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CLASSICAL TIMES

A monthly newsletter for the parents and benefactors of St. Thomas More Academy



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Dear STMA Community...

Our school has seen amazing growth over these past two years, and perhaps you’ve wondered, as I have, how a new community has sprung into existence seemingly overnight. What has brought all of us together, different as we are – what is the source of our unity? *Our community exists because we all share a common mission.* As members of the STMA community, *we are all participating in the work of assisting parents by educating children in true freedom.* We are all striving, each in our own way, for children to be gradually set free from ignorance, fear, and sin, and to fully develop their capacities to know and love God and His creation, which is the essence of freedom. Our patron, St. Thomas More, gives us a compelling vision of the freedom that we want for our children: the freedom that means being fully human. What a beautiful mission we have at STMA, and no wonder our school is growing and flourishing! We all have a unique role to play in STMA’s mission, but all of us – board members, administration, faculty, students, parents, benefactors – are members of the single community that is carrying it out.

To say that “parents partner” with STMA to educate their children, then, doesn’t fully express what actually occurs. It’s true that partnerships are formed: parents choose to rely on, STMA for help in educating their

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Photo: All-school Mass at St. Patrick’s Church on March 29, 2023

Dear STMA Community, Cont.



children, while STMA agrees to educate these children in exchange for tuition. Each party needs to fulfill its side of the bargain. Once this exchange occurs, however, parents also become members of a real community – they are parts of a whole to which they belong, as well as partners in an exchange. We all belong to the STMA community, and this belonging is a source of joy. As new members are added to our community, the joy of belonging to it only grows.

A school's mission is much closer to a family's than to a company's, and so in order to succeed, the bonds among the school's members must be very strong. We have grown so quickly because of the beauty of the Christian vision we hold out to the world. But we can't overlook the importance of strengthening our bonds with each other as we work toward our common goal, just as a husband and a wife can't take their marriage for granted, especially as the family grows. As this edition of the Classical Times highlights, our STMA community is vibrant and united. But we must continue to deepen the bonds among us if we are to succeed. Patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love, and trust are essential.

As membership increases, it can be challenging for a young school to preserve unity around the shared mission that first gave it life. It can be arduous to work, with confidence and patience, towards the beautiful vision that captured our hearts in the first place. Thanks to each of you for your role in strengthening unity in our mission and hope in our vision, whether this is bringing a new mother a meal, helping another family with a pickup, cheering on the Griffins at a tennis match, throwing Mrs. Enabnit a baby shower, becoming a member of the Good Servant Society, encouraging a child, thanking a teacher, praying a Memorare, or launching a service club. STMA needs each of you, and we are all blessed to be part of this institution that is greater than any single one of us. St. Thomas More, pray for us, and give us the unity and hope that will enable us to educate children after your own heart!

God bless each of you,

Margaret Freddoso
Interim Head of School

COMMUNITY INTENTIONS

In thanksgiving for a successful Head of School search!

For the Powers family, as they relocate to South Bend.

For smooth inspections, a timely closing, and a successful renovation process at the new Grace Building.

Please pray for Barbara Doran, mother of Kirk Doran, grandmother of Peter, Edmund, and Georgiana Doran, health and grace from our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all priests and religious, especially those who preside at STMA daily school Masses: Fr. Bill, Fr. Jason, Fr. Chris, Fr. Aquinas, and Fr. Marty.

Spotlight: Kevin Powers, New Head of School



What is your background?

I grew up near Boston, MA, and am the oldest of 3 children. I studied Business at Saint Anselm College and then went on to the ACE program through the University of Notre Dame to earn my Master's Degree in education. After graduating, I moved to Chicago to continue teaching in Catholic schools. In Chicago, I met my wife, Molly, a graduate of the ACE program. Molly and I have been married for 11 years this summer and have two girls, Clare and Mary. Next school year will be my 16th school year working in and with Catholic education. Catholic education is a strong passion of mine, and I view it as a part of my vocation as a husband and father as well. I have worked with all different types of Catholic schools, communities, students, and demographics. Along with my master's in education, I also have a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from DePaul University and my MBA from the University of Notre Dame.



Left: Kevin and Molly Powers at the New Head of School Meet & Greet February 17, 2023

What drew you to St. Thomas More Academy?

I heard about STMA from friends over the past few years and, honestly, didn't think a place like it actually existed. I was drawn to the deep and authentic faith the school focuses on, the emphasis on the beauty and love of learning for the sake of knowledge and not a test score, and the people I have met connected to the school. My family and I want to be at a school where our faith, passion, and love of learning can be intertwined with our professional lives; we believe STMA will provide that. I think the model of STMA will continue to grow around the country as more and more families are looking for other strong Catholic options. That is very exciting to me!

What is your vision for building community at the school?

I believe STMA's community is filled with people who are deeply passionate about their Catholic faith and a strong academic program. I strongly believe in having events for parents, friends, and the community throughout the school year, whether it is a simple potluck, mass, performance, or showcase. STMA is a community and it is important that we get together to celebrate, talk, and challenge each other on a regular basis. I look forward to working with the staff and Board of Directors to find various and unique ways to invite and engage the many stakeholders and community members in our school.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience so far of the STMA community or plans for the future?

My family and I have been blown away by the support and openness we have felt from STMA the handful of times we have been there. We are excited to be a part of this great community. My goal is to build on the strong foundation that has been built by the families, students, staff, and Board of Directors. I have been in hundreds of Catholic schools in my career, either as a staff member, consultant, or visitor and I cannot express how special and unique STMA is. We are truly blessed and honored to be a part of this school and I am honored to be the Head of the School next year.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GRIFFIN?

When asked what it meant to be an STMA Griffin, the fourth graders spoke about **friendship**, **teamwork**, **traditions**, and **character**.



"No one is left out here! Because our school started small, our ideas can be heard and grown into traditions like All Saints Day and the Students vs. Faculty basketball game. I loved it this year when it was big, loud, and really exciting! I

hope it becomes a tradition every year.

Cecilia Nagy

"I learned a lot about teamwork playing on the soccer team!"

Annie Schwenkler



"I enjoyed playing soccer at the beginning of the year because I gained friendships with other classmates."

Andrew Downey

"I liked being on the soccer team. We learned to be virtuous on the field. I also like the traditions—especially the party before Christmas break!"

Raph Pienta



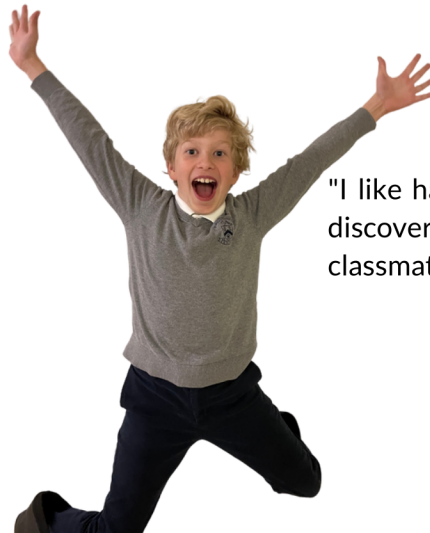
From Left: Josiah Ragland, Simeon Wilson, Gabriel Leinen

"We always get to hang out. I like Mass and starting every day that way together."

Joshua Chiang

"I like being able to play with friends all the time. Everyone gets along and it's nice to be together on the recess field, cooperating together, and being near each other."

Gabriel Leinen



"I like having fun, being silly, and discovering adventures with my classmates!"

Foederis Leugers

"I have always wanted to learn to act. Drama classes here have taught me that. In general, being here has made me better at different things."

Rose Capedeville



Faculty Spotlight: Tess Cramer



Tess Cramer is the science, art, and drama instructor for all grades, K-11. A native of South Bend, Miss Cramer is a watercolor enthusiast, avid reader, and musician who seeks to delight others through music, singing, and songwriting. She holds a B.A. in Art Education from Concordia University.

When did you first become interested in the fine arts?

I first found that I enjoyed making art during my time as a student at Trinity where, through the classical method, I learned how to draw, how to look at and see things, and how to place art into context. Prior to that, my art classes had been things like Pop Art, Abstraction, or Surrealism. Without learning the method or history, I had no context for these movements—the story didn't make sense. Because of this, I hope to give my students context and build up to things. I am at least striving for the right order. Let's not start with the rule breakers, but let's not avoid them. Let's start at the beginning—God's creation—and then evolve in our studies with how people grow in their thinking.

What role do science and art have in the curriculum at STMA?

All over creation are signs of God's creative work and beauty. Immense patterns of similarity spark us with appreciation and delight. When you gain the eye or the slowed-down pace to look for those things and the curiosity to wonder about them, it will bring you joy for your whole life. God puts these treasures everywhere - anywhere you go, you can encounter things you've never seen before and remark upon them. There are orders and patterns to things in our universe, and science reveals this in an incredible way. For instance, the same types of patterns show up in different places, like life cycles and the movements of the oceans. Nothing is still; it's all so alive!

It is a privilege to teach all grades art and to design a curriculum that would be within the classical guidelines and at the service of the good stories of the feast that we're living out for the students. Today there is an over-emphasis on modern movements without the context to understand and an insistence on the lack of foundation. I am trying to teach students that there is a story to art. It is not just random. I am trying to help them gain an eye for seeing the patterns and beauty that God has made for the world—not to let beauty be accidental because it is intentional.

What is your favorite teaching moment so far?

It's too hard to pick just one! I have had a couple of upperclassmen tell me that now that they know the techniques, art is actually fun. There is no better compliment.

What is something you wish everyone knew about beauty or creation?

What you make and do has a profound effect on others and yourself. Whatever we do, let's make it beautiful! Let's bring beauty into our world. This is not just about art; it's about life. When you take in beautiful things and grow in beauty, lives are transformed—your own and others. There is a reciprocal effect because it also makes your work more beautiful. Doing this is choosing to bring light into people's lives.

What message do you hope to share with your students?

When I go to the classroom with them, I try to meet them as individuals and be open to where they are at that moment. There are students of all backgrounds related to art. Some love it, some dislike it, some have had classes, and others have no experience. They each have a special purpose in their lives and are in an amazing time of growth and discovery.

Coach's Corner: Griffins Basketball, Grit, and Joy



Deferred joys purchased by sacrifice are always sweetest and most enduring.

- Venerable Fulton J. Sheen

Head Coach Paul Harold accurately summed up his team's season with the above quote. Coach emphasized the saying by putting it on the back of the shirts he helped gift the team at the end-of-season Basketball Banquet. I want to highlight it further here and how it applies to the first season of STMA Basketball (and life in general).

Basketball is a great sport for us at STMA because, perhaps more than any other, it prioritizes and demands teamwork, selflessness, togetherness, friendship, sacrifice, and grit. Even with many players coming off the soccer season, our older teams needed almost a month of full conditioning before they were in "basketball shape" to begin facing opponents. They ran sprints as a team and then ran sprints as a team again. Over and over. All our teams committed to this communal suffering, even our 4th graders. I remember watching those early practices, marveling at how much sacrifice and dedication it took for our students to prepare for Game 1, let alone make it through the whole season.

Even if you are in peak physical condition to run up and down the court, basketball is a very hard sport to learn and play. There are many nuances and details to the game that require a great deal of physical coordination and skill, not to mention the great deal of attention basketball demands toward the specific situations of the game. In early November, many students struggled to simply dribble the ball down the court. And in a sport where the score can get away from you quickly, the coaches and I knew this would be a process.

But ALL our coaches did a great job of choosing hard and patiently teaching the game to their team. The students also did a great job of choosing hard, dedicating themselves, and trusting the process. The result was becoming better players and more virtuous individuals. They saw a HARD challenge through to the very end. They developed grit.

There's a profound virtue in doing hard things, in following through with a difficult challenge. Basketball forced our students to constantly bring their best selves to practices and games, even when they were tired and not feeling their best, aiding in their virtue development in all aspects of life. If you're forced to bring your best to each practice, it becomes easier to consistently bring your best in the classroom and at home. When you begin to master a challenging sport and gain the confidence that you can play the game, suddenly, other challenges seem a little more conquerable and a little less daunting. These are the lessons our student-athletes are learning—we are not called to a life of comfort and convenience. We are called to confidently embrace difficulties, challenges, and adventures, knowing that we have Christ by our side and were made for greatness and true joy. We must go through the Lenten desert to arrive at that true Easter joy — and that's a sweet and enduring reality for our students to learn.

I'm PROUD of how our students finished this basketball season. Each team showed GROWTH, and our 4th - 6th grade girls even ended with an undefeated record! And for the teams that didn't quite earn the results they wanted, just wait. The deferred joy is on the way.

THANK YOU to all our parents, players, and coaches for making this first STMA basketball season possible!

Go Griffins!

Joe Everett

Athletic Director and Assistant Head of School

Coach's Corner: Griffins Basketball



Girls 4/5/6 Blue Team with coach Brett Robinson.



Boys 7th - 10th grade Team with coach Paul Harold and BJ Kloska.



Boys 4/5/6 Blue Team with coach Peter McAuliff at the winter sports banquet.



Girls 7th - 11th Grade Team with coach Bob King.



Boys 4/5/6 Gold Team with coach Joe Everett at the winter sports banquet.
Player Joshua Chiang not pictured.

STMA Community: Winter Highlights



This winter was full of community building events for students and families! Here are the highlights:

Mom's Coffee Hour

Bishop Kevin Rhoades: Mass and Visit

Launch of Griffin Logo

Opening of the Griffin Spirit Store

Mom's Night Out

Dad's Night Out

Meet & Greet Reception for new Head of School, Kevin Powers

Upper School Dance

School Spirit Week

All School Adoration

All School Stations of the Cross

Launch of the Inaugural Memorare Campaign for the new Grace Building

Family Bingo Night & Taco Dinner

STMA Community: Winter Highlights

