



# Sun Times

News from Saint Francis of Assisi School  
West Des Moines, Iowa

Volume 6, Issue 5

Trisha Lenarz-Garmoe, Principal ~ Denise Mulcahy, Assistant Principal

January, 2005

Dear St. Francis Parents,

Congratulations!! You are getting this from the website for the first time. St. Francis School just saved about 3500 sheets of paper on this monthly packet alone by going paperless. Thank you for being diligent each month and going to the SFS website to read your packet.

We hope our weekly Advent scripture focus and meditation has been a prayerful experience for your family. As we approach the birth of our Savior, we pause and thank Him for His many blessings in our lives. We are so grateful for the wonderful families here at St. Francis School and the support you show us. Thank you for supporting our Advent missions. Our Mittens for Many tree is overflowing with snugly, warm mittens, hats and scarves. The box of toys for the Children's Center at Mercy is full and families all over the world will benefit from our Heifer International collection. The children chose the following animals to purchase and send:

11 flocks of geese	20 flocks of chicks
5 bee hives	18 rabbits
7 goats	1 llama
2 water buffalo	

Especially heart-warming are the stories of the children's very own piggy banks and allowance dollars being contributed for others. This certainly helps drive home the point for these children that we need to practice self-sacrifice for others and not just give from our excess. Our January Mission project will be donated to St. Joseph's Emergency Family Shelter.

We have enjoyed much Christmas music this Advent season. Our choral and instrumental music concerts have been wonderful. St. Francis school was also surprised by a visit from world-class singer Simon Estes. He kicked the Advent week of "Joy" off with his beautiful voice filling our church. What an early Christmas treat!

Remember, December 25<sup>th</sup> is only the BEGINNING of Christmas. I encourage you to keep up the tree and trimmings and observe our Church's Christmas celebration through the Baptism of the Lord on January 9<sup>th</sup>. REJOICE!!

Our school ITBS results are in. On a school/district level, each school district in Iowa reports scores in reading, math

and science in grades four, eight and eleven to the State of Iowa Department of Education each year. Our goal areas for this year's fourth grade were met and will be reported to the State in June. We targeted one year's growth (1.0 National Grade Equivalency - NGE) in reading, math and science for this required reporting grade. Below is 2003-2004 third grade NGE and National School Norms (%) scores and the same class's scores as fourth graders this year.

	2003-2004		2004-2005	
Reading	4.7	99%	6.3	99%
Math	4.4	99%	6.2	99%
Science	4.9	99%	7.1	99%

As you can see our students, in general, perform well on standardized tests.

The end of January traditionally brings the excitement of Catholic Schools Week. Watch the website for the upcoming schedule of events. Please mark your calendars for Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5:30-7:00, our Open House Night.

This year our Kindergarten Information Night for 2005-2006 falls in January rather than February. We hope to see all prospective kindergarten parents at 7:00 PM on January 27<sup>th</sup> in the school gym.

Please remember to keep deliveries to school at a minimum. Lunches, band instruments, homework, etc. continue to trickle in through the day at an alarming rate. Students need to learn responsibility for these items and experience the natural consequence that may follow if they forget. It is part of life's lessons.

Miss Mulcahy and I would like to thank everyone for the kind cards, notes and prayers we received last month on Principal Appreciation Day. We continue to enjoy our ministry with you and your children.

A blessed final week of Advent and holy Christmas season to you and your family. May Christ's love fill our world with peace.

Trisha Lenarz-Garmoe,

## STAFFING NEWS

It's time, once again, for our next round of hiring here at St. Francis School. Our ad in the Des Moines will read:

*Catholic educators at St. Francis will be  
faith-filled, positive innovators, team players,  
committed to School Improvement and professional development.*

At this time our plan is to add to our middle school staff. We will interview the candidates before Spring Break. As always, we ask for your prayers for a strong pool of applicants and successful hiring process. So many of you have shared that you pray about this annual process. Thank you!!! I feel that God is answering our prayers and blessing us abundantly. We have a wonderful staff here at St. Francis School and with God's continued Grace and your prayers, that will continue!



## Severe Weather / Emergency Closing

With the arrival of winter weather comes the following reminders: The decision for SFS to delay/cancel/dismiss is made in cooperation with Sacred Heart School which follows WDM Public School closings and cancellations.

- If WDM schools have a late start, SF will have a late start (NO AM Kindergarten).
- If WDM cancels, we will cancel.
- If WDM has early dismissal, SFS will dismiss early (no PM K).
- In the event of severe weather closings, SFS Kids Care will close one hour after school is dismissed.
  
- Please tune to KCCI-Channel 8
- Go to [www.KCCI.com](http://www.KCCI.com) and sign up for School Closings Email
- Tune in to WHO radio station (1040 AM) for information on school delays, cancellations or early dismissals
- Go to [www.saintfrancisschool.org](http://www.saintfrancisschool.org)

Please refer to pages 29 and 30 of the family handbook for additional information.

We encourage you to be safe and check the Sex Offender Registry List regularly.  
[www.iowasexoffender.com](http://www.iowasexoffender.com)

## ITEMS OF INTEREST!

### **AFTER HOURS AT ST. FRANCIS**

Reminder that the school doors will be locked daily at 3:45 PM.

Please use the NE doors by the playground for building access after school hours for:

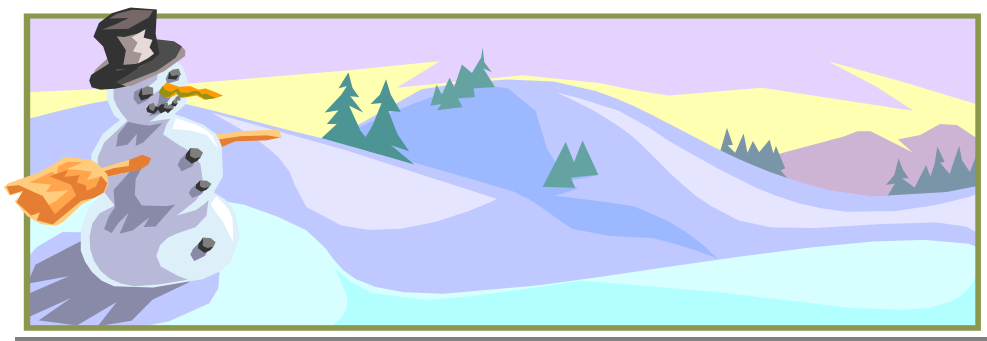
- Kids Care pickup until 6PM
- Athletic practice
- Other meetings or gatherings



### **JOINING YOUR CHILD FOR LUNCH?**

When ordering an adult hot lunch you have several options. You may:

- Call the school office by 8:30 AM
- Leave a voice mail that you would like to order a hot lunch.
- Stop by the office and place your name on the list.
- THANK YOU!



## **Guidance Corner** by Mrs. Julie Heckle

Your child experienced many helpful classroom discussions and role-plays as we practiced how to handle teasing and bullying.

Students at all grade levels are finally finishing up units on “I Was Only Teasing”. When we come back from break you will see conversations about teasing and bullying moving from guidance class to individual homerooms. Teachers will be holding class meetings about how to put these ideas into action.

During the month of January, I plan to work with Kindergarten on personal safety. 1st and 2nd graders will spend time exploring careers and 3rd, 4th and 5th grade will be working on fine-tuning their study skills. Stress management will be our topic in 6th grade. I wish you all a Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year!!



## TECH TALK by Mrs. Diane Nitzel

I hope everyone had a great holiday! December, as usual, was a very busy month.

The 2nd Graders learned how to use Excel to create a graph. The students took a poll on a specific subject (favorite pets, candy and season) and learned how to set up the data in a spreadsheet. Using the Chart Wizard, students were able to create the graphs and discussed their observations.

Mrs. Head and I worked with the 3rd Grade this month on copyright laws and how to cite sources in preparation for the Rainforest project. The 3rd Graders researched their Rainforest animals using the Internet and books. Students returned to the lab and created a postcard complete with facts about their animal, a picture and, of course, citing their source.

The 5th Graders technology assignment to do a web quest on the first Thanksgiving. As the historians, the students learned about fact vs. myth, primary sources, different cultures, and points of view. To complete the project, students created an exhibit using their researched materials.

The 6th Graders project was to independently create a graph in Excel. Using last months experience with this program, students applied the same principals of entering data to create a graph related to the information collected in P.E. class.

As the year 2004 comes to a close, I'm sure everyone here at St. Francis would agree that it has been a very wonderful and exciting year, and we are all looking forward to 2005!

**From the Technology Committee:** SFS is in need of a five or six monitors for classroom use. If you are lucky enough to find a new model under your Christmas tree, please give the school office a call at 457-7167! Thank you!



## FAMILY PACKET ONLINE!

It's ONLINE! The January 2005 the monthly Family Packet is now available at the St. Francis website: [www.saintfrancisschool.org](http://www.saintfrancisschool.org)! We will have all packet information on the school website which you can access from home! You will find the newsletter, family calendar, menu, volunteer schedule, SCRIP order form and MORE!

REMINDER: All items to be included in each month's packet **MUST** be OK'd through the school office. Please contact the school office for assistance or if you are unable to access the internet from home or office: 457-7167.



## Gym Shorts by Mr. Mike Hazel

WOW! Where did the first semester go? We're flying through the school year faster than the Chicago Bears fly through quarterbacks!

I mistakenly left out a note in the last newsletter, so I will take the opportunity here. A big, big THANK YOU to Brian, Marian, and Ben Greer for the birthday party donations to the PE department here at St. Francis. For Ben's birthday, he asked his friends to bring sporting goods gift cards to be donated to SFA, instead of gifts for himself. Thank you to the Greers and all the "party-goers" for your incredible generosity.

The third graders have recently wrapped up their 6-week long martial arts unit provided by the professionals at Ferrell's US Martial Arts. All six lessons were taught by Lance Ferrell, and he was assisted by Bill Shepek, Justin Epstein, and Anthony Beyer. The staff from Ferrells did an amazing job with the kids. I was very impressed with their enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge. The students learned skills and techniques such as positioning, blocking, punching, kicking, combinations, and posture. The instructors proved excellent role models, and they taught many important concepts beyond martial arts skills. These concepts included "rules of concentration", "rules of responsibility", respectful behavior, anger management, character development, safety practices against predators, counting to 10 in Korean, explaining the difference between fairness and equality, and much, much more. \*\*Ask your 3rd - grader to recite the "rules of responsibility" for you!!

This special unit for the third graders was a great addition to our PE curriculum, and we plan to continue doing this for all third graders yet to come in future years. Also, it is my goal to add at least one special unit for each grade to look forward to as they progress through their years here at St. Francis. Some may be community members bringing in activities like Ferrells, and others may involve field trips. It's early, but we are already getting closer to the goal.

Have a tremendous holiday season. Merry Christmas and God Bless!

## VOLUNTEERS!

### **Remember, the Bishop has mandated:**

1. Every parish church/school employee and volunteer must attend a Virtus "Protecting God's Children" training session -- please have people register online with the yellow "registration" link at [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org)
2. Every employee/volunteer with regular contact with minors must fill out the forms for a background check and the Code of Conduct -- available on our web site at [www.dmdiocese.org](http://www.dmdiocese.org)

- 01/25/2005 6:30 PM , St. Joseph's - Winterset Parish (Winterset)
- 01/27/2005 6:30 PM , St. Patrick's - Audubon Parish (Audubon)
- 02/03/2005 6:30 PM , Catholic Pastoral Center (Des Moines); also ICN at St. Albert in Council Bluffs
- 02/06/2005 6:30 PM , Dowling Catholic High School (West Des Moines)
- 02/08/2005 6:30 PM , St. Patrick's - Neola Parish (Neola)
- 02/15/2005 6:30 PM , St. Mary's - Shenandoah Parish (Shenandoah)



We are counting our blessings for the support of reading at Saint Francis.

## Book Nook Mrs. Head & Mrs. Hardy

Christmas greetings from the Media Center! We are counting our Christmas blessings for the support of reading at Saint Francis, which has enabled us to develop into an excellent – not to mention beautiful - school library. Thank you to everyone who has supported us so generously.

As you may know, I often encourage parents to read aloud to their children - even when those children are independent readers themselves. A professional book I read a number of years ago, entitled Mosaic of Thought by Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman, greatly influenced my whole concept of teaching reading to children. This would be a great book for parents who are helping their children become independent readers who think about and comprehend what they read.

Mosaic stresses that we need to teach children what good readers do when they read. Good readers make connections with the text. They make text-to-text connections, text-to-self connections, and text-to-world connections.

A situation in a book or the entire book may remind us of another book we have read - that is a text-to-text connection. A character in one book may have similar struggles or feelings as a character in another book.

Sometimes something that happens in a book reminds the reader of a similar situation in his or her own life, or a character in the story reminds them of themselves. This is a text-to-self connection.

When a situation or a character reminds the reader of something in the world - it is a text-to-world connection. An example would be reading a fiction book about a rainforest and connecting it to knowledge they have learned in social studies about rainforests.

Mosaic of Thought really made me think about how I read and what I DO while I read. I have started modeling my thoughts aloud to the students as I read to them in the library. I use these terms with the students and have encouraged them to do the same. It is amazing to hear what connections they make. They start connecting on a very literal level and before long they are making some very thoughtful, creative connections.

This process helps the reader connect the known with the unknown. It is this interaction with text that moves the reader from reading at the "word calling" level to actual comprehension. I encourage you to model your thoughts and connections to your children as you read and give them the opportunity to do the same.

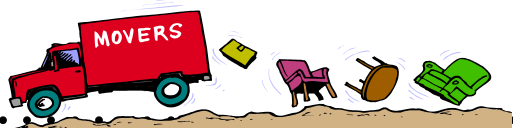
Looking forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.

### GOOD-BYE!!

The Saint Francis School community bids a fond farewell to two of our school families; John/Gerianne Mann, 6/W; Andrew/Sharon Miller, Ben Miller, 5/S, and Emily Miller, 1/D. The Mann Family will be moving to suburban Chicago and the Miller's are off to Las Vegas, Nevada.

We welcome Campbell Ketcham and his parents, Bob and Stacey to SF School. Campwill join Mrs. Dante's class beginning January 3, 2005

**DIRECTORY CORRECTION:** Mike/Susan Snuttjer (Kyle, 2/Becker) 5611 Highland Court, WDM 50266





## *Enrichment News by Ms. Chris Joslin*

Hello dear parents! It has been so wonderful to hear from so many of you this fall in regards to the Belin-Blank BEST tests. As you know SFA has far, far more students qualifying for the test than an average school. It shows how much I really need to be working with the classroom teacher on differentiation in the classroom. It is a WONDERFUL problem to have. It also indicates that I need to work with students in their particular passion area and I have two opportunities available at the moment.

First, you may have heard about the SFA Scoop! We started with the idea of having a magazine published last spring but classroom and outside events drained our time and energies. ALSO I discovered we had taken on much too big a project. Working with this year's 5th graders we started smaller...much smaller and are happy to report that it was printed and distributed on December 7th...a day that shall live in infamy for other reasons too! Our plans are to make use of the materials that were written last spring and to expand on some ideas but not to put them all into one issue. All students are invited to submit articles of nonfiction or fiction as well as artwork to the magazine. 6th graders will have an opportunity later to work on a similar project in conjunction with their language arts program. We only printed a few issues per classroom but next week our project is to get it onto our SFA website so by the time you get this, it could be there!

We will also be competing in the National Geographic Geography Bee in early January. I am meeting with students who have a passion about geography. It will require lots of memorization and a general love of the subject. We will have a mini-bee here at school and the winner of that will take a qualifying test and if they pass, they will represent our school at the state bee in April. I am looking forward to our geo-sessions in December and January.

This month I have had the opportunity to meet with some 5th graders who excel in math and science. We are working on small projects in the school. Math is taking on the challenge of scale measurements and 3-dimensional drawing to scale. Science is exploring the periodic table. In looking at elements we have found that there are diamonds in space as well as on earth. Students were chosen for this based on test scores, teacher recommendation and the ability demonstrated to complete expanded research.

There is always the problem that our school is blessed with good thinkers and how does one choose one student over another. This process is changing at the diocesan level as well as at SFA. The nationally held belief of choosing the top 3% of any grade just doesn't work with the high ITBS scores we have here. It will continue to change year to year as our population changes and we increase grades and my enrichment time. Meanwhile I still have to limit the numbers, as enrichment needs to be in small groups. As we move into middle school, we are also eligible for many more competitions such as Mock Trial and Math Counts. I continue to look into other opportunities.

Thank you for being so understanding. These next 2 years are times of transition for all of us. We are off to a great start and it will only get better with your help and support!

## MUSICAL NOTES

by Mrs. Angie Murphy



Thank you to all the parents, staff, students and friends that helped out with the many concerts last month. The students worked hard and did a great job. Thank you!

A big thank you to Mrs. Judy Schliesman for accompanying us on the piano!

Can you believe we are in January?

For Kindergarten, First and Second grades that means we will be learning about notes, playing the instruments and voice testing.

In Third and fourth we will be learning about the note names and beginning our recorder unit.

In fifth grade we will begin our keyboard classes and in sixth grade we will begin our guitar classes. January and February are busy months in the music classroom. We will also have our fifth grade classes singing at Mass for Catholic School Week. Look for handouts to come home.

Have a great New Year!



# READING RESOURCE

by Mrs. Sarah Harmeyer and Mrs. Libby Hartleib

Happy Holidays Everyone!

As you get ready to snuggle up with your loved ones (and their new books!) during the long winter break, we thought we'd share some tips to enhance your reading. Recently during one of our B.L.T. meetings, (a.k.a. Building Literacy Team) we held quite a lengthy discussion on the differences of inferring and predicting during reading.

Predicting is to make an educated guess about what is going to happen next. Inferring is thinking about what isn't being said in the words. For example, when we infer we go beyond the literal meaning of the text and make a new, original meaning that comes from merging our background knowledge and the words on the page. Because each person's experiences are different, inferring takes the reader beyond the words to only a place he or she can go.

Making inferences is a great thing for readers because inferences help you remember what has happened in the book. Inferring is like lifting ideas out of the book and adding your ideas to them. Children read aloud storybooks are a wonderful place to start! The great illustrations along with the words provide rich soil for you to plant the idea of making inferences. Be sure to share aloud your inferences while you are reading to your child and encourage them to share theirs with you.

## On Our Palettes

by Ms. Patti Chong & Mr. Jason Southward



We're still thinking of projects and ways to do them.

The call is out for:

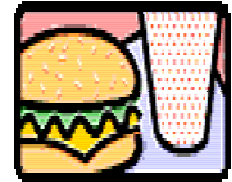
**.people with power saws** willing to cut boards for ceramics projects and wall board for friezes;

**.plastic (not foam) molded trays** usually found around toys, batteries, electronic equipment, food, etc. as protection during shipment - they are throwaway items.

Have a holiday that's holy, restful, warm, safe and full of love.

# NEWS FROM THE LUNCHLINE

by Mrs. Barb Wisnieski



Happy 2005! Here's what's cooking in January in the St. Francis School Lunch Program:

We have started our new Winter Cycle Menu! We have added many new menu items like Honey Lemon Chicken, Cavatelli, Sweet and Sour Pork, and back by popular demand are foods like Sloppy Joe, Turkey and Gravy, and Beef and Cheese Nachos. Please continue to encourage your child to try new menu items...

Did you know that the majority of our menu items are made from scratch right in our own kitchen?!! Most school lunch programs serve primarily ready-made, convenience menu items... we are blessed to have creative, experienced staff members in our lunch program that use quantity recipes to prepare fresh, healthy menu items.

We received our 2nd order of government commodities at the end of November. These commodity items are offered to schools at reduced prices that help to subsidize the cost of school lunches. We can order commodities six times/year, and the items offered change each time based on availability. We ordered flour, sugar, cheese, eggs, and canned fruits and vegetables to use on our menu in the coming months.

Look for our School Lunch Satisfaction Survey to come home via your child's take home folder in late January. Special thanks to Jeannine Laughlin, Suzanne Farley and Jonna Wisnieski for the time they donated to developing and analyzing this survey. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey...we will use the results to improve our menu and program.

Best wishes for a great 2005 from all of us in the School Lunch Program!!



## ADD/ADHD Support Group

- Meetings held 2nd Monday of every month!
- Meet in Room 2 at 7:00 PM
- ALL ARE WELCOME!
- Questions?
- Please call Julie Heckle at 457-7167, Ext. 164.



## **AAAAACHOOOO!!!**

As the cold and flu season closes in on us, parents are reminded no over the counter or non-prescription medicines or cough drops may be given to students by school personnel without physicians instructions and signed parents permission. Your family doctor is welcome to fax instructions to the school office at 440-1042. Please call the office at 457-7167 with any questions.



## *Calling all parents....*

Do you have some great pictures of our wonderful St. Francis students? The yearbook committee is in need of pictures from various events—especially DARE graduation, sporting events and any pictures taken during school prayer services, Talking Canvas, recess, etc.

Please e-mail any digital pictures to [laughrun@mchsi.com](mailto:laughrun@mchsi.com) or [LTGART@aol.com](mailto:LTGART@aol.com). If you have hard copies, please send them to school, Attn: Yearbook Committee. If you would like photos returned, please mark them with your name and we will return them to you ASAP!

Thanks so much!!

## **ST. FRANCIS SWEATSHIRTS!**

CARPENTER PROMOTIONS has offered St. Francis families an opportunity to purchase HANES XL Youth sweatshirts with the embroidered logo crest (\$16.95) or with the tackle twill SFA( \$22.95) .

If you are interested in purchasing an XL Youth sweatshirts from Carpenter's, please contact Lola Kenworthy at 283-1985, x 136 by the end of December.

Call today!



*SFS Home and School wishes all St. Francis families a merry  
Christmas and happy holiday season!*

*See you at our next meeting on January 10, 2005!*