

Holy Redeemer dedicates new learning center in honor of late principal

WILKES-BARRE – Holy Redeemer High School honored the legacy of its late principal by dedicating a new learning center in her honor Jan. 28, 2024.

In front of dozens of family members, fellow educators and friends, the Doreen Dougherty Digital Learning Commons was blessed and put into use.

“The day my mother came into Holy Redeemer, she saw the library and immediately had a vision for what it could be,” daughter Shaina Aquilina said. “To see it really come to life today has been something that is truly special and unique.”

Dougherty died last August after an illness. She had been working on transforming the school’s library into an environment that better met student needs at the time of her passing since she became principal of the building in 2019.

“The library was previously just somewhere you would grab a book and go back to class and now it feels like more of a community atmosphere. Every table has room for more than one person,” son Devin Dougherty explained.

The new space is filled with desks, sofas, smart boards, and computers – an environment better suited to help students engage in the digital era.

“The Digital Learning Commons really became a space for the future and a space where students can have that college feel,” principal Cody Opalka stated.

Opalka said Dougherty talked often about space, so naming it after her will forever highlight the lasting impact on those around her.

“Doreen was such a servant leader. She would make time for you even if she

had a million things going on,” Opalka added. “Her dedication and passion for education made her the perfect principal for Holy Redeemer.”

For Doreen’s family, the word many repeated at the dedication ceremony was “grateful.”

“I’m so grateful that they put in the time, effort and dedication that it took to make this space everything she wanted it to be and more,” Aquilina said.

“I just want to thank everyone. It has been amazing to see the impact and legacy she has left and will continue to leave on everyone,” Dougherty added.



Family, friends and staff of Holy Redeemer gather on Jan. 28, 2024, for the dedication of the Doreen Dougherty Digital Learning Commons (Photo/Dan Piazza)

Service projects emphasized as schools celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2024

DUNMORE – A central aspect of Catholic education is learning the importance of service to others. As part of Catholic Schools Week, every Catholic school participates in service activities to showcase how to make the world a better place.

At Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School, students wrote letters to their parish priests, collected personal care items for veterans at Gino Merli Veterans Center and held a cereal box domino event on Feb. 2, 2024.

“We started our cereal box domino during COVID. We did it upstairs in the hallway and it became a thing. The kids really liked it,” Maryelizabeth Shattin, principal, said.

Students are invited to bring in a box of their favorite cereal and the eighth grade set up all of boxes in a path that would have them all fall in the pattern of dominoes.

“It is really a great way for us to help others. We turned it into a class competition as well. The class that collects the most, in ounces, gets a dress down day,” Shattin added.

The whole school looked on and cheered as the cereal boxes all started to topple on each other.

More than just providing a few exciting minutes, all the cereal boxes were



A student works to create a ‘Cereal Box Domino’ on Feb. 2, 2024.

then donated to a worthy community cause.

“They are going to a really good cause. They are going to Saint Ann’s food pantry,” eighth grader Keira Lalli explained. “We do a lot of service projects throughout the year, and we give to people in need, and it shows that we care for people.”

Shattin said events like the cereal box domino are an easy, fun way to instill Christian values of service and giving in the students – with the goal of making them good Christians.

“We listen to the Gospel and listen to the things Jesus did, helping those around him, and we want to instill that in our students,” she said. “We want them to walk in Jesus’ shoes.”

Faculty ‘gets in the game’ to celebrate Catholic Schools Week in Wilkes-Barre

WILKES-BARRE – There is no question that the eighth graders at Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary School appreciate their teachers – but that didn’t mean they would show them any mercy on the volleyball court.

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, the Wilkes-Barre school held its annual 8th grade vs. teachers volleyball game in the school gym as part of Catholic Schools Week 2024.

Leading up to the game, eighth grader Megan Ohrin, predicted a fun time.

“We’re going to get some good competition going between us,” she said. “It’s going to be a lot of fun. It’s going to be really funny.”

Patrice Perry, a third-grade teacher, said she loves Catholic Schools Week because there are different activities – like the volleyball game – that take place each day.

“The kids are thrilled to see their teachers out there – being one of the kids,” Perry explained.

The teachers – who wore black t-shirts with their name ‘Breakroom Bandits’ on the front – ended up taking home the win in the fiercely-fought competition in front of the whole school.

“We get so close with them,” eighth



Eighth grade students play volleyball against their teachers at St. Nicholas-St. Mary School on Jan. 30, 2024.

grader Lilah Hilal said of her teachers. “All the teachers have helped me so much.”

“We have great teachers,” Ohrin added. “Everyone knows everyone. Everyone is really close.”

Teachers are the backbone of Catholic Schools. While many think Catholic Schools Week is just for students, in reality, it also helps to honor teachers, administrators, staff and volunteers who help to create a family-like atmosphere in every building.

“We always call it our Saint Nick-Saint Mary family because that is what we are every day. Faculty, student, staff, everyone works together,” Perry explained.

Importance of Catholic faith plays prominent role in Catholic Schools Week

WILLIAMSPORT – Amid many fun and engaging activities that take place during Catholic Schools Week – the importance of faith and religion never take a back seat.

Every Catholic school in the Diocese of Scranton held special Masses during Catholic Schools Week – and some like Saint John Neumann Regional Academy – also prayed the rosary when they came together on Jan. 31, 2024.

“We had all three of our buildings here. We bring the whole Academy together to celebrate Mass, our identity, to live out our mission,” principal Alisia McNamee said.

The Mass, which was held at Saint

Boniface Parish, featured older students sitting next to younger students – a hallmark of a ‘mentorship program’ that has positively impacted many kids.

“Since I came here, the seniors mentored me and since then I’ve been mentoring kids younger than me and it helped me to develop as a person,” senior Aidan Vogt explained.

The Catholic Schools Week Mass at Saint John Neumann Regional Academy was celebrated by Father Bert Kozen, V.F., Chaplain, and concelebrated by Father Glenn McCreary, V.E., Pastor, Saint Boniface and Saint Lawrence Parishes; Father Sean Carpenter, Pastor, Resurrection

Parish; and Father Shawn Simchock, Administrator, Saint Ann Parish.

Senior Malachi Coleman says Saint John Neumann Regional Academy has taught him many Christian values – including how to be humble, help others, and have love and dignity for all people.

“They really do shape you well with Christian values, to help you go out into the world and be a shining light,” he said.

Elizabeth Weller, another senior at Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School, agreed.

“I live out my faith just by being kind and lending a hand to others. If anyone is struggling, I always try to help them.”



Students from Saint John Neumann Regional Academy in Williamsport gather for Mass at Saint Boniface Parish Jan. 31, 2024, in celebration of Catholic Schools Week.

Duryea school collects hundreds of soup cans as part of ‘Soup Can Derby’

DURYEA – Cans of chicken noodle, vegetable and tomato soup weren’t just flying off store shelves recently. They were rolling down ramps in a heated competition inside Holy Rosary School.

As part of Catholic Schools Week 2024, the Duryea school held its annual ‘Soup Can Derby’ to benefit the Pittston food pantry. Students were invited to bring in cans of soup on Jan. 29 – and test how fast they would go down a plywood platform in the school gym against other student’s cans.

“It is truly exciting. We get to dress up and not only have fun with things like the soup can derby racing, but we also get to donate and give back to our community,” seventh grader Julianna Ciuccio said.

On only the first day, students collected 386 soup cans and had a goal of surpassing 450 cans by the end of the week.

“Throughout the year we do many service projects. We sent Christmas stockings to Janet Weis (Children’s Hospital) for kids that are stuck in the hospital during the holiday,” Debbie Brady, Holy Rosary’s 8th grade teacher, explained. “The students just made soup the other day and brought it up to Crossin Towers and Father Michael helped with that.”

Each year, Holy Rosary students enjoy challenging their friends in the ‘Soup Can Derby.’ They understand, however, that it benefits a very important cause.

“Jesus went out with His disciples and



Holy Rosary School in Duryea held a ‘Soup Can Derby’ on Jan. 29, 2024.

gave to those who needed it, so this is us going out, we’re doing what Jesus wants us to do and give to those in need,” seventh grader Haley Karboski explained.

As part of Catholic Schools Week, Holy Rosary students also got to participate in an Irish Step Dance class, talent show, and wacky activities. In addition to the soup cans, they also collected socks for those in need and sold candy to benefit the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters who have been so integral to the history of the school.

Jackie Keating, who is not only the 6th grade teacher at Holy Rosary, but a parent of three daughters at the school, said she is constantly amazed by how receptive students are to the Christian values they are being taught.

“I think the one thing that stands out to everyone is the foundation of Christ,” Keating explained. “My gets get to experience that and live that every single day and not just on Sunday at Mass!”

Harlem Wizards entertain, and teach, students at Good Shepherd Academy

KINGSTON – Students at Good Shepherd Academy were jumping with joy and the gymnasium was filled with laughter Feb. 1, as a member of the Harlem Wizards entertained and educated the students during a Catholic Schools Week assembly.

“It was our first experience with the Harlem Wizards,” Jim Jones, principal, said. “They deliver an inspirational message, and they couple that message around athletics and basketball, and they interweave that message with our children. While they’re seeing something fun, they’re leaving with a message that they need to be good people, have upstanding values and need to treat others with respect.”

For an hour, the students were treated to comedic skits, ball-handling tricks and more.

“I always look forward to Catholic Schools Week as just a break from regular school,” eighth grader Chase Liska said. “You don’t have to worry so much about work and different projects.”

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Catholic Schools Week. In addition to the Harlem Wizards assembly, Good Shepherd also had a ‘Science in Motion’ presentation, talent show, spirit day and much more.

“It gives us a week to celebrate not only our academics, but we celebrate our teachers and our students, we celebrate our PTA, we celebrate our athletic associations, we celebrate everything that is good about Catholic education,” Jones said. “Everything



A member of the Harlem Wizards interacts with Good Shepherd Academy students.

at Good Shepherd, we begin in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These students are the future of our church. They’re the future of society.”

As she prepares to move onto high school next year, eighth grader Sienna Curry said she has been given both the academic and spiritual foundation to succeed.

“They definitely prepare us. We do a lot of service projects and work together,” she said. “This school is a family. It is a great community to be in.”

While Catholic Schools Week is always a fun experience, it is also a time to highlight why Catholic schools are great places of academic excellence and faith-filled mission.

“Here at Good Shepherd, we place our utmost trust in our delivery of the academics, the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical growth of children. We’re setting the stage for their futures,” Jones said.

Diocese of Scranton

CATHOLIC

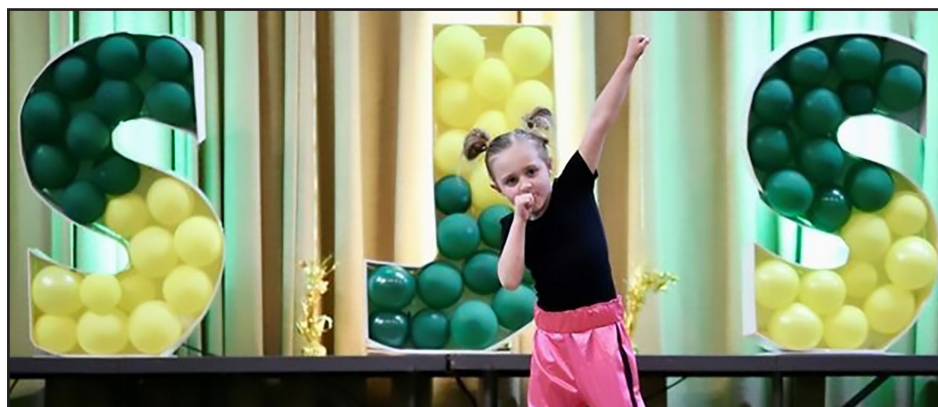
SCHOOL SYSTEM

FAITH • ACADEMICS • SERVICE

The Diocese of Scranton is committed to educating our students in an environment that is academically excellent and facilitates the development of moral judgment and Christian decision-making. We are proud to share the following successes of our students in the classroom and in their service to others. Each day, our schools are fulfilling their mission of preparing today's youth and young adults to become tomorrow's faith-filled leaders.



The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, recently celebrated Mass at **Holy Redeemer High School in Wilkes-Barre**. Bishop shared with the students and faculty that we are called to “Do What We Can” for others and that is how people will see the power and presence of God.



Callie Michaels, a student at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top**, dances her heart out during the school's “SJS's Got Talent” Catholic Schools Week Talent Show.



It was a groovy time at **All Saints Academy in Scranton**. As part of Catholic Schools Week, students danced through the decades while making a monetary donation in support of the Doreen Dougherty Scholarship Foundation, raising more than \$800.



The community of **La Salle Academy in Jessup** appreciates the pastors who partner with them to support the mission of the school. This year, students celebrated the pastors of our Adopt-A-Priest program, like here with Father Gerard M. McGlone from Queen of Angels Parish, and thanked them by delivering donuts.



Students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green** wrapped up Catholic Schools Week with “Falcon Friday,” the return of our annual basketball shoot-out and showing off their Falcon Spirit!



The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated Mass with the students and faculty of **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore**, during which he asked the school community to “flavor the world with God's goodness by showing kindness to all.” After Mass, he posed with the fourth grade class who served as music ministers.



Seniors at Saint John Neumann High School in Williamsport showed their appreciation to teachers and staff by giving a shirt to someone who has made an impact on their life during their academic career.



Pre-K 4 students at Epiphany School in Sayre celebrated the start of Catholic Schools Week by making pocket rosaries using beads and pipe cleaners.



Monsignor John Sempa, pastor of Corpus Christi and Saint Barbara Parishes, stops to visit some Chess Club members from Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter during the school's Open House during Catholic Schools Week.



Father Michael Bryant, pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish, treated the students of Holy Rosary School in Duryea to ice cream sweets as the community celebrates Catholic Schools Week.



Faculty and students at Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg donated over 400 items for the "Cereal Box Domino Challenge" with the boxes lining the hallways for an epic domino train during Catholic Schools Week. All the cereal was then donated to the Saint Matthew Parish Food Pantry in East Stroudsburg.



Students at Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg kicked off Catholic Schools Week with their annual "Souper Bowl" food drive for the less fortunate.



During Catholic Schools Week, students at Holy Cross High School in Dunmore showed off their expansive knowledge of current events, entertainment, sports and general trivia, as well as impressive dance moves during a visit from *The Brain Show*.



It's cool to be at Holy Family Academy in Hazleton! During Catholic Schools Week, students and faculty built their own sweet snow cones using the Kona Ice Machine.



Students from Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport paired up with their high school buddies to participate in STREAM activities during Catholic Schools Week. Activities ranged from science, technology, exercise, geography and art.