



Spring 2015

A Publication for the Alumni of St. Margaret Mary Catholic School, Omaha, NE

Vol. 1, Issue 9

SMM Awarded Monarch Butterfly Rescue Grant

St. Margaret Mary School was selected by the National Catholic Education Association as a grant recipient for its Monarch Butterfly Rescue Project. Funds will be utilized to construct a butterfly garden on the school grounds. Under the direction of Kate Rezac, teacher-leader of the project, students, parishioners and community members are tilling the soil, composting and planting a 1,550 sq. ft. garden. The goal is to be an active participant in efforts to help the monarch butterfly migration come back from the brink of extinction.



The garden will be part of the University of Minnesota's Monarch Larvae Monitoring Project. No other group or individual from Omaha is currently part of this study. Students will also tag butterflies and submit information to MonarchWatch.org.

The Butterfly Garden will engage students from kindergarten through 8th grade in interactive learning experiences outside the walls of the school building. It will provide a new lens for students to learn across all subject areas.

As part of the garden planning process, a Name the Butterfly Garden contest was held. Sixty-two entries were received. Multiple features were chosen from different submissions and a logo and name were combined to christen the garden. The result is the blended work of SMM parishioner Theresa Copenhaver, SMM alumni (1996) Sue Copenhaver and current SMM third grader Michael Sauer.

Hence forward, the garden will be called the SMM Monarch Meadow.

Alum Conner Rensch Achieves National Attention



Conner Rensch, 2003 alum, remembers her SMM days with great fondness. Though she was heavier than most, she was well liked by her classmates. With the support of her parents, and a positive attitude, she had a healthy self-esteem that brought success in and out of the classroom. In spite of her achievements she got bigger and bigger. By the time she was in 9th grade she weighed over 200 lbs. She remained outgoing and

popular and was elected Student Board President at Marian High School.

Following high school, she earned a scholarship to St. Louis University. During her freshman year she tipped the scales at 271 lbs. and her size began to bother her. She was tired of being judged by her weight and wanted to make a lifestyle change. She began by working with a nutritionist and personal trainer. She started eating six small meals a day and following a strict exercise regimen. She said, "It took me a year and about seven or eight months." Now, she's a slim 141 pounds, half the size she used to be.

Conner's incredible journey has been featured in People Magazine, ABC's Good Morning America and social media outlets.

Today Conner loves herself from the inside out. She is truly happy not because she is skinnier, but because she is healthier and fought to become so. Conner is devoting her time to inspiring young women to love themselves from the inside out. She has spoken to a variety of high school and university audiences. She is also in the process of training for a transformation fitness competition in June. Congratulations to Conner on her amazing accomplishments and her desire to motivate others.

In the Loop...Do you have an interesting update on an SMM alum...

Or other news or memories to share? We welcome your additions to the newsletter. Please send to alumni@smmomaha.org.

We are accepting memorials, honors & donations. Please send to: St. Margaret Mary School
6116 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68132

School Wish List

There are so many ways you can help SMM. Currently we are in need of iPads for the teachers to use in the classrooms.

If you would like to help with this item please send contribution to: SMM, Attn: Peggy Grennan/Wish List
123 N. 61st St, Omaha, NE 68132.
Your support and any donation is greatly appreciated!

St. Margaret Mary Spirit

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SMM & Social Media: Attention SMM Alumni a new Facebook Page has been launched featuring current activities at the day school and accomplishments of our alumni. Please like us and follow all the amazing achievements of the past and present Spartans. The Facebook page is St. Margaret Mary - SMM Omaha Alumni. Also don't forget to follow us on Twitter @SMMschoolOmaha.



Upcoming Reunions

Following are the classes that have upcoming milestone reunions in 2015:

2005 - 10 yr.; 1995 - 20 yr.; 1985 - 30 yr.;
1975 - 40 yr.; 1965 - 50 yr.; 1955 - 60 yr.

If you would be interested in planning a reunion for your class please email: alumni@smmomaha.org.

Memorials and Honors

In Memory of:

Mary Dunbar

Donor Name:

Dr. Richard & Michaela Belatti

SMM In the News

St. Margaret Mary School was in the Omaha World-Herald when teachers and student's dressed up as their favorite character from a book during Catholic Schools Week.



Audrey Fangman, daughter of alum Scott Fangman, Class of 1987, dressed as Judy Moody.



3rd grade teachers Mrs. Kate Rezak and Mrs. Barb Gilman.



Nebraska First Lady, Susanne Shore, mother of an SMM 8th grader, reading to the 4th graders on Dr. Seuss' Birthday. She was one of several celebrity readers who read to K-4th grade students that day.



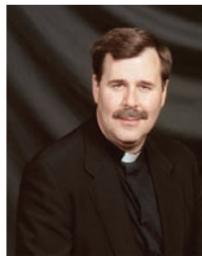
SMM was featured in the OPPD newsletter for winning the OPPD Marshmallow Challenge. The challenge tasks students to build a structure using only dry spaghetti, string and tape. The structure is then topped off with a marshmallow - all in just 20 minutes. Winners were based on the structures height. SMM's structure stood 43.5 inches high. Forty-seven teams participated. Way to go SMM students!

Notable Alum Accomplishments

SMM Alumni from Creighton Prep were State champions: Brett Slezak, SMM 2014 in tennis and Jack Slagle, SMM, 2014, John Lukowski, SMM 2012 and Thomas Doran, SMM 2011 in cross country.

Jonathan Collins, SMM 2011 alum, got a 36 on the ACT, the highest score possible! He is a senior at Mount Michael. He has been accepted at St. John's University in MN, William and Mary in VA and Notre Dame so far. He is waiting to hear from Dartmouth College and Cornell University. He will decide where to attend next year when he gets all the responses.

At Mount Michael he continued playing the alto sax which he began in 5th grade with the Music in Catholic



From the Pastor

By Father Greg Baxter

Dear Saint Margaret Mary Alumni,

Every spring, students graduate from St. Margaret School as students have done for over 90 years. And every fall, these students begin high school. Without fail, we hear one story after another about how students are so well prepared to take on the new challenges in high school. Our graduates soon discover that their years at St. Margaret Mary Catholic School have given them a very firm foundation in the faith, along with a strong academic background that includes strong study habits and critical thinking.

I am never surprised when I hear these stories, because St. Margaret Mary School not only has a group of dedicated teachers and staff, but an entire community of parents and parish members that round out the educational process so essential to our dynamic school. Most importantly, our Christ centered environment enables our students to go beyond classroom academics and enter more deeply into their life of faith which gives the students a solid foundation on which to stand as they grow and mature.

If you haven't had a chance to visit St. Margaret Mary School recently, I invite you to call and arrange a visit so you can see what the generosity of so many has provided for our children. I ask your continued prayers and support for St. Margaret Mary School. We are doing well; however, it is always a challenge and a struggle to maintain our high level of excellence. With your continued prayers and financial support, we can continue our long standing, powerful and faith filled institution for our young people of today and tomorrow. Thank you for all that you do for St. Margaret Mary School.

God bless you!

Fr. Greg



Jonathan Collins

Schools band program. He played basketball, soccer and legion baseball. He participated in Academic Decathlon (Mt. Michael just won its second small school state title recently). Every summer Jonathan has been a part of VBS as a crew leader.

Congratulations to these alums on all of their accomplishments. If you know of an alum's achievements or have an interesting story about one of our alumni please email the information to: dschinzel@smmomaha.org.



From the Principal

By Peggy Grennan

Easter greetings to our Alumni!

The students and staff are hard at work on various things:

- 2nd grade made their First Holy Communion April 26th.
- 8th grade received Confirmation on April 19.
- Kindergarten will perform their music program in May. They are also busy learning how to read.
- 1st grade is very busy learning how to read and working hard on their journaling and handwriting.
- 2nd grade is working hard on their cursive handwriting and their math facts.
- 3rd grade did great projects on their favorite spots in Omaha and their state projects. Which state did you have in third grade?
- 4th grade showed their artifact projects for social studies. They are learning all kinds of things about Nebraska.
- 5th grade is busy with their President's Briefcase project. Do you remember which president you had?
- 6th grade are presenting their All About Me projects. Their science invention projects were so interesting!
- 7th grade did a beautiful presentation of the Stations of the Cross for the whole school.
- 8th graders will be presenting their Lighthouse & History Hall of Fame projects.
- 8th grade also presented their musical *Night in the Wax Museum* to rave reviews.
- Mrs. Sheri Cohen-Vollmer, our PE/Health teacher, has been busy teaching the whole school how to dance. SMM won the \$1,000 top prize in the Go Move student dance contest! Her next project is teaching First Aid to the 7th grade and CPR to the 8th grade.
- Mrs. Kate Rezac, 3rd grade teacher, received a grant from the NCEA to build and establish a Monarch Butterfly Garden. St. Margaret Mary School will be a way station for the Monarchs during their migrations. The Girl Scouts helped out by planting milkweed plants at Mulhall's nursery this winter. Parents and students will help prepare the garden, install irrigation and plant all the milkweed and other butterfly friendly plants all in the next few weeks.

Mrs. Barb Gilman and myself attended the NCEA National Catholic Education Association convention in Orlando during Easter break. Mrs. Gilman was a presenter on utilizing social media to promote Catholic schools.

Don't forget to follow us on Twitter @SMMschoolOmaha.

God bless you,

Peggy Grennan

St. Margaret Mary Is Proud To Be Part of Omaha Gives!

On May 20, 2015, please donate to St. Margaret Mary School during Omaha Gives, a 24-hour fund raising event sponsored by the Omaha Community Foundation. Last year, more than 18,000 people raised \$6.3 million for almost 600 area non-profits in just one day!

The 2015 community event begins at midnight on May 20 with a minimum gift of only \$10. Encourage your family, friends, colleagues, clients and fellow alums to participate. Use your social media contacts to spur on donations. The Omaha Community Foundation awards bonus gifts and matching funds throughout the day.

To donate go to omahagives24.org or visit smmomaha.org and follow the link. A link can also be found on the SMM Alum Facebook page (St. Margaret Mary - SMM Alumni Omaha). Thanks in advance for your generosity.



In Memorium

It is with sadness we announce the passing of Class of 1992 alum C.J. Nebbia. Please keep his family in your prayers.



Email Request! If you received a paper copy of this newsletter in the mail please send us your email as we would like to begin sending our newsletter electronically. Please send your email to: dschinzel@smmomaha.org.