

Saint John Neumann's first MLK Day of Service reflects Church's mission

WILLIAMSPORT - Saint John Neumann Regional Academy students, faculty, and administrators celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day with an in-person learning day on Jan. 19, 2026, filled with faith, service, and fun.

"It's a basic tenet of Christianity - and a deep part of Catholicism - that we're called to meet Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless and the stranger," Father Glenn McCreary, pastor of Saint Boniface and Saint Ann Parishes, said. "Our day of service reflected MLK's life mission as well as the Church's mission to the world."

This was the first year Saint John Neumann Regional Academy held a student school day on MLK Day since it became a national holiday.

"This has been a goal of mine for many years. It is important that students learn about and share their time and talents with others on this day," explained Principal Alisia McNamee. "Martin Luther King Day is more than a celebration of his importance to civil rights and peaceful protest. We wanted our students to show how important MLK's message about service resonates throughout our lives and within our Catholic beliefs."

Dr. Chad Greevy, Assistant Principal and Curriculum Director added, "We had over 200



Saint John Neumann Regional Academy primary students make cards for local heroes as part of a MLK Day of Service on Jan. 19, 2026.

students participating in morning Mass, and every SJNRA student provided service at our local food bank; provided the collection of products, assimilation, and distribution of hygiene-care packages to local soup kitchens; helped with projects around Saint Boniface Parish; or wrote thank you cards to community service heroes for our Catholic Schools Week project."

CATHOLIC FIRST

Students gathered before the normal start time of their school day, to join Saint Boniface parishioners for daily Mass followed by a message from Williamsport Mayor Derek Slaughter.

The 8:00 a.m. Mass was attended by parishioners, SJNRA

parents and family members, community leaders, and SJNRA PreK-3 through Grade 12 students.

During his homily, Father McCreary spoke about the importance of Dr. King's message of equality and service and how it helped to shape our nation's pathway.

However, he also explained how King and others like him "stood on the shoulders of others before him ... including many black Catholic saints."

Father McCreary referenced saints like St. Martin de Porres, St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Augustine of Hippo, and St. Benedict the Moor. He also spoke about six African Americans who are on the path to sainthood, including Servant of God Julia Greeley and Venerable Mother Henriette Delille.

"Thea Bowman, as an educator and musician, used her voice to highlight the beauty of African American church music and to speak about justice to the American Bishops," Father McCreary said.

Following Mass, Mayor Slaughter, spoke to those in attendance about the needs of the community and the necessity for giving back.

Slaughter shared how volunteerism can be impactful



Students in third through fifth grade assembled thousands of Easter eggs as part of their MLK Day service project.

to a community and emphasized how St. John Neumann's Day-of-Service "is a day we serve those less fortunate than us."

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VOLUNTEER LOCALLY

Following Mass, students in grades 9-12 headed to the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to begin their service to the community.

However, students and teachers were not the only ones sacrificing their time and day off to work at the food bank.

Employee Ryan Watts, Volunteer Projects Coordinator, was the lone employee that morning. He came in on his "day off" to serve alongside the Neumann High School students and faculty. Watts shared that "roughly 430 groups a year volunteer" at the food bank.

"The kids did great. I feel that it's important to encourage the younger generations to do good things for their community," Watts said.

Watts related that this was the first time a group had come in on MLK Day to volunteer, and he has already invited Saint John Neumann back for its Day-

of-Service on the same holiday next year.

"Saint John Neumann tries to volunteer there three or four times a year with groups of students. I think today changed the perception for some of our kids. A few were hesitant to attend not knowing what to expect, but after an hour and a half and four pallets of packed food boxes for veterans later, we showed Neumann's passion for care and our energy to help others," Dr. Greevy shared.

MIDDLE SCHOOL INVITES SPEAKER, SERVES OTHERS

Middle School students began their morning of service with an interactive lecture and applied activity with Melodie Shaw.

Shaw, the Former Executive Director of the Campbell Street Family & Youth Center at the Williamsport Community Center from 2006-2010, spoke about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s sacrifice for today's society and how his actions and words helped to inspire students and adults alike.

Jennifer McPherson, Director of Guidance, related that Shaw shared with students about "how to respond to adversity peacefully."

She cited the March for Civil Rights that MLK led as well as other events.

"Martin Luther King sacrificed himself for people of all ages, cultures, and genders," eighth grader Quillen McPherson said.

Quillen made the connection that "Jesus and even some Catholic saints" made similar sacrifices.



The MLK Day of Service for students, faculty and administrators began with the celebration of Mass at Saint Boniface Parish.

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Saint Agnes School sock collection delivers comfort and warmth

TOWANDA – Across the Diocese of Scranton, Catholic Schools Week looked a little different this year.

A big snowstorm in late January, icy roads, and frigid temperatures forced delays, closures, and schedule changes in many places, stretching what is traditionally a single week of celebration into something longer and more flexible in many communities.

Yet even as calendars shifted, the foundation behind Catholic Schools Week remained the same: faith, learning, and service to others.

Throughout the 19 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Scranton students participated in outreach projects that extended beyond school walls and into the wider community.

One such example came from Saint Agnes Elementary School in Towanda, where students collected socks to benefit the local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post. The socks will be distributed to men, women, and children throughout the local area and the state – providing warmth and comfort during the cold winter months.

The service project was organized by the school's 5th Grade Kindness Club, which took responsibility for collecting and counting donations from every grade level. From Pre-K 3 through sixth grade, students were encouraged to bring in socks, turning a friendly competition into a shared mission.

"We were bringing socks and we would count them up and give them to people who need them," fifth grader Killian Smith said.



Fifth grade students from Saint Agnes School in Towanda pose with nearly 400 pairs of socks that they collected for the local VFW during Catholic Schools Week 2026.

When asked how it felt knowing the socks were going to the VFW, Smith's answer was simple and sincere: "Good."

His classmate, Will Eberlin, was struck by the number of

donations. "There were a lot of socks," he said. "It will help a lot of people, and it will keep people warm."

In the end more than 360

pairs of socks were collected, with second graders leading the way by donating 96 pairs.

Several students spoke about how meaningful it was to help others during a week already filled with celebration.

"Catholic Schools Week is really fun because you get to play games and think of the people you're giving to," fifth grader Sofia Lrozzo stated.

For Max Bride, the combination of learning, fun, and service is what makes Catholic Schools Week special.

"I think it's nice to help people," Bride said.

Through projects like the sock collection, students at Saint Agnes School learned to live the Gospel in tangible ways and that even small acts of kindness can make a meaningful difference.

Saint John Neumann Academy puts faith into action on MLK Day

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"We heard that we have to learn about our ancestors' mistakes. Without learning from each other, we will make the same mistakes. Doing what people like MLK did helps us understand their sacrifices better," the Neumann middle schooler explained.

Ann Wilson, Saint John Neumann High School Secretary and 1983 Neumann alumna commented, "From my observation, even the hardest to engage students were one hundred percent on board with the projects they were assigned, and I witnessed some great camaraderie in the hallways between High School and Junior High students.

GRADES 3-5 ASSIST WITH ST. BONIFACE PROJECTS

The upper elementary students wrote their own prayers for their Peace Tree and helped

Father McCreary organize, clean, and assemble thousands of plastic Easter eggs used for parish and community Easter egg hunts.

"Our students took on a bigger task than expected putting together Easter eggs for Saint Boniface and helped in organizing areas of the church campus," Arianna Scutt, fourth grade teacher, said.

Fifth graders studied the "I Have a Dream" speech and discussed its importance.

They also learned that Dr. King spoke locally at Lycoming College, adjacent to the Saint Boniface campus, in April 1958.

"Our students did multiple activities during the week. We were busy, but it was good busy. We helped the church, learned about Dr. King's message, and made connections between his message of service and how simple services can make big impacts," added third grade teacher Sara Meixel.



Following Mass on Jan. 19, Williamsport Mayor Derek Slaughter spoke to students about the importance of volunteering.

YOUNGEST STUDENTS WRITE LETTERS TO HEROES

SJNRA Primary students also discussed the legacy of MLK Jr. and his teachings. Teachers developed a curriculum that taught students that a "legacy" is the impression of what you or someone else leaves behind.

"It's what people will

remember you for. We had the honor of bringing action to this legacy, which made them very excited, by making cards for our local heroes. This paired with the lesson they had on community helpers," Shayna McNamee, Pre-K 3 teacher, explained. "We centered our learning around MLK's quote that 'Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.'"

She added, "Jesus came up multiple times in our conversations. When learning about MLK and the kindness he shared, a Pre-K student even said, 'like Jesus.' It was perfect."

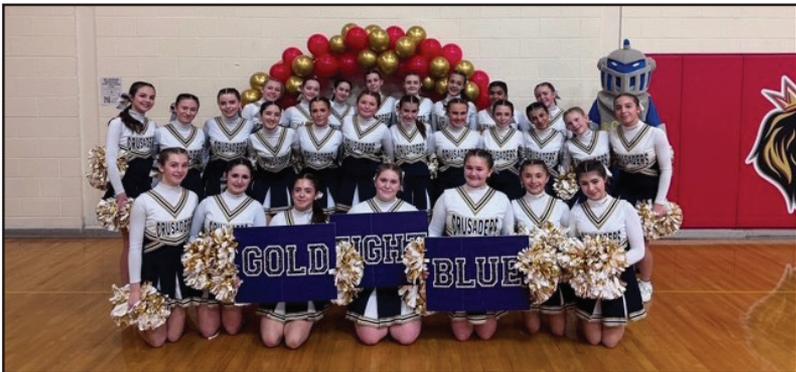
The letters, cards and pictures were delivered along with 'Thank You Baskets' during Catholic Schools Week to local fire companies, police departments, nurses, and the local armory. Provisions for the baskets were donated by SJNRA families as part of MLK Day and Catholic School Week.

"I witnessed some great camaraderie in the hallways. I feel that this day was completely beneficial to our students allowing them to learn in a hands-on way, what service to your community can be," Wilson said. "We showed our students many different ways to serve that day, and our Neumann Knights approached all tasks with greatness. I believe that our Academy had another moment of excellence that day. May there be many more!"

For more information about Saint John Neumann Regional Academy or to inquire about Admissions and Enrollment contact: admissions@sjnra.org or call (570) 323-9953.

For more information about the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, located at 3301 Yahoo Drive, Williamsport, call (570) 321-8023, or to contact Volunteer Projects Coordinator Ryan Watts, call (570) 980-9079 or email him at rwatts@centralpafoodbank.org.

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.



Congratulations to the varsity and junior varsity cheerleaders at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** for their performance at the Holy Redeemer Cheer Competition. The Crusaders took home first place in varsity and second place in junior varsity last weekend.



Student council officers at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg** serve up sweet treats to their classmates at the Catholic Schools Week ice cream sundae bar.



Congratulations to Chloe Coslett, an eighth grader at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**, for scoring 1,000 points as a Lady Falcon!



Second grade students from **Saint Agnes School in Towanda** learn about the types of clouds and their water cycle.



Students from Mrs. McDermott's fourth grade homeroom at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre** show their school spirit dressing up for "decades day" as part of Catholic Schools Week.

Coming in March...
 Celebrating the recent success of our *Living the STREAM* competition. More than \$116,000 was raised from 800 donors!



During Catholic Schools Week, students from **All Saints Academy in Scranton** played a game against the Learning Campus from the NEIU. Students from all grades also made signs to cheer on their teams.



First grade students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** celebrated the 100th day of school by building a large tower with 100 cups.



The winners of the 'Religion Bee' at **Notre Dame Elementary School in East Stroudsburg** pose with their medals.



Seniors at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport** give a presentation to other students in the school gym.



Kindergarteners at **Epiphany School in Sayre** celebrated the 100th day of school by dressing as 100 year olds and completing 100 themed challenges.



Students from **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** participate in the Blessing of the Throats for the Feast of Saint Blaise.



Students at **La Salle Academy in Jessup** are loving their newly refinished gym floor.



Students from **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** recently sponsored a bake sale with the proceeds benefitting the Bernardine Sisters.



Students from **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** were recently recognized for earning scholarships to Holy Redeemer High School based on their high school placement test scores. Scholarship recipients pictured include: Matthew Shemo, Bridget DePhillips, Frank Pacelli, Eugene Pisano, Tyler Vecchi and Kelsey Barrett. Scholarship recipients not pictured are: Jorja Lamoreux, Lucianna Dunn and Nathan Marsh.



Students from **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore** gathered on Feb. 11 with several Diocesan priests for a working lunch. Students met with area pastors to discuss ways of forging deeper connections between our student body and their parish communities.