

'FIRST IN MATH' from page 1

Each week, the class with the most points gets to display a trophy in its classroom. The trophy has floated from classroom to classroom, with each class having possession at least once during the school year. This year the third graders have earned the most overall points. The class' teacher, Christine Dean, loves the competition, revels in each victory and pretends to hesitate each time it is time to turn the trophy over to another class.

Due to St. Didacus' success in the FIM program, Principal Elizabeth La Costa was able to

obtain a \$1,000 grant from Wells Fargo. The grant was contingent on obtaining the first place status and the school is eligible to apply again at the next grant cycle. The money will be used to help fund the program and for FIM-related technology.

On May 24, a representative from the company was on campus to hand out FIM awards during a special assembly. Each student is a really a winner as all those hours playing "add up" to a brighter future in math. ❖



The third graders with teacher Christine Dean were the top class of the school.



The top ten students in the school pause for a group photo.



Principal Elizabeth La Costa receives the first place in California award from FIM representative, Jill Henderson.

Welcome back, Fr. Richard Brown

1940 Alumnus returns to the other side of the pew

On Wednesday, May 11, Class of 1940 alumna, Fr Richard Brown, celebrated Mass with the school children. Concelebrating with Pastor Fr. Mike Sinor, the school children were treated to a wonderful homily. Fourth grader AlexSandra Valero was chosen to assist

Father with his props. The altar servers were Andrew Stoddard and Madeline Robertson. What a treat it was for Father to be back at his alma mater and for the school to welcome back one of its own. ❖



FUTURE VISION INFO

The Future Vision newsletter is a product of the St. Didacus Parish School community. Father Michael Sinor is the parish pastor and Elizabeth La Costa the school principal.

The newsletter was developed to foster a stronger, and longer, relationship between students, alumni, school parents, friends and parishioners.

Development Core Team

Mike Herrera - Chairperson
Marlene Gros • Felipe Enciso
Heidi DiPaolo • Pam Brock
Yvonne Audiss • Marcy Busch
Elizabeth La Costa - Principal



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FUTURE VISION

The Development Newsletter for St. Didacus Parish School

Volume 10, No. 2

Spring 2011

Decathletes Make School History

St. Didacus wins local academic competition then goes on to represent the San Diego Diocese well in Sacramento

By winning first place on March 5 in an academic decathlon involving Dioceses of San Diego schools, the team from Saint Didacus Parish School captured the right to represent the county at a statewide competition in Sacramento. Boy did they represent us well.

held a pep rally where each decathlete was presented with a bag filled with snacks and other items for the big trip.

Nativity School, last year's San Diego Diocese representatives, visited St. Didacus for lunch and offered hints and competition pointers. They students also left behind the decathlon trophy that will be displayed at St. Didacus for the next year.

The St. Didacus team was unique in a number of ways.

First, and most important, was the students' love of learning for its own sake, which also is a hallmark of the school. While many schools have to beg and

plead to get 10 students onto a Decathlon team, St. Didacus usually has to turn away 30 to 40 students who want to participate. "Academic Decathlon is basically a LOT of extra HOMEWORK," says Elizabeth La Costa, school principal. "It is not required. Yet our students embrace the challenge eagerly."



The decathlon team is all smiles at the competition.

Team members placed among the top finishers in four of eight categories, coming in fifth place overall. Gabby Ashenalfi was first in Social Studies; Crystal Doan won second in Religion; while Eric Lujan and Sophia Nerricio came in third in English and Literature, respectively. All four are eighth graders.

Academic Decathlon teams compete in 10 subjects. The team was made up of the following students: Eric Lujan, English; Mitchell Stoddard, Science; Tristan Epperly, Super Quiz; Rebecca Lindgren, Super Quiz; Jason Gros, Math; Madeline Robertson, Fine Arts; Gabby Ashenafi, Social Studies; Sophia Nerricio, Literature; Malcolm Johnson, Current Events and Crystal Doan, Religion. Alternates Brandon Hoang, Lauren Maalouf, Kate Obazee, Paul Ammons and Alexandra Rodarte prepared as well in case they were needed.



The decathlon team huddles in prayer before the competition starts.

Second, is the team's diversity. Some students are from families whose parents are immigrants, some recently, to this country: Vietnam, Mexico, and Ethiopia. These are the children of hardworking families across the socio-economic spectrum.

The community supported the decathlon effort in many ways, including prayer. On the Wednesday before the competition, the school

see DECATHLETES page 2

First In 'First In Math'

St. Didacus earns first place in California for online study program

The equation is simple: Take the number of students from first through eighth grades. Add numerous hours of time and commitment. Subtract seven dollars a year per student. Do the math and the correct answer should be "1" as in first place.

Of 258 California schools who use the "First in Math" computer program, St. Didacus Parish School has completed this school year ranked first in California. Nationally, the school ranked 14th out of 4,807 schools.

First in Math, or FIM for short, is a web-based, nationally utilized math program that students access online from school and home. Students are provided with differentiated practice routines as they progress at their own pace through various modules, from single-step addition to multi-step algebra.

Having solved more than 1.6 million problems, the program also proves to be ecologically sound. Doing the work on-line has saved more than 166,000 sheets of paper.

FIM employs a learning technique known as deep practice, where skills that normally take months of regular practice can be mastered in a matter of weeks, or even days. Students who need remedial work have an opportunity to improve and those who are advanced can work ahead and challenge themselves.

While trophies are nice to receive, the real rewards come from the increase in math skills. And those rewards are built on year-round efforts.

Students are given FIM summer assignments that must be completed by the first day of school. Since the school began using this program in 2008, the teachers report they are doing much less review work at the start of the school year. As each year progresses, teachers give out weekly assignments in FIM, either with a goal of points scored or minutes played per week using the program.

see 'FIRST IN MATH' page 4

A Trip Down Memory Lane

Annual reunion allows alumni to remember and reminisce

The Development Team at St. Didacus School never stops working. On May 1, the Sunday before the school children returned to class from Easter break, several alumni and former teachers returned to campus for the annual alumni reunion. Memorabilia including yearbooks, old uniforms and trophies were on display for all to enjoy.

Hot dogs and hamburgers were grilled to order and served with chips, soft drinks and a wonderful array of desserts. Development chair, Mike Herrera, was on hand to greet alumni and update addresses on the ever-growing database. Development members, Felipe Enciso, Heidi Di

Paola, Marlene Gros, Juanita Warner and Marcy Busch made the event even more special by welcoming alumni and making them feel at home.

Alumni poured over yearbooks and laughed as they shared old stories and memories. Tours of the school were given and children present had free reign in the giant bouncy. Joining the group were Principal Elizabeth La Costa and her husband, Joe. The couple always makes time to be at this annual event to show how important the alumni are to the past, present and future of St. Didacus Parish School. ❖



Mary (Redmond '52) Morzinski still looks up to her friend, Kathleen O'Haver '47.



Chris and Sara (Beckerson '93) Roberts pose with their beautiful children, Parker, Bailey and Morgan.



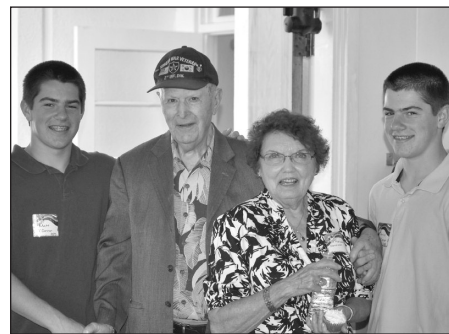
Kristina (Palomares '92) Gonzalez, her son Max and mother Lupe pause for a multi-generational photo.



Dan Gruta '77 and Julie Peckham '82 are happy to be at their alma mater.



Current school librarian Celeste Dueber reminisces with former science and computer teacher, Rosalie Wisniew.



Recent Alums, Matthew and Patrick O'Connor '10 give Joe Hess '43 and friend, Marceline Hanawalt, a tour of the school.



Marsha Long '64, Alice Humphrey '72 and Cecilia Humphrey '75 pause for a group photo.

DECATHLETES from page 1

Third, our school is an inner city school, without the resources available to the teams that usually win such competitions. Our student body is 265 students. The teams who have won from San Diego in the past are from larger schools of 500 students or more. Those schools can pull from a pool of 60 or more eighth graders as opposed to our pool of 26.

Fourth, the dedication of the teachers is outstanding. While some schools don't send a team due to lack of teacher interest, St. Didacus has two coaches and each teacher in the school "adopts" a student to mentor in each subject area.

Finally, there is a spiritual element to this success. The team worked and prayed together, using hard work and faith as strong motivating factors. "The students really encouraged each other and worked well together," said Decathlete parent Marlene Gros. "Not only did they study their own material but they helped each other by quizzing one another and encouraging their teammates."

To cover competition expenses, the team took less than a month to raise \$7,000 to finance their trip. A school-wide See's Candy sale just before Easter proved very successful. In addition,

Individuals and church and community groups donated money directly in support of the trip.

The decathlon team at St. Didacus represented the school well. Its members should be proud of their accomplishments and treasure the many great memories they will have for the rest of their lives. ❖

A Solid Foundation Is Passed To A New Generation

1994 alumna, Stefini Ma'ake is grateful for her St. Didacus education



Harkening back to her days as a student, Stefini Ma'ake, Class of '94, couldn't be prouder when she brings her niece to St. Didacus preschool each morning. "I love to tell her stories of how her father and her aunts were also students at this school", says Ma'ake.

Ms. Ma'ake is proud of her family's legacy at St. Didacus. Her older sister, Tefi, graduated in 1993 and her younger sister, Lynzi, graduated in 2002. Fia, her brother, is Class of '01. All of her siblings are happy in their chosen professions.

Ma'ake, who entered St. Didacus as a kindergarten student in 1985, says the school had a big impact on the person she is today. She feels lucky to have had four nuns as teachers and credits her seventh grade teacher, Sr. Maire Naughton, as having the greatest influence on her school success. In addition, her interest in science was sparked by her junior high teacher, Mrs. Rosalie Wisniew.

At St. Didacus, Ma'ake was a very involved student. She played softball, basketball and volleyball from fifth through eighth grades. She served on the student council as secretary in eighth grade and even played the

piano for one of the Christmas programs. She fondly recalls the eighth graders reading to her first grade class and taking a hiking field trip every year from sixth to eighth grade. The excursions, she says, helped build lasting friendships and class camaraderie.

Ma'ake credits her family's support for allowing her to have a wonderful experience at St. Didacus. In return, her parents helped make St. Didacus the great place that it is today. Her mother served as room parent and helped out at all the Fall Festivals, serving as chair of several booths. By fourth or fifth grade, her mother was employed by the school to run the hot lunch program. It quickly grew from one to two days a week under her guidance. Ma'ake loved being able to see her mother on campus.

Her father, who owned his own construction company, built many of the walls surrounding the church and poured the concrete ramps. While St. Didacus laid the foundation for the family's education, Mr. Ma'ake returned the favor by pouring the foundation when the kindergarten classroom moved to its present location. He placed a stamp on the concrete to honor his late wife.

Extremely prepared for high school, Stefini Ma'ake attended Our Lady of Peace, entering with honors. After graduating in 1998, she attended Loyola Marymount University and graduated in 2002 with a bachelors of science

in biology. She moved back to San Diego to help care for both her mother, who was diagnosed with cancer, and her younger brother and sister.

After deciding medical school was not for her, she became the math and science teacher at St. Rose of Lima. With aspirations to teach high school, she landed a job at her alma mater, OLP, where she is now teaching biology, honors biology and AP biology. She models much of the way she teaches on the way she was taught by Sr. Maire. She is still amazed at the caliber of St. Didacus alums that attend OLP and with new students notices right away their grace, talent and intelligence.

Ma'ake recalls that many of the St. Didacus families became close and this allowed the kids to forge long-lasting relationships that continue to this day. Facebook allows her to keep in regular touch with about 10 of her classmates.

She believes that St. Didacus Parish School gave her a firm foundation to grow on. "I was surrounded by caring staff and faculty members who believed in all the students," Ma'ake says. "It is because of this school that I received a love of learning, a solid Catholic identity and most importantly, a love of God and oneself."

St. Didacus Parish School is truly lucky to have the next generation of the Ma'ake family in its midst. ❖

This Life In Balance Deserves A Bow

Eighth grader Madeline Robertson gets a full scholarship to Mater Dei Catholic High School

As a ballerina, eighth grader Madeline Robertson knows the importance of balance in her life. Always on her toes, she is able to juggle six to eight ballet classes a week and a busy academic schedule at St. Didacus Parish School. Recently, all that hard work has paid off.

Having scored in the 99th percentile on the entrance exam, Madeline has received a four-year, full scholarship to Mater Dei Catholic High School. She vividly recalls the day she found out. "I screamed when I heard the news," she says. "We were actually in the car, leaving school, and my mom turned around and went back so I could tell my friends. It was all very exciting."

Madeline has attended St. Didacus for the last seven years. She credits all of her teachers for not only teaching her academics, but also morals and life skills. She describes her current

teachers, Mr. Remedios and Mr. Kabalican, as both funny and great educators. Mr. Kabalican is preparing her for the future and Mr. Remedios has taught her many analytical skills and challenges his students to find symbolism in literature.

Robertson is no stranger to success. She won first place in the school geography bee in seventh grade and recently was the fine arts representative on the successful St. Didacus decathlon team. She is currently the student council ecology representative. She played on junior varsity softball in fifth grade and danced in the talent show in fifth and sixth grades.



Madeline's fondest memories of St. Didacus are all the group projects that she did with her classmates. She says it was fun to make movies about molecules and about the Revolutionary War. The experiences away from campus, like the Museum of Tolerance field trip and the decathlon trip to Sacramento, will always remain etched on her memory.

While she feels well prepared for high school, Madeline is hesitant to leave her friends. As she puts it, "After all these years together, we've actually become a family," she says. What she soon will learn is the St. Didacus family extends far beyond graduation day, and Madeline will always be a welcome member. ❖