

Smack Dab in the Middle!

A Monthly Newsletter serving the Middle School Families of St. Francis Xavier School

Welcome to a New and Exciting School Year!

Welcome to a new and exciting school year! We are grateful that you have chosen St. Francis Xavier School as the environment for your child's middle school years! We are blessed to have the opportunity to work with such fine students and families.

Welcome also to the first issue of *Smack Dab in the Middle* for the 2009/2010 School Year. *Smack Dab in the Middle* is a special newsletter to let you know what is happening at the St. Francis Xavier Middle School. Inside *Smack Dab* you will find out what students have recently studied, are currently studying or will be studying in the near future.

Wondering how to help your child suc-

ceed during the middle school years? Being involved in his or her education is as important now as it was when he or she was in kindergarten. Here are several ways you can support your child's learning and make a big difference in his or her school success.

Ask questions If you want to know what's going on at school, take the time to ask your child. If he or she says, "Nothing," follow up with a specific question. *Example:* "What chapter are you discussing in science class?" Talking about school helps your child see how important it is.

Expect success Tell your child what you expect from him or her at school—

such as hard work, perfect attendance and consistent study. Challenge your child to set goals in all classes. Or suggest that he or she tackle a difficult topic on a term paper. The important thing is for your child to learn, so don't overemphasize grades. Students achieve more when their efforts are encouraged.

Work together If something goes wrong at school, take a deep breath before you contact the teacher. Keep in mind that the teacher wants your child to learn as much as you do. Together, find solutions to the problem. Working calmly through problems will put your child back on the path to learning.

Learning About the World Around Us

The school year started out with a bang this year! The 6th Graders are learning about the Ancient World, and who better to teach them about it than an ancient teacher? We will be studying the Middle East for the next month or so.

The 7th Grade is hopping right into the causes of the American Revolutionary War. Did you know that King George 3rd of England was a German? (Probably a relative of mine).

The 8th Graders will be studying Geography. They will be watching the superb



Disney movie "Earth." Also, we'll be looking at the forces that shape our earth and the people who live on it.

The Middle School ventured north for a field trip to Camp Ripley (near Little Falls) on Thursday, September 24th. They have the finest Military Museum in the upper Midwest, and it was a great trip. Industrial Technology Teacher Don Soupir served as an outstanding guide for us. He was stationed there for many years in the Army Reserves.

I am planning to have two fantastic

speakers on Tuesday, October 27. These wonderful men, one from England, were both prisoners of the Japanese in WW2 and did slave labor on the River Kwai. Their stories are unforgettable! This will be open to the public.

We are planning a speaker for Veterans Day. He is receiving chemotherapy right now, but God willing, he'll be here to tell us what it was like to be on the Battleship USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor, December 7th, 1941. Again, we'd love the public to join us.

Mr. Muller

MS Physical Education: Not Quite the Olympics

To lead up to Family Fun Night, students in the middle school completed a dance unit. This was cross-curricular, pairing physical education with music. They might not admit it, but they enjoyed the unit. Did you see them dancing during Family Fun Night? The Limbo and hula hooping were two of their favorite activities.

We are already into the middle of a floor hockey unit, another favorite activity, which happens to coincide with the ice hockey games at the Olympics.

From here we move on to a couple of other favorite units: basketball and volleyball.



All of these activities require good sportsmanship and team work. The games all require good hand, foot and eye coordination along with consideration for other team members as well as their opponents. Everyone has the chance to play together in a safe, friendly and somewhat competitive manner.

Mr. Mead

Camp Foley

A reminder to 6th grade parents, we will need 2 male chaperones to go on our trip from May 10-14.

The cost of the trip is \$145.00, due by April 30th. Checks should be made out to St Francis Xavier.

Great Literature & Memorable Stories

Language Arts 6

We have just finished reading *The Hobbit*. Final projects are assigned and due on Monday. A vocabulary test on the book is this Friday. The next novel we will read together is *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. As we read, students will be assigned work on vocabulary and comprehension. We continue weekly spelling tests and are learning about adverbs. The students are learning to diagram sentences as part of their grammar study. Students are writing letters to Mrs. DeWilde thanking her for speaking to them about her time during the War. We were honored to have her at our school.

Language Arts 7

We are reading *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, a coming of age novel about a young boy growing up in a tough neighborhood where

many are judged by appearances. As we read, students will also work on memorizing and reciting poems to the class. Robert Frost's poem, *Nothing Gold Can Stay* is quoted in the novel and is part of this novel's main theme. Students will be memorizing it as well as understanding its connection to the novel and their own lives.

Students are writing letters to Mrs. DeWilde thanking her for coming to speak about her experiences during the War. She remains a positive person despite the many difficulties she endured.



Language Arts 8

"August 4, 1943

Dearest Kitty,

Now that we have been in hiding for a little over a year, you know a great deal about our lives."

The Diary of a Young Girl: Anne Frank. Anne Frank. New York, 1995.

The 8th graders are taking a close look at the life Anne must lead to stay alive, and how she and her family try to keep their lives normal in a frightening world.

Anne's story is the account of Anne and her family and their time spent hiding in Amsterdam during WWII. Prior to beginning reading, students are constructing timelines of WWII and presenting these to the class. They are also each reading a second book, either fiction or non-fiction, about the Holocaust. We were all honored to have Mrs. DeWilde come and speak to us about her experiences in Auschwitz. Students are writing her letters expressing their thanks.

Mrs. Lenczewski

Our Forty Day Journey

The Olympics fit right into the schedule for 6th Grade, because we're studying ancient Greece currently, with all of the myths and legends. We will be going on to ancient Rome in a few days. And shortly after that we'll launch into learning about our own wonderful state (mosquito's exclude) of Minnesota. We will examine the history of our great state up until the end of this school year. We plan a trip to the Wright County Historical Museum, among other things.

7th Grade is studying the Wars with Mexico in 1836 and ten years later in 1846. We will be examining the years up to and including the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. This was a most catastrophic time in US history. The war

was fought entirely on American soil and resulted in 600,000 dead. What a disaster!

8th Grade will be traveling south to Mexico for a survey of that very great neighbor. Then we'll be hopping across the Atlantic Ocean for an extended stay in Europe. We hope this will be very interesting for the students, because many of them have ancestors from this part of the world, and many will eventually visit the continent.

We hope that many of you heard our speakers on the Holocaust. They were excellent! We hope to another speaker this spring. Al Muller

Making Beautiful Music

If you were lucky enough to hear the Middle School Band perform at the Mardi Gras dinner, they you should consider yourself fortunate.

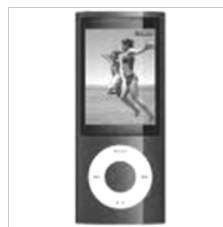
These band students have come a long way since the beginning of the year and I couldn't be more proud of their progress. They sounded fantastic with their rhythms, intonation, and crisp cut offs! Congratulations to them all!

This week they will be receiving some of the new music that will be performed at our spring concert (Date and Time TBA). In a few weeks we will be further studying musical terms and symbols, along with composers, and the different time periods in the history of music. Go Band!!!

Mrs. Fantauzza



Our Lenten Journey



We have started our Lenten journey with a number of projects that serve to remind us it is more blessed to give than to receive. We begin each week of Lent by gathering for prayer as a middle school in the chapel.

Our *Project iGive* raffle is underway with all proceeds going to Sharing and Caring Hands and Feed My Starving Children. Mardi Gras sales totaled over \$130.00. Additional sales bring the total near \$200.00. Tickets can be purchased from any middle school student, as well as after Wednesday Mass and Fridays during the lunch hour through Wednesday, March 24th.

We are also praying the Stations of the Cross and the Rosary. Each class has finished Unit 4, which focuses on the Church, and will soon have Unit tests. The topic for Unit 5 is Morality.

Mrs. Lenczewski



STFX Middle School Team

Nancy Lenczewski:	MS Religion MS Language Arts
Erin Marsyla:	MS Math MS Health
Al Muller:	MS Social Studies
Carol Fiedler:	MS Science
Joy Swearingen:	K - 8 Music
Lyn Fantauzza:	4—8 Band
George Mead:	K - 8 Phy. Ed.
Rachel Yakesh:	K - 8 Computer
Iliana Gramstad:	K - 8 Spanish
Mary Mahon:	MS Art
Jan Hance:	MS FACS
Don Soupir:	MS Tech. Ed.

“Anything is possible,

but you have

to believe.”

- Lance Armstrong

Who is Having a Bad Hair Day?

The elements of art: line, shape, form and space are concepts the middle school students are using to create their projects these first few weeks. The 7th graders have created line designs and the 6th graders have used line and color to design calico animals. Both are on display in the hallway outside of the art room. The French artist, Henri Matisse, who loved using shapes and colors, is the inspiration for collages by students in sixth and seventh grade.



“Bad Hair Day” has given the 8th graders an opportunity to be creative with curls and swirls of hair.

Mrs. Mahon

Growing Our Seeds of Faith

St. Francis Xavier Middle School Showcase

Please join us for a fun and informational event promoting St. Francis Xavier Middle School. The event will be held in the St. Francis Xavier School cafeteria next Thursday, October 8th, beginning at 7:00pm. The agenda includes a presentation by Kim Zumbusch, Middle School teacher introductions, a panel of current and alumni students, results of 2009 MCA-II scores, open discussion, and time for socializing.

Refreshments and dessert will be served.

Please RSVP by emailing Ann Greenhagen at ann.greenhagen@stfxb.org by Monday, October 5th.

Although this evening is geared to students and families in grades 4—8, all are welcome! Come and learn about all of the wonderful things St. Francis Xavier Middle School offers your child!

Learning About and Growing Closer to God

Religion 6

We are using the *Call to Faith* Religion series this year. The focus of 6th grade study begins with the Old Testament. Prayer is a very important part of our day. We participate in daily prayer, seasonal prayer services and go to the chapel to pray the Rosary at least once a month. On Fridays we spend time discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. We use the *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Venture*.

Religion 7

Our Religion series focuses on Jesus and the Gospels in Unit 1. We have prayer services in class and go to the

chapel to pray the Rosary at least once each month. Our new Mary Garden has also given us an additional place to pray as well. Students have each been assigned a book on a saint and a report on this saint due November 2nd. We spend time each Friday discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. In addition we use the *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Vision*.

Religion 8

Our 8th grade Religion series focuses on the Church and the Holy Spirit in the first Unit. We have prayer services and also pray the Rosary each month in the chapel. We examine the ways we are to live our lives and how that influences all

of our choices. Students have been assigned a book on a saint to read and write a report. These are due November 2nd. Friday class time is spent discussing missions and current issues facing Catholics. The *Maryknoll* magazine and a publication called *Vision* are also important additions to our curriculum.

All middle school classes will go to *Feed My Starving Children* again this year. Our trip is scheduled for Friday, December 18th from 8:30am—12:30pm. We are able to bring a few parents. Please let Mrs. Lenczewski if you would like to go.

Mrs. Lenczewski