



# DeTOURS

THE NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF ST. MARTIN OF TOURS SCHOOL

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FALL 2022

## Continuity Reigns with New School Year

One of the absolute best aspects of being a teacher, whether one is in her twenty-fifth year of teaching or his first, is that every September offers a new beginning. Teachers, like their students, feel the excitement of seeing old friends, opening new textbooks, and starting the school year with a fresh slate. Every fall, new students offer teachers an opportunity to challenge them to reach newfound heights academically, spiritually, and socially.

This year, St. Martin's School welcomes one new faculty member, sees two staff members in new roles, and celebrates an educator's twenty-five years of remarkable service. "Our faculty and staff have a passion for teaching and a true devotion to their students and we look forward to another successful and joyous school year," says Principal Stephen Lamont.

Mrs. Netta Morelli has been teaching middle school Social Studies and Language Arts at St. Martin's School since 1997. We have been blessed by her extraordinary talent, dedication, and commitment to her students. Incredibly well-respected among her colleagues, Mrs. Morelli is the consummate leader, also serving as our Assistant Principal. "I have been so for-

tunate to be part of this wonderful school family for twenty-five years and counting," she explains. She has a Master's Degree in Education from Walden University, and an undergraduate degree in Education from Penn State University. She received the ADW Teacher of the Year Award in 2006, participated in ADW's Leadership Academy, and has led several diocesan professional development sessions. As a believer in life-long learning, she has participated in programs such as the Ford's Theatre Teacher Fellowship, the Holocaust Museum Bearing Witness Program, and the Discovery Education Network. Mrs. Morelli enjoys moderating quiz bowl teams and preparing students for academic competitions, as well as Student Council and Safety Patrols. When away from school, Mrs. Morelli is a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician in Frederick.

We are excited to welcome Mr. Ben Desmond, who is new to St. Martin's. He brings a wealth of varied experiences to the role of middle school Language Arts teacher. Mr. Desmond explains, "I love teaching the kids, I love language, writing, and reading, but my faith is the core of my being." He was born and raised on Long Island, New York, where he was active in his parish youth group and later taught Religious Education classes. Mr. Desmond has an undergraduate degree in Professional Writing from the University of North Carolina in Wilmington and a Master's Degree from Western Carolina University in Entrepreneurship. "I wanted to help others in starting their business," he adds, "but teaching is



my love." He moved to Maryland with his wife, where he realized his true calling while teaching at a Catholic school. Mr. Desmond comes to us from St. Raphael's School in Rockville where he was the Media Specialist, teaching Technology and Library classes. He began last year at St. Martin's as a long-term substitute for middle school Language Arts and was thrilled when a permanent job opening became available. He explains that "working here enables me to do what I love, which is teach, but at the same time, I am driven by a mission to bring the light of Christ into these students' lives. I am thankful for this opportunity and excited to start each day." Now that afterschool clubs are returning, having been put on hold due to the pandemic, students were elated to hear that Mr. Desmond plans to bring back the Drama Club. When he is not teaching, he enjoys traveling and reading, which are two of his passions.

Two of our staff members are taking on new roles this year. We are pleased to have Ms. Rocio Pineda taking on a new title as Pre-Kindergarten teacher after twelve years of working in our beloved Aftercare Program. Aftercare has prepared her well for her new responsibil-



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ities. Ms. Pineda, also known as Ms. Ro, has been dedicated to seeing our students grow in all aspects, through helping with homework, fostering creativity through exciting projects, and through fun physical activities which help keep our students physically fit and socially oriented. Her magnetic nature has made her a favorite from one end of the school hall to the other. Ms. Pineda is a local, born and raised in Gaithersburg. She worked for ten years as a business manager for Adventist Health Care. "My focus will be to create excitement in learning. There is no better way to prepare these four-year olds for Kindergarten," Ms. Pineda explains. Her favorite activities outside of school are reading and going to the beach.



We are in great hands as Mrs. Jennifer Mohrbacher takes on a new assignment as office manager. Her thirteen years of teaching experience at St. Martin's, along with her prior years of working in administrative roles, prepare her for the myriad of responsibilities in a busy school office. We appreciate her knowledge, experience, and friendly nature as she transitions to this important role.

As we look forward to another busy year at St. Martin's School, we are particularly inspired by the dedicated lives of those who lead this important ministry. They are enthusiastic and ready to empower our students to excel academically, socially, and spiritually in a safe, Catholic-centered environment. ■

Dear St. Martin's Community,

The Season of Advent marks the beginning of a new year in the liturgical calendar, and appropriately we begin the season by lighting the Hope Candle. For the last three years we have worked to provide the highest quality educational experience for our students and families, while working against the challenges of COVID. However, this year ahead offers us the hope of growth and opportunity.



We have learned while educating during a pandemic to be flexible, to reach students where they are, to sacrifice for others, and to persevere. Through the first part of the 2022-2023 school year, we have seen what is possible when those skills are utilized in a less restrictive environment. Students and teachers are engaging in learning and instruction in a more collaborative way than at any point in the last two years, and there are now more resources available to create access for students to reach content mastery.

Our ability to foster the growth of our students and to continue our growth as a school is reliant upon the collaboration with and support of our community. We are blessed to have a financial safety net that we have been able to draw upon, but the financial toll of maintaining our educational experience for our students these last two years has impacted our reserves.

Each member of our community has a special connection with St. Martin's School that brings us together. Our alumni and alumni families stay connected to our school because of the foundation they built within these walls. Our parishioners recognize the value of raising young boys and girls to know Christ so that they can serve our community and our parish. When you make a gift to our school, you support the immediate acquisition of resources such as software programs and professional development that help us fulfill our mission. Your gift also allows us to rebuild our reserves to ensure our sustainability for generations to come.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of making a gift to St. Martin's School this holiday season. I wish each of you a blessed Christmas – May the Lord Jesus Christ grant you peace and renew your strength for the year ahead.

In your Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen C. Lamont".

Stephen C. Lamont  
Principal



## Shauntese Adams - Volunteer of the Year

The Catholic Business Network of Montgomery County Volunteer of the Year award is an annual opportunity to recognize St. Martin's most significant parent volunteer of the year. This year, we congratulate Shauntese Adams for being our most outstanding volunteer and we wish to honor the impact she makes on our school. Her remarkable contributions have increased volunteerism, improved communications, and boosted family participation in school activities.

The popular saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it," could not be more appropriately applied to Shauntese Adams. From the moment her youngest son Kenneth began Kindergarten in 2015, she enthusiastically became involved in school activities, eventually taking on parent leadership roles. Shauntese explains, "Volunteering at St. Martin's early on created a sense of family, community, and belonging for me and Kenneth." In her first year at St. Martin's, Shauntese was a full-time telecommuter, which allowed her to be physically in the school in her role as Kindergarten Homeroom Parent. However, the following year, as the Global Diversity and Inclusion Human Resources Executive at Lockheed Martin, Shauntese was thrust back into the office to manage several employees and traveled around the country to visit work sites and organize conferences. In her desire to maintain her commitment to St. Martin's and still juggle her hectic work schedule, she took on the larger role of Homeroom Parent Coordinator, consistently communicating with Homeroom Parents to provide guidance on how to coordinate with both their class-

room teachers and class families regarding school related events. "Volunteering at St. Martin's feels natural to me but always surprises those who know the demands of my work schedule," she says.

In the past few years, reaching out to families through Homeroom Parents has become one of the most effective ways to keep parents up to date on school news, solicit volunteers for classroom and school-wide events, and to build a sense of parent/school cohesiveness. Shauntese has also transformed what was formally our "Back to School Popsicle Social" into what is known as our "Back to School Picnic" each year - an event where families can meet their teachers, engage with new friends, and reconnect with old friends over great food. During the past three years, the coronavirus safety precautions have created situations that required Shauntese to pivot from one set of event plans to another in an extraordinarily seamless fashion while still meeting the goal of fostering a strong relationship between families and school staff.

Finding the right Catholic school has always been a priority for Shauntese. Her two older children had attended Catholic schools and she was looking for that same welcoming community. While it was important for her son to have a faith-based education, she chose St. Martin's at the time because of the location, since her oldest son Petey attended Gaithersburg High School. "Mrs. Coyne and Mrs. Bell exceeded my expectations, offering the experience I wanted for Kenneth.

They were both very caring and personable, knowing my family on a first-name basis by the middle of the year. Over the last seven years, Kenneth has had great learning and developmental experiences, matured positively, been taught by awesome teachers, and our family has made enduring friendships," asserts Shauntese.

Shauntese inspires others through her joyful commitment to not just a school but a family. "I have always



been active in my children's schools whether it was coaching sports or volunteering in various activities and as they have gotten older, I have stayed involved," she says. Her daughter Sarah is the owner and director of Creative Explorers Child Care in Gaithersburg, where Shauntese volunteers on her days off, chaperones trips, and helps coordinate parent socials. Shauntese has passed along the importance of community service to her daughter. Sarah has been coaching the St. Martin's CYO Track and Field Team since 2018. She pushes the athletes out of their comfort zone to compete and helps them obtain high school scholarship opportunities through CYO track and field. Juggling work, assisting with Kenneth's older sister's business, ensuring Kenneth's older brother is supported while attending college in West Virginia, and taking care of her mother who has had some recent health issues, certainly leaves Shauntese with a full plate. But she never wavers in her willingness to help St. Martin's any way she can.

When asked why she devotes such considerable time and effort to St. Martin's, she said, "I strive to lead by example, so volunteering with an emphasis on serving the community and giving to others are principles that I live by and principles I have passed on to my kids." St. Martin's extends heartfelt gratitude to Shauntese Adams and to all supporters and friends who so generously donate their time, talent, and treasure every day. ■



## Continuing a Tradition While Forging a New Path

For ninety-eight years, Saint Martin of Tours has served as the patron saint of our school. His life and his example of faithful sacrifice are examples to our community and lessons about the importance of serving others with dignity and love. This call to humble service is woven into the daily lives of our students; outreach opportunities are part of their formation. Generations of alumni have developed moral compasses during their time at our school, and contribute to the local community and the world. Our strong emphasis on the value of service informs their decisions, and they go on to serve the community and the world in beautiful ways.

David McVeigh, class of 2016, has continued to embody, throughout high school and college, the SMS values of compassion, service, social responsibility, and leadership. "St. Martin's taught me first and foremost to be considerate of people around me, then taught me how to direct the compassion that was instilled in me by my teachers and faith to do more for my community." David now volunteers for the Red Cross on the National Capital and Greater Chesapeake Region recruitment team, which provides young adults with opportunities to learn and serve while supporting the Red Cross mission. He is a Blood Donor Ambassador, who engages donors by greeting them, registering them, answering questions, providing information, and supporting them through the recovery process. The special attention he provides helps create a favorable impression that encourages ongoing donor support.

David also recruits for Transport Specialists, who are critical links between blood donors and blood recipients by delivering blood, platelets, or other blood products to hospitals. David reached out to St. Martin's School to help spread the word for the Red Cross's ongoing need for critical volunteers. Please consider getting involved with the Red Cross, the world's largest volunteer network, which helps to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies. To learn which volunteer positions



**American  
Red Cross**

are most needed, go to their website at [www.redcross.org/volunteer](http://www.redcross.org/volunteer).

Our community will also benefit from the leadership skills that David is fine-tuning in college. He is a junior in the Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, which provides a focus on public leadership. This program provides him with experiential opportunities and guided discussions to grow as a leader. David is majoring in Biology, and plans to pursue a Master's Degree in Hospital Administration while seeking a career in hospital management.

At St. Martin's, David saw first-hand those in our community who needed food, warm clothes, and basic health care while volunteering with fellow classmates at the Food Pantry and for other service projects. In high school, David went on meaningful service trips

in El Salvador and elsewhere while supporting local communities, by building houses, visiting hospitals, and working at daycare centers. David also volunteered with A Wider Circle, an organization which helps to meet the needs of people living in poverty with essential household items.

Many in the class of 2016 have remained close; it is not unusual for our graduates to remain friends. David affirms, "The friendships I made in St. Martin's will be everlasting. A couple of the kids in my kindergarten class are now my roommates in college! I have grown alongside my friends, and they have been pillars that I know I can always depend on." St. Martin's supports and reinforces Christian values that begin at home. These values inevitably become the basis of lasting friendships. We are proud of our graduates! ■



# St. Martin's HAPPENINGS

During **Hispanic Heritage Month**, our middle school hosted a Sabor Latino Celebration, which included traditional ethnic foods, dance, and games.



On the **Feast of All Saints**, our fourth graders represented different saints, honoring their lives of heroic virtue.

Our **school lobby renovation** is in progress. We look forward to the added functionality and safety this upgrade will provide.



Our halls were filled with **Superheroes and Princesses and Ghosts, Oh My!** Our Halloween-themed day continued with parties, games, and more.

We exceeded our **Thanksgiving Food Drive** goal of 2,000 food items, so Principal Lamont walked the halls looking gobble-rific in his turkey suit.



Boy Scout Pack 926 collected 500+ books during their **Book Drive**, for the benefit of students at St. Martin's.





## Meeting the Needs of our Diverse Community

St. Martin of Tours is an ethnically and culturally diverse parish with many Hispanic/Latino members. Many Spanish speaking families contribute to this thriving community. The mission at our parish school is to make our Christ-centered learning environment as accessible to as many parishioners as possible. Part of our ongoing mission is to build our communication capacity to reach out and engage with our Hispanic/Latino families and students, and ultimately increase the school's enrollment and retention.

The Crimsonbridge Foundation is an entrepreneurial philanthropic organization that invests in education, leadership, and capacity building programs to help America's youth and nonprofit organizations succeed. Their Bridges for Schools program provides resources and tools for Catholic schools to successfully engage, enroll, and retain Latino students and their families. For the past two years, St.

Martin's has been the recipient of grants from Bridges for Schools to address areas that would produce the most impactful results.

To increase our capacity to reach, enroll, and retain Hispanic students, we are working to address three areas of need. The first and most important is to translate our website into Spanish. Our website is a hub of information for prospective families. The second area is to make available a fluent school representative for school tours, information sessions, and parent/teacher meetings. Lastly, we need support for professional translation of school materials such as enrollment and financial aid information.

We are especially grateful to the leadership of the Crimsonbridge Foundation for investing in solutions to improve the lives



of youth and families through education, by helping to transform schools to attract and maintain Latino students more effectively.

Beyond the enumerated benefits, there are long term advances beyond the grant period. As we reach the goal of increased enrollment and retention, the justification for these ongoing efforts is readily apparent. Overall, this grant and our endeavors demonstrate our commitment to Hispanic and Latino families and our aspiration to build a unified community that grows stronger with each year. ■

## SMS CLASSNOTES

### We would love to stay in touch!

Share with us your news and we will keep you up-to-date on happenings at St. Martin's School. Go to [www.smsmd.org](http://www.smsmd.org) and click on SMS Alumni or email Anne Gemunder, Director of Development at [agemunder@smsmd.org](mailto:agemunder@smsmd.org).



### Endowment Funds: Honor Roll of Donors

Every Gift Matters. Every Giver Makes an Impact.

We thank our alumni, parents, parishioners, and friends for their generous support of our School Operating and Financial Aid Endowment Funds this past year. It is the collective impact of our entire community – including you – that enables us to continue to deliver on our mission. The principal of each Fund is invested responsibly in line with our Catholic values. The interest generated from the Operating Fund helps defray the cost of a Catholic education that tuition revenue alone does not cover. The interest generated from the Financial Aid Fund provides financial assistance to students who could not otherwise afford a St. Martin's education. These investments allow your generosity to make a difference year after year.

Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to our School Operating Fund or to our Financial Aid Endowment Fund. On the envelope enclosed, please check the box to designate which Fund should receive your generous donation.

**The Honor Roll of Donors, which will be included in our Summer DeTours, includes gifts donated to the Funds from June 16, 2022 – June 15, 2023.** If you have questions regarding how you can support St. Martin's School and invest in our children's future, please contact Anne Gemunder, Director of Development, at [agemunder@smsmd.org](mailto:agemunder@smsmd.org).



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