



### Focusing on Discipleship

For the past 104 years, Sacred Heart Area School has strived for academic excellence, to provide for students the tools they will need to succeed in the future. What sets Catholic schools apart from public schools is our ability to also develop the spiritual part of the student for a happy life. Teaching students to be followers of Christ and keeping God at the center of what we do, and who we are, is the key to our success. Instilling in students gratitude for what they have and a love and respect for each other and all of God's creation gives them the guidelines to accomplish this. In our Veterans Day and Christmas programs we learn to be thankful to God and others. In community service projects we learn to show our love for others. We learn about respecting creation in religion class, recycling, and community spruce up. From our teachers, alumni, parishioners, and families, we learn about the Church and discipleship. We learn the most of how to live happily in God's Kingdom from each other. Thank you all, for playing such an important role in our lives and faith.

### New Principal



There have been many changes at SHAS over the last year, but one of the biggest changes was the addition of a new Principal. Before coming to SHAS, Mr. Durham was a high school mathematics teacher at some area schools, and worked as an engineer and manufacturing manager for several local companies. Mr. Durham originally grew up on a farm southeast of Brainerd, MN and still calls the lakes area home. He enjoys playing softball, and also enjoys watching the Minnesota Twins and amateur baseball. He's also a devout Minnesota Gophers and NDSU Bison football fan. Mr. Durham is very grateful that he was given the opportunity to lead a faith based school in a rural community that is composed of dedicated teachers and staff and respectful students. If you haven't met Mr. Durham, he'd love to talk with you and learn more about SHAS history!

### Securing our classrooms

At our last Spring Blast/Dinner and Auction, several of the attendees donated to our special school security project. Approximately \$6,000 was raised towards the purchase of more secure doors for our classrooms. These new doors will keep our students safe from an intruder and they're better insulated to save energy. Thank you to everyone that attended the Spring Blast and contributed to this important school improvement project! If you haven't attended our Spring Blast fundraiser or haven't attended in awhile, I encourage you to do so again. The theme of the next Spring Blast is "May the Fourth be with you!", which means the school and all the rooms will be decorated with a Star Wars motif. It should be a lot of fun for everyone that attends, and please remember it's one of our most important fundraisers.

*Save the date:  
Spring Blast  
May 4th, 2019*

## Serving the Community

On Wednesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> we had our 5<sup>th</sup> annual SHAS Work-a-thon. Just like last year, the SHAS students worked at the city cemetery and around the church grounds. Preschoolers cleaned up around the school and church buildings. All of the other classes and some parents were at Evergreen Hill Cemetery, removing overgrown sod from foot stones and raking leaves. The students learned about being respectful in the cemetery, realizing that all the monuments represent the lost loved ones of others. Everyone received a valuable lesson in service to the community. The event raised nearly \$8000 for Sacred Heart Area School. Great work everyone!



*Students, staff & parents alike, worked together to beautify the Staples cemetery during the SHAS Work-a-thon on October 17th, raising \$8,000.*



*4<sup>th</sup> graders edging foot stones at Evergreen Cemetery*

## Grateful for Our Blessings



*Color guard students Isabel Cole, Abby Brichacek, and Riley Reese paying solemn respect during this year's Veteran Program.*

The 2018 SHAS Veterans Day Program was very well received by everyone that attended. All students respectfully honored veterans through their songs, words, and actions. Each grade sang one of the official service academy songs which was appreciated by all the veterans in the audience. Everyone really enjoyed listening to Mr. Jim Vollegraaf of Staples, MN, who described what it was like to go through basic training in the late 1960's. He did a great job of relating his experiences in basic training to the students we have in SHAS today. He explained that his classmates in basic training had to help each other become better soldiers, and regardless of their physical differences, they were all in it together. Today, more than ever, our children need to learn about patriotism, gratitude to God and others, and love and understanding for our great nation. Thank you, veterans, for your many sacrifices for all of us to live in peace, security, and freedom.

*Guest Speaker, Jim Vollegraaf (left) First graders singing the Army song (below)*



## Where are they now?

Since SHAS was founded in 1914, graduates have gone on to many careers, served their communities, and accomplished great things. For this issue, we would like to highlight the accomplishments of former SHAS graduate Leah (Becker) Jacobson. Since graduating from SHAS, Leah founded and is the CEO of the Guiding Star Project which promotes a culture of life. In addition to her responsibilities with Guiding Star, Leah and her husband have 6 children and manage a bed and breakfast near Crosby, MN that caters to bike riding enthusiasts.



Leah (Becker) Jacobson as a 4th grade student at SHAS in 1991-1992 (left) and her official Guiding Star website picture

## Welcome Back!



If you've visited SHAS lately, you may have noticed a familiar face. Patricia DiGiovanni, who is both a former student and teacher at Sacred Heart has returned to teaching at the school. Mrs. DiGiovanni attended SHAS through the 7th grade, when the school dropped the 7th and 8th grades and she had to finish

her education at the local public schools. After earning a degree in Elementary Education from Moorhead State University, Mrs. DiGiovanni secured her first teaching position as one of the first lay teachers at Sacred Heart after the sisters were removed from the school. After teaching at Sacred Heart for 4 years, she then taught Kindergarten, 2nd grade, and Special Education at both the Staples and Motley elementary schools. After retiring from teaching, Mrs. DiGiovanni subbed at several schools in the area, including Sacred Heart. This past summer, when the 4th grade position opened, Mrs. DiGiovanni decided to come back to her alma mater and is blessed with having her grandson in class. Mrs. DiGiovanni's life and career at SHAS has come full circle, and we're very glad that she chose to come back!

## A Message from Father Gabriel

Christmas Greetings to our Sacred Heart School's Alumni! We carry on today a rich tradition of academic excellence and the deep spiritual heritage founded upon our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate in this season! As the sudden appearance of light casts out the gloom of darkness, so the coming of the Christ-Child at Christmastime was the great light descending into a dark and wounded world. Even so are we called to bear the light of Christ into the world today! You—*alumni of Sacred Heart*—are the heirs of a prolific spiritual and academic tradition. And, to those who have been entrusted with much, much will be expected (cf. Luke 12:48).

Is the fact of the Incarnation—*Jesus Christ coming among us as one of us*—evident to others by how you live your life? Does the Lord's Sacred Heart *beat with joy* and excitement at the thought of the good you strive to do each day? Have you ever given occasion for His Sacred Heart to beat heavy with sorrow? Regardless of where you are at today, how can you strive to improve upon the past by committing the *present* to Him now? That present, your *present* moment, is the greatest gift you can give your Lord. After all, it is His birthday we celebrate at Christmas.

I am so very grateful for you, your families, and so many of you—our alumni's—children who continue to carry on the rich traditions of Sacred Heart Area School. I thank *God* for you and your families! And, I thank *you* for all you do! Please continue to keep the mission of our school in your prayers. Pray for me... and know of my prayers for you as well!

In his name,

Fr. Gabriel Walz, Pastor

### Congratulations 2018 Dollars for Scholars recipients!

**Bernie St. Pierre Scholarship \$200**

Braden Tyrrell

**Sacred Heart Area School Scholarship \$200**

Kyle Serich

### SHAS Scholarship Campaign Fund

Consider a gift of a scholarship for a parish student this Christmas season. Our goal is to make our school available to all children in our parish communities that want a faith-based education, regardless of financial status. **The two ways you can help are to either become a sponsor and / or spread the word, sharing our need with others.** Thank you for consideration. Have a blessed Advent!

**Sacred Heart Alumni & Friends**  
**324 4th Street NE**  
**Staples, MN 56479**

Visit us today at: [sacredheartareaschool.org](http://sacredheartareaschool.org) or <https://www.facebook.com/Sacred-Heart-Area-School-106804739351912/>

## ALUMNI & FRIENDS

The following donations were received from December 2017 to November 2018.  
We sincerely thank each of these donors for helping Sacred Heart Area School.

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