

Diocese opens new Catholic school year

SCRANTON — The Diocese of Scranton heralded in the new 2022-23 academic year two weeks ago when it enthusiastically welcomed back 4,430 students enrolled in 19 Catholic schools. There are four high schools and 15 elementary schools in the Diocesan educational system.

“Each school year we look forward to the excitement of new beginnings. This is especially true this year as we are able to enjoy more activities and celebrate the many successes of our students together,” Diocesan Secretary of Catholic Education/Superintendent of Schools Kristen Donohue expressed. “We are looking forward to sharing these positive experiences with our school families.

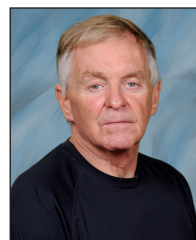
With the start of a new school year, Donohue said, there is a renewed focus on the spiritual, academic and emotional growth of students. On a daily basis, Diocesan schools strive to strengthen their connection with Christ, as well as provide ways for students to collaborate, think critically and demonstrate their creativity.

“As we work with our students on these 21st-century skills, we do so as Christ would, with kind hearts and an awareness of the social and emotional needs of all involved,” the superintendent remarked. “We are blessed to have the most dedicated and compassionate administrators, teachers and staff.”

New Principal at Holy Family

On the administrative level, the Diocese welcomed a new principal to the helm of Holy Family Academy elementary school in Hazleton.

Thomas Kostic, a U.S. Air Force veteran with extensive experience in Catholic education, was recently appointed to the position after serving as a longtime faculty member at the former Bishop Hafey High School in Hazleton, where he was also director of religious formation.



Tom Kostic

Since then, Kostic, who is on track to be ordained a Permanent Deacon for the Diocese in November, has filled the roles of DRE and athletic director at Holy Family Academy. He has also served as acting principal on three occasions during his 32 years with Diocesan schools.

“Catholic education is different than public education, (and) that difference makes all the difference,” Kostic noted. “I would not be in the school



business if I was not in the Catholic system.”

The new principal envisions a steady progression toward normalcy since the COVID-19 outbreak.

“We just celebrated our opening school liturgy with all grades in attendance. This was the first time in three years,” he said.

Social, Emotional Skills Learning

One of the many initiatives Scranton Diocesan schools are extremely proud of as the new academic year begins is the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in Catholic schools.

According to Kara Kennedy Ware, principal of Saint Clare/Saint Paul School, Scranton, SEL is the process by which young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills

and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals.

“SEL emphasizes empathy for others, while establishing and maintaining supportive relationships and making responsible and caring decisions,” Ware explained.

She continued by highlighting four major points to cite why SEL is a crucial part of a school’s curriculum: relationships provide a foundation for learning; emotions affect how and what we learn; social and emotional skills can be taught; and SEL has a positive impact on academic performance, health, relationships and citizenship.

“SEL programming has truly become a focal point at Saint Clare/Saint Paul School,” Ware said. “We know that if we address the SEL pieces first, then true learning can occur with all of our students at every grade level.”



Holy Rosary School in Duryea



One of the many images capturing the first days of classes at Catholic schools around the Scranton Diocese is the above photo from Notre Dame High School in East Stroudsburg.



Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston

All Saints Academy new vending machine dispenses 'food for thought'

SCRANTON — Vending machines in schools are nothing new, but how about one that provides refreshment and sustenance for the mind?

Brittany Haynos-Krupski, principal of All Saints Academy in West Scranton, was effusive in discussing the Catholic elementary school's new, creative concept of a vending machine that rewards student patrons with knowledge.

She was even more excited about detailing how there is no money required for the educational treats — just service to others, teamwork, personal accomplishments and even some random acts of kindness.

During the first days of the new academic year at All Saints, Haynos-Krupski explained, the Knights school community implemented a "House System"

to help promote positive behavior and provide a little friendly competition.

After faculty and staff were assigned to one of the four "houses" — each named for one of the four Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) — all students in grades pre-K thru eight discovered which "household" they would become part of.

"The energy in the gym was amazing," Haynos-Krupski said. "The students were so excited to pick their house. As the houses grew, so did the energy. We want the students to feel that sense of community at All Saints Academy."

Each student was given a wristband to signify their house color and pennants were created to decorate the houses, as the four

separate "families" within the All Saints family afforded students an even deeper sense of identity and inclusion.

"The houses spent the entire day together," the principal related. "They ate lunch together, enjoyed a special ice cream treat and bonded with students on all grade levels."

During the presentations, faculty and staff stressed to the students the importance of kindness toward all and striving to be the best they can be — which led to the idea behind the book vending machine.

According to Haynos-Krupski, "house points" will be awarded throughout the year for helping others, community service, academic achievement, teamwork and other positive accomplishments.

"Faculty, staff and students will have monthly meetings to nominate students who have gone above and beyond during the month in their house," she explained.

Those students who are chosen will be recognized at

school Masses and receive tokens for the unique vending machine stocked with books for all grades.

"Students will keep the books that they receive. We need to keep books in the hands of students in all grades," Haynos-Krupski noted.

All Saints Academy students gather around the school's new book vending machine.



Royal Treatment: Holy Redeemer athletes 'play it forward' for community causes

WILKES-BARRE — Holy Redeemer High School athletic teams and cheerleaders are playing and performing as hard off the field, as well as on, to be champions in every respect as the 2022-23 academic year kicks off.

The "Play Like A Royal!" service-project initiative at the Wilkes-Barre Catholic secondary school has team members uniting to address the social causes of the day, with the same competitive edge as taking on opponents on

the opposite sidelines.

Cody Opalka, the school's newly appointed vice principal, spearheads the project by echoing the "Play Like A Royal" mission that permeates the concept: "Holy Redeemer High School athletics is committed to educating ethically responsible student-athletes who uphold the pillar of servant-leadership as they put faith in action in their school, in athletic arenas and within the community at large."

Team requirements that instill diligence in conditioning the athlete's spirit state that at least one group service project is to be completed within the team's season, along with a Catholic-identity faith component requiring prayer during every practice and competition and one seasonal Mass attended by the team.

Thus far, the Holy Redeemer girls volleyball team has led the way by organizing a donation drive to help offset the needs of the Blue Chip Farm Animal Refuge in the Back Mountain area, which has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The junior high golfers will participate in the "Adopt-a-Highway" project on Sept. 24, as team members do their part in collecting trash along the entrance and exit ramps of Interstate 81 near the Mohegan Sun Arena in Wilkes-Barre Township.

According to Opalka, the Royal cheerleading squads are volunteering at the third annual Drive-thru Trunk-or-Treat Supporting Autism Awareness NEPA on Oct. 9. As the

cheerleaders lend their helping hands to the effort for a second time, they hope it becomes a yearly tradition.

A natural for the school's cross country teams will be their participation in the "Walk to End Epilepsy" on Saturday, Oct. 15, at PNC Field in Moosic. All proceeds raised will benefit the Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern PA and the opening of a Wilkes-Barre community center serving those afflicted by the medical condition.

"This project resonates with the athletes," Opalka noted, "as one of their own will benefit from the local community center."

Also on Oct. 15, Holy Redeemer's girls soccer program will host a "Pink Game," with money raised from shirt sales and raffle baskets benefitting the "Paint Pittston Pink" annual crusade marking October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month in the battle against all cancers.

Girls on the field hockey team will volunteer at the annual "Pink Game" to fight breast cancer on Tuesday, Oct. 18.

Players will be selling "Fight for a Cure" t-shirts to benefit the Saint John Paul II Cancer Research Institute, a non-profit medical research facility devoted to finding cures for various medical diseases. The event will also include a 50/50 drawing and gift basket raffles.

The boys soccer team at Holy Redeemer has already given of their time and efforts to the Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank, as their day was spent packaging food boxes for distribution to various food banks and senior centers in the area.

Upcoming service projects planned by the school's athletic programs include the football team visiting the Graham Academy School in Kingston to assist students with autism and behavioral challenges, and varsity golfers volunteering at local nursing homes.

The Holy Redeemer girls tennis squad and junior high school soccer team are also preparing to participate in clean-up projects at Coal Street Park and Kirby Park in the Wilkes-Barre area.



Members of the Holy Redeemer girls volleyball team pose with donations collected for the Blue Chip Farm Animal Refuge.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL



All Saints Academy, Scranton



Epiphany School, Sayre



La Salle Academy, Jessup



Notre Dame Elementary School
in East Stroudsburg



Holy Family Academy, Hazleton



Holy Cross High School, Dunmore



Holy Redeemer High School, Wilkes-Barre



Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green



Saint Jude School, Mountain Top



Saint John Neumann Elementary School,
Williamsport



Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School, Wilkes-Barre



Saint Agnes School, Towanda



Wyoming Area Catholic School, Exeter



Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School, Dunmore



Saint John
Neumann High
School,
Williamsport