



ST. MARK CATHOLIC SCHOOL

WHERE FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE MEET

Lifetime Lions Alumni Newsletter December 2014

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Dear St. Mark Alumni:

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education notifies schools around the country when they become eligible to apply for the National Blue Ribbon Award based on standardized test scores. Scores must be in the top 15% in the nation, and eligible schools must not have received a Blue Ribbon Award within the past five years.

I am thrilled to announce that your alma mater, St. Mark Catholic School, is one of those schools for 2015 (only two schools in the Diocese of Dallas qualified). This is quite an honor, and one that Father Cliff and I are eager to pursue.

Our faculty and staff have been working hard to complete the rigorous application process which concluded this month. Based on those applications, only fifty private schools in the nation will receive Blue Ribbon Award nominations in January, and the 2015 winners will be announced in September.

As most of you know, St. Mark has received this award twice, first in 1992 and again in 2007. Many of you were students at St. Mark during those years. A third Blue Ribbon Award would put St. Mark in a category all by ourselves. To date, there is no other school in the Diocese of Dallas to reach this status, and there are only three other schools within the State of Texas with that distinction (mix of public and private).

This is truly an honor that everyone from this community, past and present, should take great pride in.

During this season of giving, we at St. Mark are thankful for all that our alumni have given to this school over the years (read about some recent examples in the "Lions Mentor Lions" section below), and on behalf of the students, faculty and staff, I send you our very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2015!

Patricia Opon
Principal, St. Mark Catholic School

ALUMNI INVITED TO VISIT THE WEEK OF JANUARY 5

Calling all alumni! We know that many high school and college students will be home during the holidays. St. Mark resumes classes on Monday, January 5. Any alumni who are still on vacation are invited to come back and visit our campus any day that week! They can say hello to former teachers, have lunch with a sibling, check out their class composite photos, and see the updates we've made to the school. They simply need to check in at the front desk. We'd love to see them!

FOLLOW US

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www.pinterest.com/stmcs

LIFETIME LIONS REGISTRATION IS ONLINE

Haven't registered for Lifetime Lions yet? Complete your registration and become eligible for even more St. Mark alumni information and opportunities. [Click here](#) to register.

LIONS MENTOR LIONS

The "Lions Mentor Lions" program is an integral part of the Lifetime Lions alumni network. Alumni are given the opportunity to return to St. Mark and mentor current students on a variety of topics and activities. It's a chance to give back to the St. Mark community, and if you are a high school student, a chance to earn valuable service hours. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, please contact debbie.reed@stmcs.net. Here are some recent examples of how our former lions are mentoring our current lions ...

St. Mark Student Council Meets with High School Student Council Presidents: Recently, our Student Council officers had the opportunity to interview two Class of 2011 students who are currently serving as Student Body Presidents at their respective high schools. Emily Patton is the Student Body President at Ursuline Academy, and Alexander (Zander) Erturkuner is the Student Body President at Jesuit College Preparatory School. The St. Mark students sat down with each alum and asked a variety of questions, many of which centered on advice for our current 8th grade class as they embark on the high school application process and the prospect of becoming high school freshmen. The best advice? Be yourself, stay organized, and keep an open mind. The Student Council officers shared an overview with their fellow 8th grade students so that they could all benefit from the alumni's advice. [Click here](#) for more details and a complete transcript of the interviews.

John Paul II PAL Program: In November, members of the John Paul II High School PAL program visited with our 5th grade students. Three St. Mark alumni were part of the group: Fernanda Barrientos, Claire Forrest and Abbie Vela. PAL stands for Peer Assistance and Leadership. Members visit area schools and provide mentoring to younger students. They discussed topics such as bullying, peer pressure, and communication skills. Our 5th graders loved spending time with our alumni and other JP II students, and learned a lot from them.



Cistercian Student Heads Math Counts: St. Mark Class of 2013 alumnus and current Cistercian Preparatory School sophomore Chris Bender is coordinating the Math Counts program for St. Mark. He conducts weekly practices to prepare middle school participants for the national math competitions affiliated with this program.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the two St. Mark gymnasiums have been renamed? The former “Old Gym” is now known as the “Lion’s Lair Gym,” and the former “New Gym” is now called “Bacot Gym.” The renaming was made official during our fall pep rally. The spaces were blessed by Deacon Ed Putonti, and former Principal Mrs. Suzanne Bacot herself was on hand as the Bacot Gym was rededicated in her name. The following photo shows Mrs. Bacot and current Principal Mrs. Patricia Opon showing off the new outdoor lettering at the entrance to Bacot Gym.



ALUMNI NEWS

Ursuline Junior’s Essay Selected: Katie Pace (St. Mark Class of 2012) was recently among four Ursuline Academy Honors English students who were selected to read their essays at the colloquium, *Celebrating Flannery O’Connor: A 50-Year Retrospective*. Forty-eight students were

chosen out of 153 submissions from twelve schools. The academic seminar was held at Cistercian Preparatory School and celebrates O'Connor's work during the 50th anniversary of her death. Katie analyzed O'Conner's short story "Revelation," and her essay was called "Revelation': An Analysis of Mrs. Turpin's Startling Realization." The Ursuline essays are published on the [Cistercian Conference website](#).

St. Mark Graduate Earns John Paul II High School's Bishop Grahmann Award: John Paul II High School student Fernanda Barrientos (St. Mark Class of 2011) recently received the Bishop Grahmann Award. The award is bestowed on students who exemplify the qualities of the John Paul II mission statement through their academic performance, faith journey, citizenship and leadership.

Former Lion an Olympian: Thomas Scott, St. Mark Class of 2004, recently contacted us with an update. Upon graduation from St. Mark, he attended Jesuit College Preparatory School, earned a BS in Criminal Justice from Texas Christian University, followed by a Master's degree in Entrepreneurship from the University of Texas at Dallas. He has been studying karate since he was eight years old (including his years at St. Mark), and has been a member of the U.S. Olympic karate team for the past five years!

Piano Talent: A round of applause for Uyen Le, St. Mark Class of 2014 and current freshman at Ursuline Academy, who recently won third place at the Dallas Solo Piano Competition.

Volleyball Kudos: Congratulations to Amber Robin, St. Mark Class of 2014 and current freshman at John Paul II High School, who received an Honorable Mention award in TAPPS 5A Volleyball!

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES, EVENTS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



Laissez les bon temps rouler...let the good times roll!

**Our Annual Mardi Gras Auction & Dinner is fast approaching:
Saturday, January 31, 2015**

The DoubleTree Hotel – Richardson

It's our biggest fundraiser of the year! This year's event promises to be a great night of dining, dancing and bidding on some amazing items.

The 2014-15 school year is known as the "year of technology" in the school halls. It is our goal to put iPads and iPad carts into the hands of each student before the end of this school year. This year's auction proceeds will go directly towards that goal.

We are counting on our alumni participation and support to make this auction a grand success. If you would like to help out in organizing this event as a volunteer, or if you would like to donate auction items, please reach out to us. We need help with venue decorating, set-up and clean-up, solicitations, ticket sales, and data entry. **Service hours are available.**

More information and ticket sales will be available soon on our [website](#). Celebrate Mardi Gras, and help support your alma mater at the same time!

GO ST. MARK LIONS: Basketball season begins soon! Check out the team schedules by [clicking here](#)! Bring the family and come out to cheer on your alma mater!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GIVING

As you review your tax deductible donations for the year, please consider giving to the St. Mark community. St. Mark Catholic School is a non-profit organization that allows for you to make a tax deductible donation. Many companies also provide matching funds.

Digital Wish Technology Donations: St. Mark is now accepting technology-specific donations through Digital Wish with the goal of equipping our students with iPads and iPad carts, further integrating personal technology into our curriculum. [Click here](#) to donate. Feel free to share this link with family, friends and associates who might like to help.

Gap Fund Campaign: At St. Mark, every effort is made to keep tuition at a reasonable rate, allowing more of our parish families to provide a Catholic education for their children. Each year, there is a "gap" between the tuition amount charged to each family, and the actual costs incurred by the school to educate each child. In 2014-15, that difference is \$1,075 per student. It is through fundraising efforts and the generosity of donors that this additional cost is met. The purpose of the St. Mark Catholic School Gap Fund campaign is to provide a direct way for donors to help bridge this gap. Donations in any amount are appreciated, all donations are 100% tax deductible, and matching funds are welcome. To donate to the St. Mark Catholic School Gap Fund campaign, please [click here](#).

Donation to a School Program: To make a monetary donation to a particular department or program at the school (such as the Athletics Department), please [click here](#). Enter the amount under "Miscellaneous" and specify the program in the "Comments" section.

We appreciate your generosity!

STAY CONNECTED

Keep us posted! As we receive alumni updates, we incorporate a section in our "Weekly School Bulletin" called "Alumni News" that is sent to our entire school community, and we include it in our alumni newsletters, and on our social media pages, too. Tell us about your recent activities and accomplishments. High School into adulthood -- we'd love to include them all! Our goal is make this Alumni Newsletter a place where you can learn about fellow alumni and ultimately, keep in touch with each other. Simply email debbie.reed@stmcs.net with details.

Need to update your email address or other contact information? Contact debbie.reed@stmcs.net.

FAVORITE ST. MARK MEMORIES:

When registering for "Lifetime Lions," you are asked to share your favorite St. Mark memories. Geno Coradini, Class of 2013, says it well ... **"All of them."**

SPOTLIGHT ON THE CLASS OF 2012

2007 was the year that St. Mark won its second Blue Ribbon Award from the U.S. Department of Education. The Blue Ribbon flag was hung in the school's gymnasium, but was not framed. As a class gift to the school, the 2012 Student Council had the 2007 Blue Ribbon flag (as well as an American flag) framed that year and both are still hanging in the Bacot Gym.



"Once A Lion, Always A Lion!"