every one of your students. You will never be forgotten.

—Gabriella Moghtadaie



AQUINAS 2ND GRADERS CELEBRATE FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Second graders came together with the school community to celebrate Mass on May 16th. This provided a special opportunity for the students. Since Aquinas is a regional school, students of Our Lady of Angels, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Sacred Heart each celebrated their First Holy Communion on separate dates. On May 16th, during the weekly school Mass, second graders came to school dressed in their First Communion attire and celebrated the mass together. A reception provided by the third grade parents followed.

Preparation & Celebration of the Sacrament

Over the course of the school year, religious instruction is done by the teachers. However, each individual parish has particular requirements for students that are receiving Sacraments. For example, Sacred Heart requires that students attend a monthly Faith Fest from September through May, while Our Lady of Angels requires a day-long retreat. Additionally, priests from the parishes come to the Aquinas second grade classes to further supplement religious education. Each parish celebrates First Holy Communion with their unique traditions. However, the Sisters were

all in attendance at all three parishes for the children of each parish for their first encounter with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Celebration at School

Due to the unique aspect of being a regional school, it is an Aquinas tradition for the second grade students of the three parishes to come together to celebrate. Therefore, on the second Wednesday of May, at the weekly school Mass, the second graders come dressed in their First Communion attire, attend Mass and then enjoy a reception in their honor by the third grade class.

In the words of second grade teacher Sister Amata Christi, "It was truly a joy to be able to help prepare the second graders for their First Holy Communion. I took my religious name and feast day in honor of the Holy Eucharist (Corpus Christi) and so it is a particular blessing for me to be a part of the preparation for this Sacrament. As I watched the students' anticipation and desire to receive Jesus grow this year, I could see the Holy Spirit at work within them, inspiring in them a deeper love of the Lord and His Church. I pray that it

will continue to increase with each Holy Communion they receive!"

The second grade students wrote a "thank you" to Jesus for their First Holy Communion.

"I am happy because how you [Jesus] can come to me in the Eucharist. I am so glad that you can now come into my heart. You are so special to me because you are the Son of God. Please come to me lots of times in my life through the Eucharist so that I may know and love you more. Help me to be a better person, to sin less, and love more. I want to live a good life so that I may be in heaven with you some day. I cannot wait for that day. I love you very, very, very, very much." —Jonathan

"I thank you for the Eucharist. When you went in my heart it felt very good. And because you did that for all of us we want to give you a special gift and that gift is to love and serve you." —Olivia

Above Left to Right: Sr. Amata Christi, O.P. and Mrs. Norma Treco, with their second grade classes. | Jonathan Coleman, with Sr. Amata Christi, O.P.





MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS SHINE IN SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS

Above, Clockwise: Middle school students Natalie Marshall, Josh Glascock, Brady Kita, Matthew Espinosa, Ryan Kelly, Phillip Fitzpatrick, Curtis Kasiski, and Alex Barbuzza perform the "Barn Dance." | The leads, Andrew Krakie and Brooke Duckworth, embrace at the end of the play. | Phillip Fitzpatrick, Matthew Espinosa, Brooke Duckworth and Joshua Glascock. Catherine Mendell and Kelsey Connor dance as June brides. (Left to right:) Miranda Smith, Natalie Marshall, Erica Giles, Megan Krakie, Mairin McNulty.

Under the artistic and musical direction of Mrs. Lillian Riley, Aquinas music teacher, along with dance direction from Sister Christiana, Aquinas fifth grade teacher, middle school students performed *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* on March 30 and 31 at John Paul the Great High School in Dumfries.

This year's musical "*Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*" was the fourth musical St. Thomas Aquinas middle school has presented since Lillian Riley joined the school. The students have presented "*Oliver*" in 2009, "*Guys and Dolls*" in 2010, and "*Mulan*" in 2011. The students rehearse two times a week for one and a half hours starting in mid-January. The success of the musical comes down to talent, determination, and a lot of hard work.

Filled with great dancing, humor and charm, this was a purely entertaining experience for parents, faculty, students and guests. Woodsman Adam (Andrew Krakie) and Milly (Brooke Duckworth) agree to marry

even though they have just met. Once Milly arrives in the mountains, she finds Adam is actually one of seven brothers, played by Densel Dagdagan, Josh Glascock, Phillip Fitzpatrick, Matthew Espinosa, Ryan Kelly and John Soliday.

She proceeds to curb their rambunctious behavior and teach them how to dance. After weeks of working with them, they agree to all go to town for a barn dance. While there, Adam's brothers meet six beautiful girls, played by Miranda Smith, Sarah Arata, Megan Krakie, Natalie Marshall, Mairin McNulty and Erica Giles. At first, their newly learned manners come through, and it's evident how much Milly has worked with them.

This part of the musical shined. It was evident that the students had worked long and hard to perfect their skills. The chemistry among the students was strongly felt. The audience laughed and cheered at the truly outstanding dancing.



“The confidence they learn here is something they will always remember.”

Once the brothers begin to dance, however, they eventually fall back to their unruly old habits. The suitors (played by Alex Barbuzza, Curtis Kasiski, Liam Fitzgerald, Ethan Dagdagan, Brady Kita and David Corbett) attempt to throw them out, and a huge fight ensues. The brawl was also entertaining as the stage actually became the grounds for a seemingly real fight!

The brothers are ultimately thrown out and banished from town. Time passes and the brothers, upon direction of Adam, come up with a plan to capture and hold the girls captive. When Milly finds out that Adam has orchestrated the kidnapping, she sends him off to live in the mountains, and the brothers in the barn. As the girls fall asleep in their new surroundings, they dream of a wedding in June. The June Brides, a cast of dancers, played by Katherine Mendell, Leanne Evans, Kendall White, Payton Dodd, Kelsey Conner, Rachel Cole, Francesca Victoria, Cristina Herrera, Leilani Chu and Danielle Ross take the stage.

Over a long winter, Milly learns she is pregnant, and the girls learn that they are in love with the brothers. In the spring, a beautiful baby is born, and a joyous wedding is celebrated.

With songs from *Going Courtin'*, *Bless Your Beautiful* and *Hide and Spring*, the students shined on stage showing their hard work, dedication, and love of song and dance.

The students began rehearsing shortly after winter break. Many of the students had only acted in previous Aquinas plays and had no acting experience outside of school. Brooke Duckworth, who played the lead, has been taking dance and musical theatre since 5th grade, and reflected on her experience with the play as “learning how to work as a team by listening to each other’s cues.” She remarked how helpful the teachers were during the play and how much of a blast they had performing it—“not just for themselves, but for the audience.”

I always believed that school musicals are not only about music. They give children an opportunity to learn how to speak in public, how to work together for a common goal, increased self-confidence and, of course, an opportunity to have fun during the process. Over the course of the rehearsals, you can see their perception change to “I can do this” and they all shine in their assigned responsibilities and parts. The confidence they learn here is something they will always remember. As a school community, we should be so proud of this wonderful opportunity the students have. I am so thankful for the support the parents and students have given to the program.

—Lilian Riley, Music Teacher

GIRLS' SOCCER

The 2012 spring season for the Aquinas girls' soccer team started with a few 8th graders, no 7th graders, a lot of 6th graders and two 5th graders! It looked like we had a very young team and with perhaps, not a lot of experience. True to the old saying "never judge a book by its cover" the young girls proved to be a strong and willing team.

Under the leadership of the 8th graders, particularly Sarah Arata and Kendall White, and also 6th grader Kaitlyn Cox, the girls were asked to play in positions unfamiliar to them on their respective travel teams and they did so admirably. They were also instrumental in leading and encouraging their fellow team members, both verbally and by example. Kaitlyn Cox scored a hat trick in one game!

Our defense, Colleen Ranieri, Brianna Smith, Kiana Toledo-Hernandez, Jesse French (goal keeper) lead by Kendall White, played solid ball and worked together as a unit as the season progressed.

The midfield had a lot of players on and off the field, but were well anchored by Sarah and Kaitlyn. Molly Metzler (who had great speed), Kalli Perroots, Naomi Adefris, Carlie Marshall, Laura Wenzel and Megan Arata all enjoyed the game and grew from the responsibility that comes with the midfield position and will be solid bases to work from next year.

The offense was driven by 5th grader Kaylani Lee-Green. Seeing a 5th grader take on those big 8th graders, combined with her

"take on anybody" and "can-do" attitude, gave inspiration to many on the team. Sophie Davis and Alexandra London were probably the team's two most improved players working up top with Kaylani and our other super 5th grader Eleni Tsiamis, whom I have no doubt will be a great asset to our team next year. They all added to the team's strength up top.

We finished second in the Linton Hall tournament losing to Holy Cross and were only beaten one other time in a close game, 3 to 2, by Seton. All in all, Aquinas girls had a great season and we are looking forward to improving even more and having another great season next spring.

—Coach Thomas Dent



GIRLS' SOFTBALL

Coach Mark Puller's focus for the Aquinas girls' softball team was to teach them softball skills. He set out to do exactly that by purchasing a batting net and teaching whoever showed up on Mondays and Tuesdays to practice. The girls learned hitting, fielding the softball, field positions, and base running. A young team made up of mostly 5th and 6th graders showed great talent. Eighth grader, Haylee Puller, showed excellent leadership skills during practices and games. The girls had games scheduled with Flint Hill, Burgandy Farm, and St. Stephens.

—Janelle Ferguson

BOYS' AND GIRLS' LACROSSE

If you're not familiar with lacrosse, it's currently the fastest growing youth sport in the United States. For several years, Aquinas has held spring instructional clinics for middle school boys and girls as we've worked to establish a lacrosse program. The lack of local teams to play and adults to coach didn't stop eighth grade veteran lacrosse players Wendy El, Sarah Beda, John Soliday, and Jonathan Spadafore from convincing Mrs.

Ferguson they could coach teams with the supervision of Mrs. Judy Beda, Aquinas librarian. "I couldn't be prouder of the job these 8th graders did. Not only did they have to come up with a schedule for running practices, they were awesome at explaining the rules of the sport and working with the kids who have never played before," said Mrs. Beda. Despite not having a marked field to practice on and only having goals at for a few practices, both teams were eager to learn and made the most of practices.

Halfway through the season, the boys' team got a helping hand at practices and coaching games from two South County high school lacrosse players, David Hamon and James Stapleton. The first game against Burgundy Farms Country Day School in Alexandria ended in a 9-2 loss with Aquinas' two goals scored by Jonathan Spadafore and 7th grader Ryan Kelly. The boys benefitted from great coaching by Tyler Kelly, recent graduate from John Paul and brother of Ryan Kelly; and Ryan Espinosa, brother of Matthew Espinosa, who attends Radford University where he plays club lacrosse. The boys were like a different team for their second game against Burgundy Farms which resulted in an Aquinas victory with a



score of 8–6. Seventh grader Roman Puglise scored 5 goals and 8th grader Brandon Perroots scored 3 goals. John Soliday did an excellent job as goalie for both games!

The girls' team did an amazing job in both of their games, beating one Prince William County seventh/eighth grade team with a score of 8–5 and tying a much more experienced county team 5–5! Both Sarah Beda and Wendy El did a great job coaching and playing in both games. In the first game, Sarah Beda scored 5 goals, Wendy El scored 2 goals, and 8th grader Brooke Duckworth scored 1. Eighth graders Jesse French and Dani Ross split the job as goalie and did an outstanding job defending the goal. For the girls' second game, Sarah Beda scored 3 goals and Wendy El scored 2. With a limited number of subs for both games, all of the girls got lots of playing time and experience playing different positions.

Congratulations to all of the eighth graders for a great season: Sarah Beda, Wendy El, Dani Ross, Brooke Duckworth, Jesse French, Erica Giles, Adriana Galarza, John Soliday, Jonathan Spadafore, Brandon Perroots, Patrick Ross, and Matthew Espinosa!

—Coach Judy Beda

BASEBALL

The 2012 St. Thomas Aquinas Baseball season can be defined as a “season of growth.” Fielding one of the youngest and least experienced teams in our league, I expected that there would be some highs, lows and bumps along the road to success. Success is not measured in terms of wins and losses or what the scoreboard indicates after the final out of the game. I teach that our team's success is measured by effort. When we give maximum effort, the scoreboard takes care of itself.

After a disappointing first game loss to Flint Hill by a score of 20–1, I feared that the team would give up, but I was surprised and pleased by the team's eagerness to return to practice and improve their game. Their willingness to maximize their potential and effort led to a promising season. In the very next game, the team showed what 100% effort can accomplish. Against an older and more experienced Saint William of York team, we tied 6–6. One the highlights of the season came during this game. We entered the bottom of the seventh inning with the score tied at six and no outs with a runner on third base. Nik Tsiamis was on the mound and struck out the next two batters. The next batter hit the ball to the shortstop (Justin Combs) and he picked up the routine grounder and threw out the runner at first base to end the game in a tie. The Aquinas Baseball team went on to win their next two games against Porter and Seton, before eventually losing a hard fought nail-biter to Manassas Christian 3–2 in the final game of the season. St. Thomas Aquinas Regional School finished the 2012 baseball season with a record of two wins, two losses and one tie.

I would personally like to thank the players for the growth and development they have shown, both as players and most importantly, as young adults.

—Coach Palmer





AQUINAS GIRLS' BASKETBALL COACH LEADS TEAM TO VICTORY



Aquinas girls' varsity basketball team was the VCAC champions this past season, after an undefeated season. Their coach, Tyrone Grandberry, got his start volunteering at Aquinas when his daughter started school here in first grade. He heard they needed a girls' JV basketball coach and immediately volunteered. That first year, the team lost every game they played. But Tyrone knew what he was doing – he had been a professional basketball player and played for teams in Brazil, Australia, Germany, Spain, France and Italy. “You have to build a foundation,” he says of his first year coaching at Aquinas, “I had to teach the girls that it wasn’t about wins and losses; we learned systems and plays. To them, stuff that was hard to execute the first time would all make sense – we put a puzzle together, piece by piece.” He came back the next year to coach varsity, and many of the girls from JV followed him, learning his system and style of

coaching. That year they didn’t lose a game other than the tournament. This year, they won the tournament, and the championship!

In addition to his seven years playing professionally, Tyrone played college basketball at Winston Salem State University and coached at St. Francis DeSales High School in Chicago. He taught basketball at a summer camp for under-privileged girls in NC, and it was there that he began to use basketball as a hook to teach life skills. This is an element of coaching that he particularly enjoys; girls on his team learn responsibility, timeliness, following his lead, being accountable for themselves and for their teammates, and a camaraderie that leads to victory in tough situations. It’s under pressure that you see the results of their work; “they dig in and play hard; they watch me and model what I teach.”

Many of the girls from Tyrone’s first year coaching JV followed him the next year that

he coached varsity; so that their victory this year came after three years working together with him. To Janelle Ferguson, Assistant Principal and Director of Athletics, that continuity was key. “They had a great group of players and their experience with the coach for all three years helped them to gel and to learn his style.” “The girls got to know me and my system and understood what I expected of them,” Tyrone said.

To Tyrone, his work coaching is primarily about developing character. He teaches the girls to care about doing their best rather than about the score, “I think they really respond without the pressure of having to win every game. I always coach that we’re a family; no one is bigger than everyone else. We develop a chemistry based on trusting each other.” Of course, this season also ended with an undefeated season and the championship and tournament wins, which to Tyrone were a bonus; “for me winning is winning and I love it (it certainly beats the alternative!)”

“Coach Grandberry really worked with the girls throughout the season and you could see all of the girls’ progress in their skills and game IQ,” said Aimee Johnson, the mom to player Kylee and the team mom. This year’s season culminated in the girls’ win at the VCAC Championship tournament. They had a tough bracket to get into the final, but the girls rose to the challenge, playing two tough games and then pulling off the win against St. William of York.

Above, Top to Bottom: Some of the trophies the girls’ basketball team received this year. | Aquinas VCAC champion girls’ basketball team pose with Coach Grandberry.

AQUINAS GRADUATES MADE HONOR ROLL AT LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS



CONGRATULATIONS
Aquinas alumnae
on your academic
excellence!



**2011 Blue Ribbon
School of Excellence**

BISHOP IRETON HIGH SCHOOL

First Honors

Arianna McGuire.....	10th Grade
Capri Puglise	10th Grade
Celina Amados	11th Grade
Emma Spadafore.....	11th Grade

Second Honors

Brenden Peifer.....	9th Grade
Dylan Espinosa.....	10th Grade
Jack Freeland.....	10th Grade
Mikaela Schaller.....	10th Grade
Allison Lee.....	11th Grade

BISHOP O'CONNELL HIGH SCHOOL

First Honors

Ashley Cox	11th Grade
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Second Honors

Liam Kaylor	11th Grade
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JOHN PAUL THE GREAT HIGH SCHOOL

Principal's Honor Roll

Megan Evans.....	11th Grade
Melina Gonzales	11th Grade
Devon Hoskins	12th Grade
Sabrina Judy	10th Grade
Ana LeBlanc	10th Grade
Michele LeBlanc	10th Grade
Katlyn Marshall	10th Grade
Victoria Nagel	12th Grade
Matthew O'Neil.....	11th Grade
Jacquelyn Treco	12th Grade
Kathryn Wallisch	12th Grade

First Honors

Ryan Hoskins	10th Grade
Rohey Jah	12th Grade
Andrew Lane	10th Grade
Alexander MacDonald	10th Grade
Tesia McNulty	11th Grade
Hannah McNulty.....	9th Grade
Christian Metzler.....	12th Grade
Nicholas Metzler	11th Grade
Evan Norman	11th Grade
Lauren Pincus.....	12th Grade
Kelley Planchak	12th Grade
Michelle Planchak.....	10th Grade
Adrienne Pritz.....	10th Grade
Jose Rivera-Huertas.....	12th Grade
Kelly Ross	12th Grade
Amy Ross.....	10th Grade
Mikayla Sherman.....	10th Grade
Caitlin St. Amour	9th Grade
Brian Strickland	12th Grade
Katie Thompson	11th Grade
John Yates	10th Grade

Second Honors

Anna Davis	11th Grade
Elizabeth Kestermann.....	12th Grade
Frederick Klein.....	11th Grade
Javier Rivera-Huertas	9th Grade
Melissa Strickland.....	9th Grade
Victoria Tillotson	10th Grade
Christina Villagomez	12th Grade
Taylor Zalewski	11th Grade
Christopher Zapiain	12th Grade

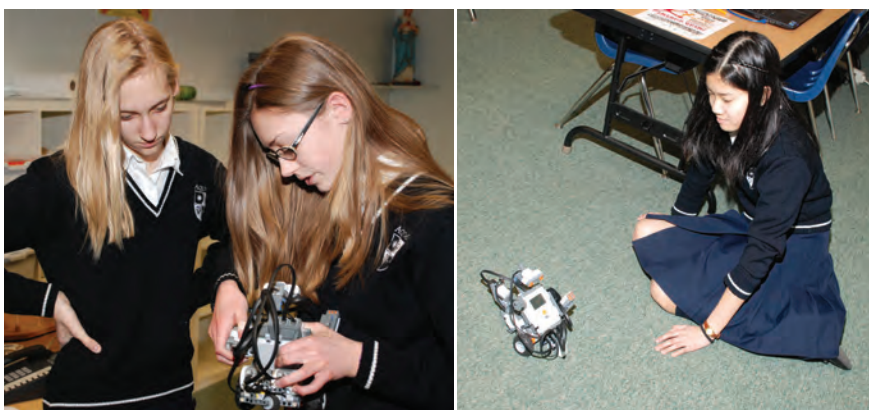
STEM EDUCATION: THE FINAL FRONTIER

The STEM program at Aquinas is teaching students to boldly go into the science and math field. This past quarter, as part of an engineering project, students programmed robots to dance.

While programming dancing robots might sound like a fun new game, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) students are actually learning a multitude of complex concepts which they put into practical application: algebra, Boolean logic, geometric relationships, amplitude and frequency, light and reflectivity, data analysis and acquisition, how to troubleshoot sensors, creating and programming the best design, how to calculate speed, distance and power, observing and predicting robot reactions and understanding the purpose of the technology. Instead of learning math concepts on paper only, Aquinas STEM students are seeing the integration of those concepts in real-life engineering, robotics and computer science problems.

According to a recent report released by Payscale, Inc., today's top ten careers all require STEM education: seven require college majors in the fields of engineering, while the other three are economics, physics and computer science. The Aquinas STEM partnership with Johns Hopkins University gives students an opportunity to have the hands-on knowledge and experience, which is the springboard for a lifetime of appreciation of science and math. Four out of five college students majoring in STEM say that they decided to study the subjects in high school or earlier – with one in five saying that they decided to study STEM in middle school or earlier. The STEM program isn't just





One in five college students say they decided to study STEM in middle school or earlier.

an opportunity to play with robots—this is an opportunity for Aquinas students to learn the skills they will need to be competitive in the economy of the future.

The NXT software Aquinas students use to program their robots has an intuitive, drag-and-drop interface that allows students to navigate, learn the basics of programming, and build working applications in hours instead of weeks or months. Programs like NXT are the logical first-step from which students can go on to college engineering programs that use the similarly interfaced NI LabVIEW software. In labs across the country, engineers use this software to

collect and map data they collect. Here at Aquinas, students have the opportunity to use software that integrates the data collection and control devices of both traditional lab equipment and real-world projects.

In surveys, CEOs repeatedly say they want to hire creative problem-solvers that are able to analyze data and trends. Aquinas students are learning those skills on software that prepares them to do just that, armed with the knowledge in math and science that will give them the leading edge they'll need to create and innovate the future.

Above, Clockwise: Mary Gordon and Colleen Rainieri work on a robot. | Leilani Chu watches her successful robot programming. | Georgius Korban, Kim Nguyen, Thomas Liuzzo and R. J. Plate in the computer lab work online with Johns Hopkins University through Aquinas STEM classes.



What's the Point?

By Kathleen Walsh, STEM Instructor

Recently a student asked me, "What was the point in Robotics?" I thought, at first, that the answer was obvious. After all, we program robots, and the robots perform the tasks that we desire.

In a recent assignment students were asked to program their robot to make two types of turns, one of which was a *point turn*, and the other, a *swing turn*. The two turns require different programming. A *swing turn* requires one wheel to move forward while the other wheel remains immobile. As a result, the robot is able to maneuver itself out of a small space without taking up too much space. For instance, when a robot runs a maze, it would require *swing turns* because there is little space for the robot to move.

The students learned that a *point turn* is very useful when the position of the robot is critical. For instance, when a robot is programmed to find landmines, this behavior is a necessity, or the result could be disastrous. The *point turn* requires the programmer to move one wheel forward, and the other backwards. The benefit is that the robot can turn without compromising its position.

So I ask myself, "How does learning specific programming like this benefit students?" We use higher-order thinking when we solve a problem. Real world scenarios like moving a robot through a maze, or moving a robot through a landmine field, require the programmer to use analyzing skills. If we relate our learning experience to Bloom's Taxonomy, we are going beyond ordinary memorizing. When students are forced to think how to position a robot so it turns without compromising its position, we are no longer asking for rote memorization from them. Instead, they are forced to analyze the components of a problem, and then logically conclude which way to program their robot.

The best education is one that prepares students to analyze and draw conclusions based on the problems set before them. Synthesizing technology and problem-solving skills is the added benefit of STEM education. When students are able to achieve that desired end, then I can say, "That's the point!"

FIFTH GRADERS TAKE CONFESSION TO THE STREETS



“Kids this age want to make a difference. They are old enough to be able to articulate the purpose of the sacrament, while taking to the street and getting the message out.”

It is not every week that you're surveyed with questions about confession. As a parent, grandparent or parishioner, an Aquinas fifth grader might have approached you this past spring at Mass, at home, or on the street as part of a grade-wide evangelization project.

Sister Christiana, O.P., fifth grade religion teacher who was new to Aquinas this year, has used this project a few times before in other schools. Her purpose assigning it is to carry out Pope Benedict's call for Catholics worldwide to evangelize; she says that call "is still in seed form, and is still formulating. Fifth graders don't realize the power they have because they are so good, and when students approach adults, it's hard to resist them." In other words, fifth graders have a unique way of being able to "reach people to carry out the message that God wants

us to change our lives, to return to Him, that He is there waiting with mercy and compassion," Sister Christiana said.

Phase I of the project was to survey five people over the age of 16 on how often they go to confession, if they are aware of the times that the sacrament is offered at their parish, and to provide a personal experience of the sacrament.

In the words of 5th grader Claire Bassett, "Sister Christiana assigned the project so that we would all realize our mission to show others how they cannot live without the sacrament because it's like never coming home to the Father."

Phase II of the project was to evangelize. In Sister Christiana's words, this aspect of the project was "a little out of their comfort zone." Students needed to creatively brainstorm how



Confession Times

OUR LADY OF ANGELS:

- Tuesday & Thursday mornings—6:00 & 9:30 a.m.
- Monday & Friday Evenings—6:30 p.m.
- Saturday afternoons—3:00 p.m.

SAINT ELIZABETH ANN SETON:

- Monday—7 p.m.
- Friday—9:30 a.m.
- Saturday—3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRED HEART MANASSAS:

- Saturday—4:00 p.m. or by appointment.

they were going to increase awareness of the sacrament. Some of the students did this through distribution of flyers with confession times after Mass, others, like Caroline Bennis, made a large sign that she wore on her back while bike riding. Alina Berzins made a t-shirt with confession times. Nicholas Barbuzza made a computer game that outlines sin and the steps toward the Sacrament.

Sylvia Bennis, Caroline's mother, stated that one of their neighbors, after seeing Caroline ride her bike with the sign, was inspired to actually attend Mass for the first time in 15 years. "She told me that the confession part of it would take a little while, but just attending Mass was a major step for her."

"Kids this age want to make a difference. They are old enough to be able to articulate the purpose of the sacrament, while taking to the street and getting the message out."

Phase III of the project was a written report of their findings and a reflection of what they had learned.

As an additional means of reaching out, the classes pray a decade of the rosary every day for anyone having difficulty coming back to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Link to Pope Benedict's Letter: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization>

Above, Left to Right: Sr. Christiana, O.P. teaches her fifth grade class. | Sr. Christiana, O.P. teaching religion. | Caroline Bennis with her bicycle evangelizing confession.

"THE STORY OF ANNIE MOORE— IRISH IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA"



"Hurry up Philip; we won't make it on board if you don't hurry!" The dock was crowded with everyone trying to board the boat. My two younger brothers, Anthony and Philip and I were leaving everything behind in Ireland to go to America. We had lived our whole lives in Ireland, everything we knew about was there, and we also knew that would soon change. We knew nothing of America and didn't know what to expect. Everyone said that it was a better place and that it's the land of opportunity, but we still weren't sure if we could survive and be happy. Our parents had already moved there, we were saving up money my dad sent to pay for the trip there. Our aunt and uncle had been taking care of us, and we said our last goodbyes to them on the pier.

"Next," said the man at the ticket booth; we walked up to him and gave him the money our dad sent to us. Then we boarded the ship, all three of us, young and scared. We didn't know anything about what was going on or what would happen to us next. The boat was rocking back and forth constantly.

It was a huge ship, but after everyone boarded, it was crowded. Then the ship left the pier, and our adventure began.

My little brother asked, "How many days until we get there, Anne?"

"I'm not sure, but the captain said about twelve," I responded.

I wasn't sure we would be able to stay on the boat for twelve days. After about four hours everyone started to get sea sick; not many of us were used to the ocean. At nights we could not fall asleep because of the boat rocking back and forth and the constant creaking of the hull.

"Anne, Anne, wake up, it's Christmas!" said Anthony and Philip at the same time.

We went to the deck of the ship; everyone was singing Christmas carols and dancing. It was the best day that we had on that boat. It lifted all our spirits and gave us hope. A few days later the captain said that we would be arriving soon, and we couldn't wait to spot land. We all wondered what it would be like, and we all feared that it would be the same as where we came from, or maybe even worse.

"I see it, I see it, Anthony, Philip, I see it!"

The Statute of Liberty stood higher than any other building. Then the ship pulled up to what I later learned was Ellis Island. All of the ships' crew members were trying to organize the 145 immigrants on the boat. Immigrants—it was the first time I heard that word, and I learned that I was one. We formed a line that led to a booth to turn in our paperwork, and the line was extremely

long. Luckily, we were at the front. My brothers and I were scared and confused. We planned on watching what the man in front of us did so that then we would know the procedure, but he was nervous and did not speak English, so he insisted that we go first. The man at the booth asked us questions and asked for our immigration papers. After that we stepped into a doctor's office. The doctor did an inspection to see if we were sick; they did not want any disease in the country. Several people had to return to Europe who had poor health. After the long process we boarded a smaller boat to go to New York City. It was a huge city with high buildings and people everywhere; it was the biggest city in the world. We stopped at a dock and unloaded our few bags. Then I saw something unbelievable—our parents! We immediately ran towards them as fast as we could and hugged them for the first time in several years. It was the best day of my life. Our parents took us to our house in our new home, in America.

This essay took first place in the regional and third place in the Virginia Ladies' Ancient Order of Hibernians Irish History writing contest.

Above: Mary Beth Rainieri, a member of the VA Ladies' Ancient Order of Hibernians, hands David Corbett his essay writing prize.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE AQUINAS CLASS OF 2008...

who earned over **\$830,000** in academic scholarships, and are going on to attend the following universities and colleges, including an Ivy League school:

Benedictine College

Bridgewater College

Christopher Newport

University of FL, Institute of Technology

George Mason University

Indiana University of PA

James Madison University

Marymount University

Northern Virginia CC

Old Dominion University

Princeton University

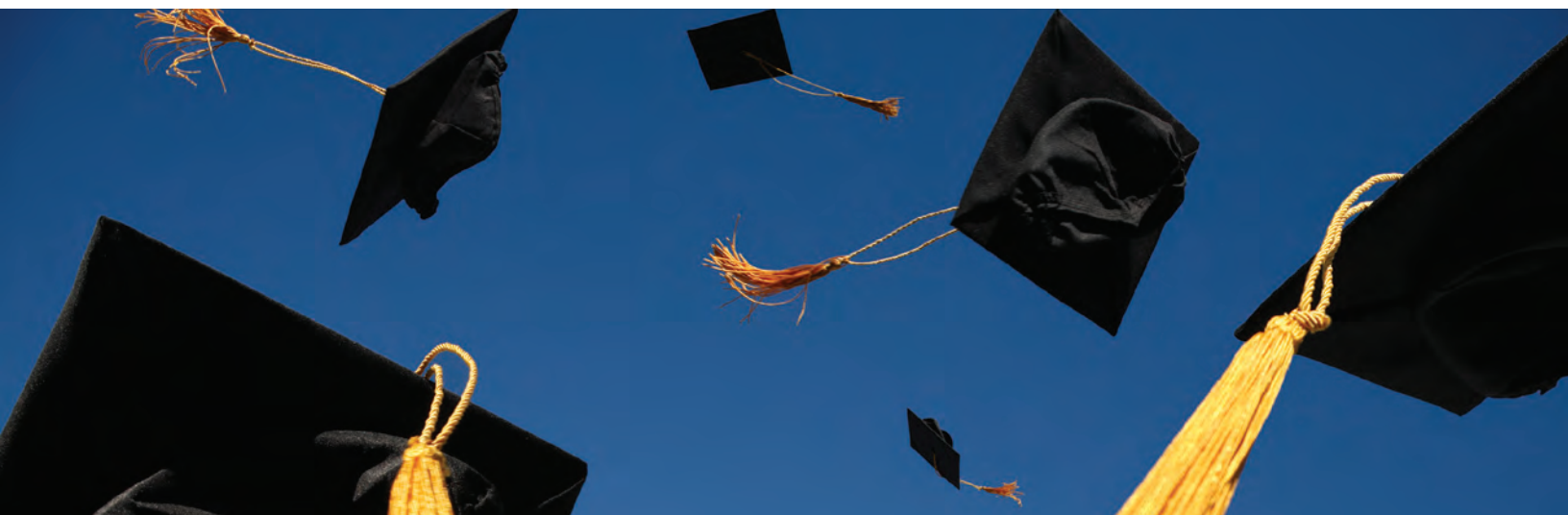
University of Central Florida

University of MD—College Park

University of Notre Dame

University of Virginia

Virginia Tech





CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GRADUATING 8TH GRADE AQUINAS CLASS OF 2012

Derrick Almond	Matthew Espinosa	Andrew Krakie	Patrick Ross
Sarah Arata	Leanne Evans	Megan Krakie	Danielle Ross
Alessandro Barbuzza	Phillip Fitzpatrick	Katie Ann Magyar	Brandi Roth
Sarah Beda	Jesse French	Natalie Marshall	Leah Salmeron-Curtis
Tara Butler	Adriana Galarza	William McGregor	Peter Schafer
Mark Choe	Erica Giles	Joseph McNealy	Daniel Scully
Leilani Chu	Jacob Gilliland	Liam Mulcahy	Brianna Smith
Justin Combs	Joshua Glascock	Brandon Perroots	John Soliday
Kelsey Connor	Mary Gordon	Gaston Perry	Jonathan Spadafore
Austin Cox	Rosa Hernandez	Diana Marie Principi	Scott Stoessel
Densel Dagdagan	Kylee Johnson	Ana Michele Principi	Kendall White
Payton Dodd	Jasmine Khalil	Haylee Puller	Lisa-Lan Woell
Brooke Duckworth	Louis Klein	Priscilla Quinteros	
Wendolyn El	Jonathan Knapp	Colleen Ranieri	

High Schools Attending:

Paul VI—2
Pope John Paul the Great—27
Public—19
Bishop Ireton—2



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AQUINAS & JP

BUILDING TRADITIONS TOGETHER



JOHN PAUL WISHES ALL OUR FRIENDS AT
AQUINAS A FUN AND RELAXING SUMMER!



Aquinas students performing their hit Spring musical, Seven Brides for Seven Brothers on the John Paul the Great stage.

**Special congratulations to the 8th grade
graduates, and to all the new Wolves!**

See you next year!



info@jpthegreat.org • www.jpthegreat.org

17700 Dominican Drive, Dumfries • (703) 445-0300

Directions: From I-95, exit 152-A/Dumfries. LEFT at Jefferson-Davis Hwy (US 1).
RIGHT at River Heritage Blvd. LEFT Dominican Dr.



SAVE THE DATES

AUGUST 24, 2012

Meet & Greet/Ice Cream Social

AUGUST 27, 2012

First Day of School

SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

Back to School Night 6th–8th Grade

SEPTEMBER 19, 2012

Back to School Night PreK–5th Grade

OCTOBER 12, 2012

Fall Festival

NOVEMBER 16, 2012

Race for Education