The gift of a Catholic school education

Holidays are part of the culture of schools, which enjoy new year celebrations twice each year. When students return to school in August, the new academic year begins fresh, filled with expectations of tremendous growth. Then, in January, students and faculty return after Christmas vacation to celebrate a new calendar year filled with energy for learning. Such double opportunity for celebration is truly a blessing! Catholic Schools Week is part of the new year celebration as schools across the country take time in January to reflect on the gift that Catholic schools are to our families, community, nation and church in Evangelizing Hearts, Educating Minds, Encouraging Talent and Embracing the Future for young people. Such a gift is precious, as evidenced by the skillful talent and countless hours of dedicated work by staff in their ministry. Such a gift is precious, as sacrifices are made by families to provide Catholic education for their children. For the significant, generous and precious gift of Catholic education, we are truly grateful.

As a ministry of the church, Catholic schools welcome families into a nurturing culture that goes far beyond academic excellence; it speaks to the heart of humans, providing a glimpse of our loving God who welcomes us to learn and grow. Clergy, religious and lay ministers who serve in Catholic schools are gifts to Catholic education in our diocese, and we are grateful for not only what they do, but for who they are in modeling Gospel values for students in their care. Catholic schools fulfill their vision of Evangelizing Hearts because of the formation students receive. Consistently, students in the Diocese of Baton Rouge score above the national average on the ACRE test for faith knowledge and log more than 200,000 service hours annually in service to others. Catholic schools in the diocese are blessed with the gift of talented educators who fill classrooms with learning. With a focus on Educating Minds, educators strive each day to provide rigorous, relevant and engaged learning experiences for students. Standardized testing in grades 3 – 12 reflects above-norm scores, and the Class of 2018 mirrored the high level of accomplishment as previous graduating classes by realizing an average ACT score of 24, which is well-above both state and national averages.

Students in Catholic schools are given the enrichment opportunities through various programs such as music, drama, art, clubs and sports. Focused on Encouraging Talent, all schools in the diocese offer the gift of mentorship through extra and co-curricular activities that expand and extend learning beyond the classroom and into specialty areas. Whether students are developing talent on the field of play or in a STEM robotics lab, they are blessed with generous faculty and volunteers who go above-and-beyond to provide experiences that develop the whole child. Advisory boards at each school site help to fulfill the vision of Embracing the Future, as members work with clergy and school leadership to set direction for development and growth. In addition to the high expectations for the continuous improvement of school programs required by national accreditation, school strategic plans identify focus at each school site for the next three to five years. Likewise, the Diocesan School Board has identified Catholic identity, financial vitality and advancement for growth as focus areas. Through reflection, prayer and action, board members help to ensure the precious gift of Catholic schools continues to be strong in the future.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2020, we are especially grateful for the support of Bishop Michael G. Duca and for the active involvement of clergy, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students and all partners in the work of the schools. With God’s blessing and strong stakeholder support, Catholic schools will continue to be gifts to coming generations within the Diocese of Baton Rouge! Information on Catholic Schools is located at csobr.org
Embracing the rich tradition and history of St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine, as well as a commitment to the school's mission of providing a nurturing environment where students grow in their faith and values while learning the importance of leadership and service are all qualities Father Gregory Daigle has displayed while serving as pastor at St. John the Evangelist Church in Plaquemine.

Because of his dedication to the school and students, Father Daigle has been selected Distinguished Clergy Member for the Diocese of Baton Rouge and will represent the diocese in the National Catholic Education Association 2020 awards.

“(Father Daigle) presence in the school community and his involvement with students, teachers and stakeholders proves that he is committed to the vision of the goals of our school,” St. John principal Cherie Schlatre said. “Father Greg is active in our administrative operations and a frequent visitor to our campus. He is a spirit-filled, fun-loving character who has no problem engaging with students with conversation.”

She noted that in a time when some of the younger generation are not necessarily familiar with the clergy, Father Daigle is approachable, and students are comfortable in his presence. Schlatre added that his pastoral care is "truly a gift," and he shares it with students and teachers.

She said it is not uncommon for Father Daigle to be on campus to help a student with a personal issue, or offer support with academic or behavioral issues.

"In those interactions, his mercy, compassion, concern, faith in God and love for others are evident," Schlatre said.

Father Daigle attends many school events and athletic contests, regularly celebrates Mass with the students and encourages students to become more involved in the liturgy.

His unique story-telling talent augmented by his Cajun accent, as well as sharing a joke at the beginning of every homily, are what students look forward to and find endearing.

"His love for his family, knowledge of the church and love for Christ are evident in his homilies," Schlatre said.

Father Daigle has introduced several new Masses at the school, including a special Mass for the Exultation of the Cross. He has also harmonized the church and school in various ways, including celebrating the Junior Ring Ceremony and Baccalaureate Mass with the parish.

Father Daigle has also used his tremendous musical talent to encourage St. John students to develop their own individual talents. His vision has resulted in the establishment of a children’s choir and high school choral group.

Under Father Daigle’s leadership, students have had the opportunity to participate in his annual and quite popular Epiphany Concert with the Bill Grimes Orchestra.

“While he is always ready to share all his time and talents, his particular talent for music and his willingness to share that gift with us has been a blessing for our school,” Schlatre said, adding that his commitment helped revitalize the school’s music program which had been decimated by budget cuts.

She said in the past five years, the Epiphany concert...
Distinguished Educator honored

By Debbie Shelly
The Catholic Commentator

Glynis Davis has been selected the Distinguished Educator of the Year for the Diocese of Baton Rouge for using foreign languages and cultural immersion experiences as a springboard to learning and leadership.

Davis, who teaches French at St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, has spent her life dedicated to Catholic school education with 44 years of service, 39 at SJA and five years at St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine.

“Having been in the teaching profession for as long as Glynis has, one might understand a bit of slowing down or a decline in enthusiasm for discovering new teaching strategies. This is not Glynis,” said SJA principal Stacia Andricain. “She absolutely loves the French language and culture and relishes in her daily work to immerse our students in both. She has been teaching French I and II since coming to SJA and delights in witnessing the growth of her students in those years.”

Davis uses multiple teaching methods to meet the needs and learning styles of the students, according to Andricain.

“She makes learning a language exciting, as she ties French language and culture to our own Louisiana heritage,” said Andricain.

The distinguished educator is a champion of students and offers opportunities for learning outside of classroom. Davis has been the moderator of the French I and French III/IV clubs throughout her SJA career. These club meetings provide unique activities to foster club members’ understanding of a French-speaking region. At one meeting, students learned about Belgium, where French fries originated. The students enjoyed homemade la Friterie Belge (French fries) and special Belgian dipping sauces while listening to Belgian music.

The distinguished educator has also chaperoned immersion trip to France since the 1980s and for the past 15 years has taken the students to Quebec as well.

Davis was also instrumental in SJA adopting the practice of awarding the Seal of Biliteracy to seniors who successfully complete a level four foreign language in high school and learn qualifying scores on the English and reading sections of the ACT. The Seal of Biliteracy provides universities with a method accrediting applicants for attaining high-level skills in multiple languages and allows employers to identify those with global language skills.

“Glynis’ students have earned scholarships to universities in France, have tested out of French college credit hours and become French teachers themselves,” said Andricain.

Davis has deep roots in Catholic education. Her mother taught in a Catholic elementary school and her siblings attended Catholic schools along with her. Both her daughters also attended a Catholic elementary school and graduated from SJA.

For Davis, it is the highest compliment to receive an award from the Catholic school system.

“My first thought when I heard about this honor was wishing my mother could be here to share it with me. She passed away seven years ago, but it feels like yesterday. She was my role model as a teacher and a mother,” said Davis.

The biggest reward for a teacher is, for the most part, delayed, Davis said.

“It may take years to realize the mark you may have made; occasionally, you do see it in the present. When you hear from students from 20 years ago or hear about former students’ accomplishments, it touches the heart. I am as proud of their accomplishments as I am of my own daughters.”
Lee Distinguished Administrator

By Bonny Van
The Catholic Commentator

When it comes to Catholic education, Ellen Lee’s roots run deep. And what she learned in those formative years, remains with her daily as principal of St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge.

“Catholic education focuses on the whole child,” said Lee, selected this year’s Distinguished Administrator for the Diocese of Baton Rouge.

“The Catholic faith is integral throughout the content areas so that students learn to think critically in the light of the Catholic Church’s teaching. As Catholic educators, we understand our vital responsibility of planting and watering the seeds of faith so that our children will grow up to be the people that God calls them to be.”

Lee, born and raised in the Capital City, attended Our Lady of Mercy School and St. Thomas More School, both in Baton Rouge. She graduated from St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge and earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees in education from LSU.

Lee said there was no question that she would attend Catholic schools growing up. Both of her parents were graduates of Catholic schools.

“My father taught me that there are very few gifts you can give your children that are more valuable than a Catholic education,” she said. “My husband, Steve, and I were able to provide all three of our children with a Catholic elementary and high school education. Both of our daughters, Jessica and Kathleen, are religion teachers in the Diocese of Baton Rouge. Our son Eric is an attorney in Denver (Colorado).”

Lee has 40 years of experience as an educator. Her first job in administration, as assistant principal at St. Michael, came the same year as Hurricane Katrina, when thousands of displaced students from New Orleans moved to Baton Rouge.

“It was heartwarming to know that so many people who were displaced and came to Baton Rouge had their first priority of getting their children into a Catholic school, some even before they found a place to live,” said Lee.

In 2011, Lee was chosen principal of St. Michael High School, and she strives to continue growing the programs of the school and the faith of the students. According to assistant principal Julie Leichich, Lee provides teachers with professional development to integrate the teaching of the Catholic Church in all content areas.

“Teachers are required to include these teachings where appropriate in their curriculum guides and lesson plans, as they are asked to make a conscious effort to achieve the mission of forming young people as committed disciples of Christ,” said Leichich.

Under Lee’s leadership, the school has developed several programs to help students integrate prayer life into their daily life, including “MP3s,” which stands for music, prayer, praise and pizza nights. The school also makes an annual bus trip to the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

St. Michael also sponsors prayer groups such as “Prayer Partners” for all faculty and staff and “Parent Prayer Warriors” for parents to pray for students, faculty and staff.

“In today’s world, young people are bombarded with so many negative and self-serving messages,” said Lee. “The values that are integral to Catholic schools help the students learn to make decisions and take actions that allow them to be Christ to one another.”

In 2019, the school cut the ribbon on its new multipurpose building to enhance the school’s fine arts program and provide space for school liturgies and sports. The school has also integrated a number of technology programs into its curriculum, partnering with the University of Texas to offer two engineering courses and creating a STEM lab.

Lee said it is rewarding to see former students go on to be successful professionally and personally.

“As a teacher and an administrator, I realize that I touch the lives of so many students,” said Lee. “I always want that influence to be a positive one. What an awesome privilege to be some part of their growth and formation.”

As for being selected Distinguished Administrator, Lee said she does not do her job alone.

“I share this recognition with the entire St. Michael community,” she said. “The people in the Warrior family make St. Michael the great school that it is.”

PASTOR ▼
from page 3B

has raised more than $100,000, all of which has been funneled back into the music department.

“Father Daigle is a conscientious and zealous shepherd of both the parish and St. John Interparochial School,” Bishop Michael G. Duca wrote in his letter of recommendation to the NCEA.

Father Daigle graduated from St. George School in Baton Rouge in 1973 and Catholic High School in Baton Rouge in 1977. He studied music at Loyola University in New Orleans from 1977-80 and in 1983 graduated from LSU with a bachelor of arts degree in music.

He graduated from Notre Seminary in New Orleans with a master of divinity degree in 1993 and was ordained June 5, 1993 at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge.

A classically trained, professional vocalist, Father Daigle has performed opera and in concerts in the United States and Italy.
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Father Jamin David 2018 Distinguished Graduate

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ASCENSION | ASSUMPTION | CENTRAL | EAST BATON ROUGE | IBERVILLE | POINTE COUPEE | ST. JAMES | TANGIPAHOA | WEST BATON ROUGE
The 2019-2020 school year marks the 125 anniversary of Catholic High School in Baton Rouge. From its humble beginnings in 1894 in an L-shaped wooden building in downtown Baton Rouge, the school’s legacy has been rooted in a spirit of compassion with a commitment to excellence.

In the summer of 1789, France plunged headlong into a bloody revolution, setting the stage for a decade of war and unrest. It was against this backdrop of instability, Father André Coindre, a young parish priest in Lyon, France, witnessed first-hand the struggle for survival and the breakdown of social institutions. Unemployment was high and there were very few schools. Many children were orphaned, running the streets and often imprisoned – some as young as four to five years of age.

In 1818, feeling called to respond with a spirit of compassion, Father Coindre drafted a prospectus entitled “Pieux Secours,” which outlined his vision for establishing orphanages and schools across the region that would provide young people in need with a loving home, a Christian education and vocational skills. To help fulfill this mission, Father Coindre found the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in 1821, a community of brothers who were rooted in the same spirit of compassion and trained to work with poor youth through the establishment of Christian-centered schools.

After Father Coindre’s death in 1826, Brother Polycarp was named Brother Superior General. By 1839, the order had grown under his leadership to more than 400 brothers in 70 schools. During this period of growth and success, five missionary Brothers of the Sacred Heart, at the request of Bishop Michael Portier, the first bishop of the Diocese of Mobile, Alabama, arrived in Mobile to expand their charitable and educational work in the United States.

The brothers’ work did not remain limited to Mobile for very long. In 1854 they established St. Stanislaus College in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and in 1869, St. Aloysius College in New Orleans. Continued expansion resulted in establishment of schools and orphanages in several midwestern states, in the south and southeastern United States, as well as in New York, New England and Canada. To-day, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart serve in Mobile; Bay St. Louis; New Orleans; Thibodaux; Houma; Baton Rouge; Klagetoh, Arizona; St. Michael, Arizona; and Mozambique, Africa.

In 1894, expansion continued with four brothers traveling to Baton Rouge to establish St. Vincent’s Academy, a parochial school set up under contract with St. Joseph Church, which at the time was within the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The school was located downtown on what is now Fourth Street, and was named in honor of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which had made a significant financial contribution toward its establishment. From a humble beginning with 106 students, St. Vincent’s attracted immediate attention for academic excellence and developing outstanding character in its students.

With nearly 300 students, St. Vincent’s had outgrown its L-shaped wood-framed building by the late 1920s. In January of 1929, faculty and students moved into a new, modern brick facility on North and Fourth Street and the school’s name was changed to Catholic High School.

By the early 1940s, lack of classroom space made it necessary to begin turning away applicants. As a result, the brothers started searching for a piece of property to build a new school that would accommodate a larger student body. On June 5, 1946, 36 acres of land were purchased, but lack of funds delayed construction of the new campus for nearly 10 years.

Through the generosity of many friends in Baton Rouge, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart were able to begin construction in 1956. In September 1957, the faculty, along with 450 students, moved from the original property near the State Capitol to the new campus — the present location on Hearthstone Drive. That same year, the school changed ownership from the Archdiocese of New Orleans to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

The success of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart’s schools is founded in their educational philosophy of providing a Catholic environment of living, learning, and growing in Christ through academic excellence, gospel values, and a nurturing community.

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Cristo Rey’s first graduation ceremony scheduled in May

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge Franciscan High School is excited to announce the school’s first graduating class is scheduled May 23.

The inaugural class of 42 seniors will receive their diplomas at 3 p.m. in LSU’s Royal Cotillion Ballroom. The Cristo Rey Network’s founder, Father John P. Foley, will be a part of the graduation ceremony.

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge is part of the national Cristo Rey Network of schools. The network is comprised of 37 high schools, located throughout the United States, that provide a quality, Catholic, college preparatory education to young people who live in communities with limited educational options.

In the Cristo Rey learning environment, young people of limited economic means are offered the opportunity to become men and women of faith, purpose and service. This unique educational model combines college preparatory education with a Corporate Work Study Program.

Cristo Rey Baton Rouge opened in August, 2016. Now in its fourth year, the school has grown to include grades 9-12 and serve 174 students. This year, through the work study program, students will earn more than $1.2 million toward their tuition with the support of 53 Corporate Work Study Program partners throughout the greater Baton Rouge area.

School officials are especially grateful for those partners who have supported the seniors during the past four years and have been with Cristo Rey since its inception: Albemarle, All Star Automotive Group, Baton Rouge Clinic AMC, Baton Rouge General, Capital Area Finance Authority, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Kean Miller LLP, Lamar Advertising Co., Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, Neighbors Federal Credit Union, Ochsner Health System, Postlewaite & Netterville and Taylor Porter.

Cristo Rey is now accepting applications for the class of 2024. Please attend one of the two remaining open house dates: Feb. 15 and March 14 or contact director of admissions Erica Walker at ewalker@cristoreybr.org for more information.
January 17, 2020

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2020

The Catholic Commentator 9B

OLOM to expand technology

For more than 60 years Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge has taken pride in providing students with the best in Catholic education.

The school strives to offer the most up to date curriculum, teaching strategies and cutting edge technology. Entering 2020, the goal is no different. Officials are excited to announce expanding educational technology initiatives that will launch in the fall of 2020. These initiatives include a 1:1 iPad program in the middle school and a significant expansion of the number of devices available in Pre-K through fifth grade.

In middle school, each student will be assigned an iPad, and in second through fifth grade, each classroom will have a half-class set of iPads for student use. In the early childhood grades, classrooms will have age-appropriate access to iPads for students to use as they explore and learn to use the technology in a school setting.

The goal of this program is not just to increase the number of devices available to students, but it is also to enhance the curriculum with age-appropriate technology tools as students learn critical thinking skills necessary to become good digital citizens. Officials are striving to integrate meaningful technology use as a tool to transform the curriculum, giving students unique and experiences opportunities.

School officials hope to address growing concerns about students’ exposure to technology.

In an address given by Pope Francis on Sept. 27 2019, to participants in the seminar “The Common Good in the Digital Age,” he concluded with these words:

“A better world is possible thanks to technological progress, if this is accompanied by an ethic inspired by a vision of the common good, an ethic of freedom, responsibility and fraternity, capable of fostering the full development of people in relation to others and to the whole of creation.”

The school hopes to instill in students an appreciation for balance and a critical eye for technology use in their daily lives.

This will be achieved by teaching them how to use technology ethically and responsibly to further their academic and spiritual learning experiences and to expand their creativity and critical thinking skills. School officials are thrilled to be offering this unique learning opportunity for students as teachers prepare them for the ever-changing future they will embark upon once they graduate from Our Lady of Mercy School.

The administration at Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge is striving to integrate meaningful technology use as a tool to transform the curriculum, giving students unique and experiences opportunities. Photo provided by Our Lady of Mercy School

SJA chemistry students enjoy Bioengineering 101

During the course of six days, St. Joseph’s Academy students in Rhonda Baird’s chemistry honors courses enjoyed a unique opportunity to learn about engineering design, cancer and the work of bioengineers in the medical field. The Bioengineering 101 program, taught by LSU chemical engineering assistant professor Adam Melvin, also involved a challenge in which students designed, built and tested model “cancer trappers” and collected data to measure their systems’ effectiveness.

The three classes of 60 total students were divided into small groups of two or three to build their cancer trappers using rice and macaroni to simulate cancer cells and red blood cells. They received a list of supplies they would need to acquire, complete with cost, to build their systems. Plates, bowls, tape and scissors had to be “purchased” within budget.

The students’ systems had to achieve 70 percent purity in separating the rice from the macaroni. The systems were also required to be cost-effective to reproduce. Based on the four metrics of capture efficiency, purity, throughput and cost, the teams went to work on their designs.

Melvin then threw in additional design parameters, adding penne pasta to represent immune cells, for example, and increased the volume of the sample. In response, students had to improve their designs or start from scratch.

On the final day of Bioengineering 101, the teams presented their projects to a panel of SJA teachers serving as judges. First period winners were Amelia Lambert and Claire Fourroud; second period winners were Carsyn Smith and Ava Kadi; and fifth period overall winners were Evelyn Carley, Jemma Wood and Anna Miller.

Miller, a sophomore, said that she didn’t consider herself a science enthusiast but found the Bioengineering 101 project far exceeded her expectations.

“It was more about coming” 

SEE SJA PAGE 19

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Catholic school Distinguished Graduates selected

Ascension Catholic

Michael Nizzo’s Catholic education roots are deeply planted in the fertile soil of Ascension Parish.

Nizzo’s grandfather, father and siblings are all graduates of Ascension Catholic High School. Nizzo, who won the Mr. Bulldog Award his senior year in 1997, has been selected Ascension Catholic’s Distinguished Graduate.

“One of the greatest gifts my parents gave to me was the gift of my Catholic education,” said Nizzo, who manages a team of commercial and small business bankers in the Baton Rouge area and is a volunteer coach of the Ascension Catholic middle school track team.

“From a young age, I was able to form a Christian faith from the teachings of my parents, church and teachers,” he added. “Learning with kids who also share this faith gave me a foundation that would shape and serve me as a husband, father and business professional.”

Ascension Catholic principal Sandy Pizzolato said Nizzo believes he has achieved success because God is at the center of his life, followed by his family. Pizzolato said Nizzo believes his greatest accomplishment in life is being a father to his three children.

“He and his wife believe sending their children to Ascension Catholic is the right choice for their family,” Pizzolato said. “The historical Catholic Christian foundation, academic excellence and community makes Ascension Catholic a very special school.

“Michael and (his wife) Christina wanted their children to attend a school with the same traditions, Christian values and faith-based experiences that Michael grew up knowing. He takes great pride in his family and enjoys spending weekends relaxing and fishing with them at the family camp.”

Pizzolato said the family’s long tradition of Catholic education speaks volumes for the traditions carried on by the family.

“(Nizzo) is focused on spreading the word about the importance of Catholic education,” she said. “He volunteers his time and marketing skills to help improve our school in our community and to reach out to new families who are interested in enrolling in Ascension Catholic. His beliefs in Ascension Catholic’s success is valuable.”

Nizzo, a member of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry Emerging Leaders Council, currently manages six banking centers spread throughout East Baton Rouge, Ascension and Livingston parishes. He is a 2017 graduate of the Business Report Leadership Academy.

Catholic High

Through his military service in the Marine Corps and his career as a prosecutor, Brandon Fremin has committed his professional life to protecting and serving the community.

Those values are rooted in the education he received at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge, which selected Fremin as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

“The value of my Catholic education is immeasurable,” said Fremin, a 1992 graduate of CHS. “I am truly blessed to have had the opportunity to attend Catholic High, an institution nationally recognized for academic excellence but more importantly for the faith-based values it instilled in me and countless young men in our community.”

Catholic High principal Lisa Harvey said Fremin has worked tirelessly to protect the most vulnerable members of the community and defend the nation and state from violent crimes, including terrorism and human trafficking.

“(Fremin) serves our community in critical ways,” Harvey said. “He is a worthy role model and witness for our current and future students.

“In short, we encourage our students to emulate his dedication to a worthwhile cause, his work ethic, his availability to others and his humble and compassionate manner in handling difficult and delicate issues with respect for all.”

She said Catholic High School seeks to honor alumni who serve the community and whose personal character and values promote the mission of the school – to teach Gospel values in an environment of excellence. Harvey said Fremin has been a leader who couples his natural talents with hard work for the good of the entire community, and it is that combination directed toward a clear and worthwhile purpose that is exceptional and that most sets him apart from others.

“Those who know him or who work with him are quick to recognize these special qualities in (Fremin),” she added.

Fremin serves as the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana. As the chief federal law enforcement official with the nine civil parishes that compromise the Middle District of Louisiana and a staff of 60 attorneys and support personnel, Harvey acknowledges Fremin’s busy schedule, but said he is always willing to do whatever he can to promote the mission of CHS.

“He readily acknowledges that CHS played a critical role in his personal formation, and he is eager to pay it forward to young people today,” she said. “As a highly successful professional

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with noteworthy personal achievements, his promotion of values such as respect for all, fairness and service is a credible witness to young people.”

**Catholic of Pointe Coupee**

Trisha Morrison's exemplary life as a wife, mother, member of her church and her community led to her selection as Distinguished Graduate of Catholic High School of Pointe Coupee School in New Roads, principal Joe LeBlanc said.

LeBlanc noted that Catholic education provides a positive, faith-filled environment serving as a foundation that focuses a student's heart on Christ. He said Morrison is an example of what “we hope each of our graduates becomes once they leave us and grow as Christian role models.”

Morrison, a 1996 CHSPC graduate and the chief operating officer for the Pangburn Group in Baton Rouge, was active in student life as a club member, athlete and also excelled in academics. She was voted Student Council President, had exceptional careers in volleyball and basketball and was valedictorian.

LeBlanc said Morrison continues to serve her alma mater as a parent volunteer in various areas, including serving on committees and participating in campus and parish ministry as a vocal musician.

She is a weekly cantor and choir member of St. Mary of False River Church in New Roads and sings the National Anthem at school and community events. She also attends many athletic events, assisting with broadcasts and keeping statistics.

(Morrison's) commitment to serve when called upon and her unwavering support of her alma mater is outstanding,” LeBlanc said. “Dedication to our cause and the Christian approach she takes in helping provides us with the type of role model others need to see.

“Her success in business, her involvement in her church and the example she sets as a wife and mother are so valuable in representing the type of person we want our children to see as a presence in school and community interactions.”

Morrison was selected the district's Most Valuable Player in the district in volleyball and basketball and was elected homecoming queen. She earned the University Medal for maintaining a 4.0 grade point average while attending LSU.

She is currently recording a religious CD and makes herself available to sing at weddings, funerals and school events when asked or needed. She has also served as a committee member for the school's capital campaign.

**FranU**

Emily Broussard Walker, Distinguished Graduate of Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University, carries out her family legacy as she improves others' lives.

Fran U was the first Catholic institution Walker attended, but her faith and family life played an important role in her upbringing.

“Emily is an advocate for global issues, namely, raising awareness and funding for global hunger and human trafficking through work with Metanoia Manor,” said Judith Roberson, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Fran U.

Walker was president of Franciscan Student Fellowship while at Fran U, advocating for living out Franciscan values through campus events like “Finding Common Ground,” Agape dinners and family ministry programs.

She was selected Student Organization President of the Year for the Masters of Healthcare Administration Program and received the prestigious St. Francis Student Award for her program. She graduated with a masters in Health Administration in 2019.

A resident of Lafayette, Walker volunteers at Lafayette General Medical Center's infusion center where she does hospitality services for chemotherapy and other patients receiving IV medical therapy. She is a member of St. Joseph Church in Milton.

“Emily exemplifies what a true servant leader is through her commitment to bring others to Christ, is mission-centered and lives out her beliefs through her and her husband's (newly established) non-profit, Francis Farms, which will sell homemade products,” Roberson said. "Part of the proceeds will go to various Catholic charities around Louisiana that supports the homeless, impoverished, hungry and needy.

"The mission of their (Walker's) non-profit aligns with those of St. Francis of Assisi, who loved and respected the Earth and its bounty, just as she and her family do. The land that she and her husband will be farming on was give to her by her late father, who is her namesake Francis Wayne Broussard farming on was given to her by her late father, who is her namesake Francis Wayne Broussard.

Emily Broussard Walker attended, but her faith and family life played an important role in her upbringing.

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Broussard, and she was born Emily Frances Broussard. Her father was a very giving man, always looking for ways to help others, so she is carrying his legacy by doing God's work on the land that he provided them.”

Walker plans to set up a program to teach children how to grow vegetables while educating them about St. Francis. At the end of their program/growing season, they would donate half of their bounty to the local shelters and keep the other half to share with their loved ones at home.

Having worked for the state Medicaid system, Walker quickly realized that she wanted to help those most in need, and she is following that path through her work with her non-profit, according to Roberson.

Emily is also exploring the opportunity to become a Third Order Franciscan in Lafayette and has started the path to formation because she believes so much in Lafayette and has started the path to formation because she believes so much in the life and teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and wants to bring that to others,” said Roberson.

Holy Family
Perhaps millions of viewers are familiar with NBC’s popular series “Holiday with the Houghs.”

But likely not many know that even through co-executive producer Dillon Couvillon calls California home, his heart has never left Port Allen, or Holy Family School.

Couvillon, who believes his Catholic education is strong and is modeled in his daily life, has been selected Holy Family’s Distinguished Graduate.

“A faith-based education helped to instill values of service, compassion and community that continue to navigate and direct my moral compass on a daily basis,” said Couvillon, a 2000 Holy Family graduate who was also selected Man of the Year at Catholic High School in Baton Rouge in 2004.

Holy Family principal Alise Ashford said Couvillon has remained a contributing member of Holy Family School.

“Through service, donations and support he continues to make Holy Family School and parish his true home where his family still resides,” Ashford said. “He connects with the school and community (whenever) he is in Port Allen.”

She said Couvillon was chosen for the prestigious award because he has reached exceptional accomplishments in his career since leaving Holy Family.

“(Couvillon) is set apart from others because he moved on to become a co-executive producer of a television show after leaving Port Allen,” Ashford said. “That is not something all graduates are willing or able to do. He has put a lot of focus into his career but always remembers where he came from.”

Couvillon, who was chosen as one of 12 Outstanding Students at LSU in 2008, has been nominated for a daytime Emmy Award.

He was a member of the Holy Family Church choir, volunteered for two summers at St. Vincent de Paul Society and has donated his time and efforts to local elections in Port Allen.

Holy Ghost
Ryan Barker has twice been selected Executive Director of the Year for the Louisiana Parks and Recreation Association and continues to be a civil leader in the Hammond area, serving on the Greater Hammond Chamber Board of Directors and a board member of the Hammond Rotary Club and United Way.

But perhaps Barker’s most significant accomplishment lies thousands of miles away, helping improve the lives of countless children in Arusha, Tanzania.

Barker, selected the Distinguished Graduate for Holy Ghost School in Hammond, runs a non-profit organization that helps provide education, clean water and recreational sports to the children of Arusha.

Catholic education embodies so much more than religion,” said Barker, a 1999 graduate of Holy Family, executive director of Chippapaea Sports Park in Hammond and owner of Tanzania Adventure Tours. “It includes a focus on character development and building relationships. This foundation continues to guide me today.”

Holy Ghost principal Donna Wallette said Barker gives his time and financial resources “to help children in our community as well as those in Tanzania.”

Mater Dolorosa
Mary Durnin showed a tremendous amount of diligence in earning her degree and pursuing a

STM’s Annual Fund a success

This school year, the administration at St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge decided to initiate the inaugural STM Annual Fund. By eliminating multiple smaller asks and focusing efforts on the Annual Fund, STM aims to provide donors with an opportunity to help the school go from great to exceptional without raising tuition.

This year’s Annual Fund was a resounding success, raising $432,380.

Paving the way was STM’s faculty and staff who gave at 100 percent, raising more than $17,000. STM more than doubled the amount of revenue generated in previous years’ fundraisers while substantially reducing the number of fundraising requests made by the school.

All proceeds from this campaign are being used to enhance technology on the STM campus in order to improve the quality of education provided to students. As of the start of the second semester, nearly $75,000 has been expended on significant improvements to the technology infrastructure, resources for middle school and junior high classrooms, including several iPads and Apple TVs, and 27 laptop computers which will enable more effective utilization of classroom interactive boards.

These and additional technology purchases to be made with the remaining proceeds will enhance student learning and engagement, helping them to develop skills as resourceful and responsible users of technology.

Annual Fund Chaircouple Leigh and George Holder said, “We are so gratified by the response of the STM community to our requests for their participation in the Annual Fund. The school will be enhanced by the new technological resources that we acquire, and the greatest beneficiaries will be STM students.”

The Holders and other members of the fund’s leadership team made a significant impact on its success: Major Donor Chairs Robbie Olivier and Steven Davis; Faculty and Staff chairs Melissa Higgins and Ashley Llaneza; Grandparents’ Chaircoup le Cheryl and Joe Macaluso; and School Board Chair Rene Mire.

The STM Men’s Club installed the new technology in classrooms, providing additional savings.

Principal Brian Moscona remarked, “The Annual Fund has truly been a team effort. Everyone in the STM community has played a part, by serving on the leadership team, making a gift, big or small, or simply spreading the word about the great work we are doing here.”

Questions about the STM Annual Fund, including how to make a gift, may be directed to Dr. Greg Brandao (greg@stmchurch.org).
career in nursing. She has shown that same commitment in owning a series of Piggly Wiggly grocery stores with her family in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Because of taking chances that has benefitted the entire Independence community, Dunnin was selected the Distinguished Graduate for Mater Dolorosa School.

“(Durnin) is a kind and giving young lady,” Mater Dolorosa principal Cheryl Santangelo said. “She works very hard each day to make a difference in our community.”

Most Blessed Sacrament

Paula Talbot Dawson’s sun-natured attitude and passion for her community makes her the Distinguished Graduate for Most Blessed Sacrament School in Baton Rouge.

Dawson graduated from MBS in 1989. After graduating from Southeastern Louisiana University in 2000, she married her husband Jimmy, and they have two children, Payton and Kelsey. Follow-ing in her footsteps by attending MBS.

Dawson has been recognized locally, regionally and nationally for fundraising and development for nonprofit agencies serving those in need.

Dawson is the president of Greater Baton Rouge and Acadiana Junior Achievement.

She has worked with Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana and the American Heart Association. She serves the community as a member of the Baton Rouge Community College Department of Business Industry Board, JumpStart Financial Literacy Coalition Board, Our Lady of the Lake Business Advisory Board and a member of the Rotary Club.

Dawson credits MBS with nurturing the values which she in turn, nurtures in her family and community life.

MBS principal Cheri Gioe said, “I recently learned that Paula was a graduate of MBS when I asked parents to share why they chose MBS for their children. Paula and her family are active members of the church and parish and avid volunteers for the school. They have been supportive stakeholders. Paula also exemplifies what it means to serve by her service to several non-profit organizations whose mission is to support those in need. Lastly, Paula and her husband truly believe in Catholic education and are sharing this gift with their children.”

Our Lady of Mercy

Emily May Kline’s faith and Catholic school education equip her to offer the best of her alma mater, Our Lady of Mercy School in Baton Rouge, to others.

The OLOM Distinguished Graduate is Director of Development for the Baton Rouge General Foundation.

OLOM principal Chris Porche said Kline, a 1995 OLOM alumnae and 1999 graduate of St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge, has a firm commitment to her alma mater and her church, which is Our Lady of Mercy.

“Catholic education provides an opportunity for children to learn in an environment centered in the roots of Catholic faith traditions, prayer and service to one another,” Porche said. “Emily has dedicated countless hours of her time to the church and school community. She does this with a happy heart and for the betterment of her parish.

“Emily is a perfect example of our vision of a Mercy alum. She is a hardworking, intelligent, faithful, loving mother, wife and volunteer. She has the ability to bring people together. She shares her faith with others through her actions. She is a faithful church goer and volunteer for church and school projects.

“Emily has volunteered at our school, is a member of the School Advisory Board acting as secretary and also advancement committee chair, coached volleyball and along with her husband Chip was our annual fund chair couple,” said Porche.

Redemptorist

Raising his voice for good causes is one way Brian Fourroux is giving back to his community and that’s why he’s been selected as the Distinguished Graduate for Redemptorist High School in Baton Rouge.

“In today’s world, Catholic education is vital,” said Fourroux. “It is important for our youth to have the Catholic values instilled in them at a young age.”

As a professional auctioneer, Fourroux has raised countless funds for schools, churches, nonprofit organizations and groups across the south, according to Matthew Zeringue, president of the Redemptorist High School Alumni and Friends Association.

“Brian’s selflessness and ability to raise money for church parishes and organizations in our area is really unmatched,” said Zeringue. “He has a unique talent and is always willing to volunteer for worthy causes.”

Farroux, a 1979 graduate of Redemptorist High School, opened his business, Brian’s Furniture in Port Allen, two years later. Zeringue noted that Farroux started off taking orders and making deliveries himself.

“Brian has a work ethic and devotion to Catholic education that was instilled in him from his parents,” said Zeringue.

“Over time, the business grew and Brian was able to turn his attention to his auctioneer talent and hone his skills into a dynamic fundraising capability that is truly unique.

“Very few graduates have raised the amount of money that Brian has for organizations in our area. The successful business he started has allowed him the time and ability to use his hobby as a means to help others.”

Redemptorist St. Gerard

A longtime educator and coach in the Baton Rouge area public schools, Mark Moreau has deep ties to north Baton Rouge.

He is a 1973 graduate of Redemptorist St. Gerard School and later became a parishioner at St. Gerard Church. Exhibiting a strong commitment to his alma mater, Moreau has been chosen Redemptorist St. Gerard’s Distinguished Graduate.

“My belief in Catholic education is so strong that our children were educated kindergar- ten through 12th grade, and we continue to support our church parish’s school,” said Moreau, who is a math teacher at Central High School and a 93-year parishioner at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Baton Rouge, where he is a Eucharistic adoration volunteer and a football coach for the middle school.

“He is a living example of a lifelong commitment to serve his Catholic faith through service and devotion to his family and community,” St. Gerard principal Cheryl Domino said. “His dedication to educate the children in our community is an example of his commitment to serve God through his steadfast faith which is evidenced through his actions. And he has a million-dollar smile.”

Moreau has coached several championship teams through his 35-year career, but Domino said more important than the titles is the coach continues to shape young people to be examples of Christ.

Moreau was voted Ascension Parish School Teacher of the Year as well as being selected Cox Teacher of the Week. Our Lady of Mercy Men’s Club honored Moreau as the second recip-

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ponent of the club’s Anchor Award given for outstanding service to the parish.

Domino said Moreau is admired by his church congregation and the St. Gerard community that he considers family for connecting to other human beings as he works toward common goals.

“His faith in God, love of family and dedication is superior to most,” she said.

“He redefines what it means to sacrifice for others. His heart is big and that is why we nominated him to represent our school community.”

Sacred Heart of Jesus

Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge reached into its rich history in selecting Louis DeJohn Jr. as its Distinguished Graduate.

A 1962 Sacred Heart alumnus, DeJohn, now retired, had a successful career as owner of Louis Mechanic Contractors.

“The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart molded my faith in God and prepared me for life experiences,” said DeJohn, who has been married to his wife Becky, a 1963 Sacred Heart grad, for 53 years.

Sacred Heart principal Cecilia Methvin called DeJohn a “humble man who does much for his family and his community in a kind and generous manner. Many of our graduates are quietly successful and Louis epitomizes this.”

Methvin said DeJohn and his wife have been hosting gatherings not only for his class but many other graduating classes for more than 50 years.

“As we celebrate our 90th year, we wanted to honor someone who continues to hold steadfast the legacy of Sacred Heart,” she said. “As a husband, father and CEO, he has lived to serve the Lord. He is a model graduate of Sacred Heart in every aspect of his life.”

She also called the DeJohn’s marriage “an example of God’s love on earth, and we are proud to have them both as our graduates.”

DeJohn has been a member of the East Baton Rouge and Louisiana State plumbing boards, chairman of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Local 198 Board of Trustees, was selected by Gov. Kathleen Blanco to serve on Central’s first city council, has chaired Central’s “Cooking in Central” since 2005 and was king of the Krewe de la Centrale Mardi Gras ball.

Honors include the Central Chamber’s Lifetime Achievement Award and Central’s Co-Man of the Year.

“(DeJohn) is an asset to every organization he is affiliated with,” Methvin said. “He continues to be successful but always remembers his roots.”

St. Aloysius

After Brett Murray’s mother passed away from a rare kidney disease, the 2002 graduate of St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge organized a baseball team named Spirit in the Sky for the Baton Rouge Area Kidney Walk fundraiser.

The team raised $6,000 in its first year and Murray, combining his passion for baseball along with his dedication to the Kidney Foundation, has continued to host a weekend baseball tournament to raise awareness of kidney disease as well as funds.

It’s that type of commitment to helping others that led to Murray being selected the St. Aloysius’ Distinguished Graduate.

“Catholic education is more than a curriculum; it provides personal development for students rooted in Christian values,” Murray said. “My Catholic education challenged me to find a purpose and value in my life.”

St. Aloysius principal Erin Candilora called Murray’s volunteerism and fund-raising “notable.” She said his passion of coaching comes from knowing the importance of youth sports and was able to use that passion in raising funds for the National Kidney Foundation.

“(Murray) lives the mission of St. Aloysius School to educate the whole child in the Catholic tradition for a life of meaning and purpose,” said Candilora.

Murray has been a volunteer baseball coach at St. Aloysius for 12 years and a volunteer coach for flag football for three years.

St. Alphonsus

Chase Ryan Browning helps the students at St. Alphonsus School in Greenwell Springs see that the “the sky’s the limit” in pursuing their dreams.

St. Alphonsus School has selected Browning as its Distinguished Graduate.

“I believe Catholic education provides a strong foundation that instills in me

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my faith and values and follows me in all aspects of my life,” said Browning, a 2005 St. Alphonsus graduate who now serves as a pilot.

“(Browning) is a wonderful role model to all he encounters,” said St. Alphonsus principal Dr. Cindy Ryals. “As a student, he was an altar server, Boy Scout and became an Eagle Scout. He received the Arrow of Light award and is a member of the Order of the Arrow. He now enjoys his time as an airline pilot (the highest certificate an airline pilot can achieve) and captain with Sky West Airines. St. Alphonsus School is proud to have been a part of the foundation for his successes.”

The distinguished graduate keeps close ties with the St. Alphonsus community and is active in St. Alphonsus Church when not traveling for his job.

“He visits the community often and is a wonderful role model for the youth of our school,” said Ryals.

St. Elizabeth

Through the support of Timothy LeBlanc, St. Elizabeth Church and School in Paincourtville and St. Jules Church in Belle Rose meet the educational and spiritual needs of its students and parishioners.

For all his seemingly unseen work, SES has selected LeBlanc its Distinguished Graduate.

LeBlanc, a 1989 SES graduate, said of his time at the school, “Catholic education is vital to educating the entire child; fostering footsteps to grow into adults that walk in the footsteps of Christ.”

SES principal Dr. Kathleen Herpich noted LeBlanc draws from his experience as a pipeline technician to see that the St. Elizabeth and St. Jules communities run smoothly.

“(LeBlanc) is an active member of the Knights of Columbus. He is a member of St. Elizabeth and St. Jules churches by being a marriage mentor, a member of the maintenance committee, chairs a booth at the fairs and is an usher,” said SES Principal Dr. Kathleen Herpich. “He is a community softball league board member.

“If you call him you know he will find a way to help. Mr. Tim is a person who helps and does not want recognition. He quietly helps because he wants to. He will gladly stay behind the scenes to ensure the successful running of an event,” said Herpich.

St. Francis Xavier

When things need to be done at St. Francis Xavier School and Church in Baton Rouge, Melonie Judith Stewart is their ‘go to’ person. For her dedication to the church and school, she has been selected the SFX School’s Distinguished Graduate.

Stewart, a fifth-grade teacher at SFX School said, “Catholic education provides you with the foundation to trust in God while you guides through the journey of life.”

“Ms. Stewart has worked in Catholic schools for four years. However, she has supported Catholic ministries in a number ways,” said SFX principal Paula Johnson. “She is presently an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist at her church. Both of her sons received a Catholic education and are doing well. She volunteers for numerous events in her church and school. She is a supporter of Catholic education.”

Johnson commended Stewart, a 1985 SFX graduate, for working tirelessly to support students and staff.

“(Stewart) has been honored as an outstanding teacher. She never says no. She is always willing to help the school community,” said Johnson.

St. George

Cassie Montagnino Dinecola’s heart for service and extraordinary work ethic exemplify some of the most important Gospel values that St. George School in Baton Rouge strives to instill in its students. Living those Gospel values helped her become the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Dinecola, a 2000 graduate of St. George, has been a counselor in Baton Rouge since 2012 with a passion for working with people with disabilities and their families, according to Karla Prejean, disciplinarian and seventh-grade social studies teacher at St. George.

“Cassie enjoys helping people to realize and use their strengths to achieve their best lives,” said Prejean. The distinguished graduate is also a clinical professor at LSU School of Social Work.

“Cassie has worked tirelessly in her years since graduating from St. George to serve those with no voice. Her accomplishments have a positive, life-long impact on those she serves,” said Prejean.

Dinecola’s accomplishments include being chosen by the LSU faculty as a LSU baseball guest coach in May, 2019; an economic development assistantship from LSU from 2012-2014; and the Martha Tarver Volunteer Recognition Award from the Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center in 2007.

“Dr. Dinecola is truly a leader in the community. Not only does she work with clients with developmental disabilities, she shares her passion with others by working as a clinical professor at LSU School of Social Work. Her passion for service is a direct result of her Catholic education,” said Prejean.

St. Jean Vianney

From a solid Catholic education to a solid future, Dr. Matthew Stephen Berlinger credits his formative years in Catholic schools for leading him into a profession in the medical field, making him the Distinguished Graduate of St. Jean Vianney School in Baton Rouge.

“I believe that I received an exceptional education in the Catholic school environment that fostered moral and ethical reflection,” said Berlinger.

“Matt has always had a smile, a good sense of humor and loved to learn,” said St. Jean Vianney principal Wendy Ross. “This led to his desire to work with diverse people in a compassionate, caring medical facility. One of his program directors said, ‘Matt has it all in the head, but more importantly in the heart.’”

Ross also noted that Berlinger’s commitment “to serve the dear neighbor” sets him apart. Berlinger, a 2004 graduate of St. Jean Vianney, has already been recognized with several awards and honors including the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society, Aesculapian Society Intern Teaching Award, AOA George Karam Award in Teaching Excellence, Catholic High School Man of the Year and chief resident at LSU Health and Science 2019.

“Matt has always put it his best foot forward,” said Ross. “He cares. It’s not just a job or career for him, it is a pursuit to help others with pulmonary care and comfort.”

St. John

Catholic education provided the tools for success, according to Mary Eleanor Hebert. “Ellie” Hebert, the Distinguished Graduate for St. John Interparochial School in Plaquemine.

“My father and my Catholic education provided...
Hebert has also volunteered her time and talents to several projects at St. John School. She recently helped with the marketing of St. John School’s Continue the Legacy Capital Campaign.

“St. John provided me with an exceptional base to ground my life, gave me the knowledge needed to succeed at higher academic levels and taught me the importance of servant leadership – all in a safe, happy environment. I don’t think more could be asked of a school,” Hebert said. “Ellie has been honored by the Iberville Chamber of Commerce, Zonta International and the Louisiana Press Association,” said Schlatre. “She has graciously volunteered her time and talents to the Friends of the Plaquemine Locks, the St. John School Continue the Legacy Campaign and other community organizations.”

Hebert received the Iberville Chamber of Commerce Athena Award and the Baton Rouge Chapter of Zonta International’s Gary J. Hebert Award, named in honor of her father, for excellence in graphic design, communications, is a “hardworking individual who has experienced much success in her lifetime.” Hebert was a reporter and editor of the Plaquemine Post newspaper. She also started Louisiana Woman magazine and taught journalism at LSU.

“Growth in a professional and personal capacity is not just a result of the knowledge gained through experience,” Hebert said. “It is the result of dedication and perseverance.”

Principal Cherie Schlatre said Hebert, owner and operator of Peacock Communications, is a “hardworking individual who has experienced much success in her lifetime.” Hebert was a reporter and editor of the Plaquemine Post newspaper. She also started Louisiana Woman magazine and taught journalism at LSU.

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An active volunteer at her alma mater and in her church community, Stephanie Cargile has been chosen the Distinguished Graduate for St. Joseph’s Academy in Baton Rouge.

Cargile has won numerous ExxonMobil rewards, as well as the 2018 National Telly Award for advertising campaign collaboration, the Louisiana Chemical Association Most Valuable Player award in 2014 and 2016 and in 2019 won the Baton Rouge Business Report Influential Women in Business Award.

St. Joseph’s Academy
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Stephanie Cargile
Cargile, a public and government affairs manager for ExxonMobil in Baton Rouge, is a 1988 SJA graduate. According to Katie Valenciano, Cargile believes Catholic schools provide students with a unique blend of development, academic excellence and character formation that serve as a life compass throughout one’s life.

Valenciano said Cargile has supported St. Joseph’s as a parent volunteer, member of the Board of Directors and at Career Day events. A parishioner at St. Aloysius Church in Baton Rouge, she is also a longtime volunteer in the classroom and in parish activities and also active in outreach in the north Baton Rouge community.

“(Cargile) was chosen (Distinguished Graduate) because of her success and leadership, both at work and in our community,” Valenciano said. “Although she stays busy with her career, Stephanie continues to be a living example of the Gospel values learned while in Catholic school and exhibits those values through her leadership and community involvement.”

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St. Joseph Ponchatoula
For Joann Castjohn Fayard, St. Joseph School in Ponchatoula has been a lifelong staple in her life. The 1969 graduate sent her two children to St. Joseph and now three of her grandchildren attend the school, and she continues to be actively involved in multiple programs.

“Mrs. Fayard continues to selflessly give to St. Joseph School. She is in her third phase of being an active participant in our school,” said principal Danette Ragusa. “She has always been an advocate for our school and believes strongly in the value of a Catholic education and the importance of contributing and supporting an active family involvement to contribute to the success of St. Joseph School.”

Fayard regularly attends school events and weekly Masses. She is the coordinator of the school’s Uniform Swap Shop, keeping the uniforms organized and available, and hosts two swap shop days during the school year. She also assists with confetti eggs for the annual spring fair.

Fayard was chosen as the Billing Clerk of the Year three times for the Tangipahoa Parish School System as well as Site Supervisor of the Year. She held multiple positions on the St. Joseph Home and School Association when her children attended SJS. Fayard is also a founding member of the Garden Club for the Rosaryville Retreat Center.

Joann Castjohn Fayard
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Joann Castjohn Fayard

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``(Fayard) has a genuine love for our school,`` said Ragusa. ``She maintains close relationships with her fellow graduates and wants to help in any way she can to ensure that St. Joseph continues to be a productive and faith-filled school.``

``Catholic education not only teaches strong academics, but also teaches students morals and values that allow them to make Christ-like decisions throughout their lives,`` said Fayard.

``When it comes to call on volunteers, faculty and staff at St. Jude the Apostle School in Baton Rouge they can count on 1996 graduate David Territo.``

``Now, as a dad with two children at the school, Territo continues to give back to the school that gave so much to him.``

``David is a faithful steward to the St. Jude community,`` said St. Jude principal Michelle Gardiner. ``He can be seen volunteering as a coach, STEM leader and on the fair committee. He passes on to his family the values that were instilled in him as a St. Jude student.``

When St. Jude re-scheduled its parish fair because of inclement weather, Territo and his wife chose to continue their commitment to set up a booth and forego a fair committee.

``He can be seen volunteering as a leader and on the fair committee. He passes on to his family the values that were instilled in him as a St. Jude student.``

When St. Jude re-scheduled its parish fair because of inclement weather, Territo and his wife chose to continue their commitment to set up a booth and forego a fair committee. He continues to stay involved with his school through consulting and designing audio equipment for school assemblies, meetings, sports tournaments and plays. He also uses his talent to help provide audio equipment for St. Theresa of Avila Church in St. James.

``She has an unconditional love of Jesus and serving in his ministry,`` said Poché. ``She works with the youth of the parish to continue the PSR program.``

``Andrea embodies each of the charisms, veritas, fides and ministerium that St. Michael High School has distinguished as important pillars by which to live,`` said Khloe Page, SMHA alumni coordinator. ``She lives the faith by pursuing a life dedicated to God and sharing that with others. She serves like Christ through her various volunteer and leadership efforts by helping women in Louisianana corrections facilities get an education and become valuable members of society once released.``

Page added that Buttross has implemented new ideas and approaches toward rehabilitating female inmates and is willing to listen to others within her office to make sure all Louisiana offenders have a chance to become successful upon release. Buttross is also an active alum, attending multiple events and participating annually in the school's career day. Buttross is an active member of St. Jude the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge.

``Buttross was honored as a Capital City’s Finest Honoree for 2017 and Supervisor of the Quarter for 2013.``

``I am indebted to my Catholic education for playing a critical role in fostering my relationship with God and enabling me to see the best in people,`` said Buttross.

``St. Peter Chanel``

Learning about God’s love and mercy as a student at St. Peter Chanel School in Paulina motivated Donna Veron Waguespack to pay it forward and teach others, earning her the honor of Distinguished Graduate. Waguespack attended St. Peter Chanel School for eight years, graduating in 1973. She loved her teachers, some of whom were Dominican Sisters, according to principal Paula Poché.

``Donna believed that Catholic education was so important to her that she became a teacher and taught at St. Peter Chanel School for 23 years,`` said Poché. ``She continued working for St. Peter Chanel School as a religion coordinator, helping with prayer services, retreats and many other religious activities. Her three children are all graduates of St. Peter Chanel School as well.``

After leaving the classroom, Waguespack continued her ministry by serving as Parish School of Religion (PSR) coordinator for St. Theresa Church in St. James.

``She has an unconditional love of Jesus and serving in his ministry,`` said Poché. ``She works with the youth of the parish to continue the PSR program.``

``Andrea embodies each of the charisms, veritas, fides and ministerium that St. Michael High School has distinguished as important pillars by which to live,`` said Khloe Page, SMHA alumni coordinator. ``She lives the faith by pursuing a life dedicated to God and sharing that with others. She serves like Christ through her various volunteer and leadership efforts by helping women in Louisiana corrections facilities get an education and become valuable members of society once released.``

Page added that Buttross has implemented new ideas and approaches toward rehabilitating female inmates and is willing to listen to others within her office to make sure all Louisiana offenders have a chance to become successful upon release. Buttross is also an active alum, attending multiple events and participating annually in the school's career day. Buttross is an active member of St. Jude the Apostle Church in Baton Rouge.

``Buttross was honored as a Capital City’s Finest Honoree for 2017 and Supervisor of the Quarter for 2013.``

``I am indebted to my Catholic education for playing a critical role in fostering my relationship with God and enabling me to see the best in people,`` said Buttross.

``St. Peter Chanel``

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mentors,” said Gonzales of her formative years.

“Carlee’s personal accomplishments in our community have been numerous,” said Pat Sanguinetti, principal of St. Thomas Aquinas. “She continually works to improve the city of Hammond and the STA community.”

A graduate of Loyola University New Orleans and Loyola University College of Law, Gonzales served on the St. Thomas Aquinas Alumni Board from 2012 – 2019; she was a member of the Louisiana State Bar Association; she is a graduate of Leadership Tangipahoa 2013; selected Super Lawyers Rising Stars for 2018 and 2019; and named in the Hammond “Daily Star’s” “Top 40 Under 40.”

“Carlee has been a member of the alumni board since 2012, where she has worked on numerous projects and events to better the school,” said Sanguinetti. “She has donated her time and financial resources whenever called upon.”

### St. Thomas More

St. Thomas More School in Baton Rouge is a family tradition for 1975 graduate Jude Palombo, selected as the school’s Distinguished Graduate.

Palombo’s wife, Cindy, is also a graduate of St. Thomas More and all five of their children attended school there.

“My experience as a student of St. Thomas More in the 1970s was influential in my Catholic formation where I had my first Communion, confirmation and met numerous friends which I still have today,” said Palombo.

For Palombo, president and chief executive officer of Omni Specialty Packaging in Baton Rouge, the opportunity to integrate faith formation with his education was important. He noted that Catholic parents should consider Catholic schools as a way to further the Catholic identity of their children.

“With the Catholic school’s close connection with the parish (St. Thomas More Church) at large, children can receive sacraments and begin with their family participating in parish life,” he said. “On a very basic level the daily prayer at the beginning of school is such a spiritual positive thing that any Catholic parent should jump on.”

“Jude serves as a wonderful representative of St. Thomas More School,” said principal Brian Moscona. “His commitment to faith and family as well as his desire to serve others, make him an excellent model of what STM graduates should be.”

Another important part of Catholic school education is the history of strong, balanced and committed standards of academic excellence,” said Palombo.

Palombo credits Catholic education with “one of the most important things that affect my life and the lives of my family.”

### SHJ students enjoying ‘Playdate with the Principal’

When Sacred Heart of Jesus School in Baton Rouge principal Cecilia Methvin initiated Playdate with the Principal at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, her goal was to create a program that would bring her closer to the students. The program has done that and more, as parents, faculty and staff have all embraced this addition to school activities and students eagerly await their turn to spend this special time with Methvin.

Methvin’s most recent playdate found her exploring the campus with kindergartners in pursuit of missing 3-D gingerbread men! Each kindergartner proudly created a unique gingerbread man, complete with hair and clothing, only to discover the gingerbread men were missing upon returning to the classroom on a Monday morning.

Students posted “Lost” notices around campus complete with descriptions and drawings, but no “gingerbread men sightings” were reported. With no success from the “Lost” notices, kindergartners explored the school grounds with the help of Methvin, who was sporting her Playdate with the Principal tee shirt – in pursuit of the elusive gingerbread men. Complete with clues, school maps created by them, and magnifying glasses for “sleuthing,” the students checked hallways, classrooms and the gym, making sure to stop in the classrooms where kindergartners had siblings. Each time they knocked on the door, Methvin would lead them in asking the question, “1-2-3, have you seen our gingerbread men?” Students finally found the elusive gingerbread men in the library, along with a surprise snack of hot chocolate and, of course, gingerbread cookies.

Methvin read “The Legend of the Candy Cane” to conclude the playdate.

“The students loved having

**SEE SHJ PAGE 20B**
St. Michael High School adds second engineering class

After a successful first year of Engineering I with an enrollment of 29 students, St. Michael the Archangel High School in Baton Rouge implemented Engineering II: Applications in Computer Science to offer to students for the 2019-2020 school year. The course is focused on engaging students in programming and computational thinking to solve human-centered, technically challenging projects at the intersection of engineering and computer science.

In 2017, St. Michael set out to add an established, rigorous and comprehensive engineering program to its curriculum offerings. After extensive research, the school choose to partner with the University of Texas at Austin and its program, “Engineer Your World.” The program is designed by faculty in the university’s School of Engineering and College of Education and is also in collaboration with NASA engineers and secondary education specialists.

Currently, courses I and II focus on providing real world engineering applications to students while adding the element of service to others.

“All of our projects have a component built into them that focus on helping others in various capacities,” described department head Zach Leger. “Students also get to experience what engineering has to offer and gain invaluable experience in the field.”

Many of the program’s first-year students went on to begin college engineering curriculums at universities like LSU, Southeastern Louisiana University, Mississippi State and Louisiana Tech.

Will Clark, a 2019 St. Michael graduate, won the Encounter Engineering design challenge at LSU, said he was grateful for the course that St. Michael offered.

“Thanks to what I learned, I was able to lead my team of less experienced engineers to create the winning design for Encounter Engineering for (LSU). What was taught, applied to college level engineering,” said Clark.

In December, the Engineering II Honors class finished a motion capture unit which challenged students to develop a system that provided real-time feedback to physical therapy patients who performed rehabilitation exercises.

After analyzing user needs and creating a detailed functional model, students designed and built a basic wearable device that allowed a web camera to capture information about the joints’ range of motion. Students wrote programs that analyzed large quantities of video data, applied an algorithm for calculating changing joint angles, provided real-time user feedback and exported data to a file for future analysis by the patient’s physical therapist.

To culminate the project, students presented their models to a physical and occupational therapist in the Baton Rouge area.

“Having students present their projects and findings to professionals who are in the field is invaluable” said Leger. “It granted students an opportunity to truly experience life as an engineer and also what they can do to improve their projects and designs.”

If you are interested in learning more about the St. Michael’s Engineering Program or partnering with them, please contact zleger@smhsbr.org
The First Lego League (FLL) team at St. George School in Baton Rouge, the Dragon Bytes, received the Core Values Award at the FLL® Qualifier Dec. 5 at Holy Family School in Port Allen.

The Dragon Bytes will move on to the Louisiana State Championship at Jesuit High School in New Orleans in January. This team consists of 19 students: Coy Bruno, Chloe Clement, Beau Legnon, Quinn Luu, Ethan Noel, Rileigh Rinaudo, Gabriel Seranno, Max Schexnailder, Kenzie Stentiford and Kaiser Stentiford along with their mentors Wendy Bridevaux and Jenny Bruno.

During the course of the competition, judges recognize a team that excels across the Inspiration, Teamwork and Gracious Professionalism categories.

“This team displays extraordinary enthusiasm and spirit, knows they can accomplish more together than they could as individuals, and shows each other and other teams respect at all times,” said Bruno.

The teams also present on core values and are challenged to complete a task in front of the judges.

The students worked for more than three months preparing for competition. The First Lego League competition, City Shaper, included a rigorous challenge to create a project that would look at a building or public space in the community and come up with a solution to improve it. The students created a Modern Monticello by researching the past and how to use the past to create a more eco-friendly home in the future.

The Dragons Bytes also built George II, their tribot (a robot with three feet or wheels), using LEGO MINDSTORMS and programmed George II to complete many missions in the two-and-a-half minutes allotted at competition.

The Dragon Bytes loved the challenges associated with First Lego League completion and look forward to competing in January. The robotics club meets after school but is also offered as an activity class at St. George for sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

Bridevaux and Bruno said they hope the future of robotics at St. George continues to grow and be successful.

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Mrs. Methvin join them in the hunt for the gingerbread men,” said kindergarten teacher Amy Pickenheim. “It was so much fun watching her interact with the students and leading the pack through the hallways. It made the experience even more memorable for them.”

First grade teacher Hannah Coleman agrees with Pickenheim. First-graders playdate was pumpkin carving in October and Methvin returned to her roots as a science teacher.

“She turned a common fall activity into an engaging science lesson,” said Coleman, “and the students are still talking about it today.”

Other playdate activities this fall included a picnic lunch and story time with pre-kindergarten and Christmas cookie decorating with third-graders. Other grades will enjoy their playdates during the second semester.

“Sacred Heart is a school that takes tremendous pride in its time-honored traditions,” said Methvin. “I’m thrilled that our Playdate with the Principal aligns with those traditions and I look forward to spending special time with each class for years to come.”