Annual Fund Update:

Saint Mary’s 2016-17 Annual Fund is 91% of the way to our $60,000 goal. Active fundraising will slow down at the end of February to make way for spring’s signature event, the PTO Gala. If you haven’t made a gift to the Annual Fund yet, please consider it now – help us get to $60,000! Thank you to the many alumni and alumni families who’ve already contributed. Every gift, no matter the size, is a blessing to us.

You can give online at www.saintmary.org, or send a check to the school at this address:

Annual Fund
Saint Mary’s Catholic School
9501 Gayton Road
Richmond, VA 23229

Basketball seems to have been part of Saint Mary’s Catholic School nearly since the school began. There’s record of boys’ and girls’ teams here in 1968-69, which was the school’s third year in existence.

Through the years, who knows how many kids have come through a basketball program here, with at least one of them finding the spark for future talent, passion and fame (see story on alumna Alicia Hudalla, page 2).

This year, during the school’s 50th anniversary, there are 52 girls and 54 boys – all in middle school – participating in the program. Saint Mary’s has 10 teams this year. Parent volunteers provide the coaching and assistant coaching needed to keep the program going, and parent Meghan Brown is the director and coordinator.

Coaches count

Brown speaks highly of the parent coaches, who commit their time to practices and games each week throughout the season.

“I get the privilege of returning all the energy that was given to me when I was a youth,” said Tom Antal, who coaches both a girls’ and a boys’ team. “I was privileged to be surrounded by exceptional coaches who taught me to love the game and perform at a high level. With a little luck, my teams will share that same enthusiasm for the game, love for competition and desire for self-improvement.

“It also gives me a chance to spend time with my children before they want no part of being in their fathers’ presence,” he said with a smile.

New friends, new skills

Teams usually practice twice a week and have one game each week, Brown said. The girls’ teams play at St. Gertrude and the boys’ teams play at Benedictine, St. Michael’s and St. Bridget’s. They play teams from other Catholic and private schools in Richmond.

The program offers a great opportunity for students of all skills levels to learn and play, Brown said.

“If there is a passion to get better, the athlete will get better,” she said. “I find that a lot of the coaches work on fundamentals with the teams. The basics of the game will carry you the farthest in basketball, and it is important for the student-athletes to recognize this early, especially if they have great aspirations in the sport.

“The program is also great for some students to try something new, to be part of something bigger than themselves, and to take a risk and come out of their comfort zone,” Brown said.

(Continued on page 2)
“I hope the players understand that nothing in life is perfect, and it’s about doing YOUR best,” Brown said. “While doing that, mistakes will happen, but by sticking with it, you will have more successes in the long run.

“Basketball has taught me to never give up,” said Ann Margaret Gibrall, who plays for the fifth-grade girls. “If something’s hard and you don’t think you’ll be able to do it, keep trying.”

Brown is also glad the players get to experience teamwork.

“Sometimes in life, in order to get better or to achieve goals, you have to rely on others to get you there,” she says. “Being part of a team requires accepting a role and buying into something bigger.”

Parent Patricia Osborne agrees.

“Besides the benefit from being active, being part of basketball gives my daughter a chance to be around kids she would not normally connect with in class,” she said. “Basketball broadens her circle of friends.”

Brown says while sixth- through eighth-grade girls received new uniforms this year through an anonymous donation, the rest of the teams could use a uniform update. If you’d like to donate toward this need, please contact Development Coordinator Jennifer Janus at jjanus@saintmary.org.

University of Richmond Spiders Forward
Alicia Hudalla got her start right here

Saint Mary’s 2010 graduate Alicia Hudalla is a forward on the Women’s basketball team for the University of Richmond. After Saint Mary’s, she had a successful scholastic and basketball career at Glen Allen High School and is now a junior at U of R, in her third year of play for the Spiders.

Where was her intro to basketball?
Right here at Saint Mary’s, she said.

Hudalla tried basketball in third grade and didn’t like it, she says, but she decided to give it another go during fifth grade at Saint Mary’s. The rest is history.

The Saint Mary’s community has been a tremendous influence on who she’s become, Hudalla said.

“I was very, very shy as a kid,” she said. “I think my parents sent me to Saint Mary’s because they didn’t want me to be overwhelmed.

“I am so outgoing now,” Hudalla said. “Saint Mary’s helped me to blossom as a human and as a social person. It shaped who I was and who I wanted to be. I wouldn’t be where I am without it.”

Hudalla said that playing for U of R has been an awesome experience that “requires an enormous amount of commitment and drive.”

Her advice to today’s Saint Mary’s students?

“Don’t lose the things you’re taught at Saint Mary’s,” she said. “You are going to lean on your faith more than anything. I use it every day.”
I am very happy to say a few words about our family’s experience at St. Mary’s. My wife Deb and I have had three children attend Saint Mary’s from preschool through eighth grade. Even though they are all college graduates now, and making their way as adults, their time at St Mary’s feels like yesterday. I have thought a lot about words to describe our experience at Saint Mary’s, but I need to keep this short, so the words I came up with are home, support, education, friendship, and fun.

Home
The first word is home. Deb and I moved to Richmond in the late 1980s. We came to Richmond from Worcester, Massachusetts without an extended family or established network of friends in town. We knew we would meet people along the way, but we also knew we would need a spiritual home where we could continue our lives as Catholics. We still think of Saint Mary’s Church and School as our spiritual home.

Support
The second word is support. Deb and I decided early on that we wanted our kids to have a Catholic School education. We were not against public schools, we just wanted our children to be educated in an environment where Christ is at the center of things, and where people can freely talk about their faith. There is something special that happens in Catholic Schools when a child is supported by people who share Christian values in their family, their school, and their church. This creates an environment where children feel a sense of support and a sense of obligation to do their best. I like to call this three-part support system the “Catholic School Triangle.” It is very real, and when it works it is priceless.

Education
The third word is education. Simply stated, our kids received an excellent education at Saint Mary’s. We sensed it day by day and year by year as they progressed from preschool through elementary and middle school. We saw it proven when our kids and many other Saint Mary’s graduates did just fine in the area public high schools. They were well prepared for the classroom work, plus they had all the extra benefits of a Catholic School education. I don’t have space to name every Saint Mary’s teacher or staff member who made a positive difference in our children’s lives, but they are all warmly remembered in our hearts, and often talked about in our home.

Friendship
The fourth word is friendship. Our kids made some good and lasting friends at Saint Mary’s. And so did their parents. We met and became friends with some wonderful parents who took their children’s education very seriously. We looked out for each other’s kids, and we helped each other with rides and meals and play dates and everything else involved in getting kids through the hectic school days and weekends. We are still good friends with parents we met at Saint Mary’s, and we count that as a great blessing.

Fun
The fifth word is fun. We had a lot of fun at Saint Mary’s, especially in the basketball program. I was a coach and volunteer coordinator in the basketball program for about 10 years. We had boys and girls teams at each grade level from five to eight. Everyone had an opportunity to play, and everyone on the team was important. It was inspirational to see the Saint Mary’s teams show courage and resilience as they made their way through the ups and downs of competitive sports. It was also fun to see their antics and sense of humor when they were just being kids and not taking it all so seriously. Some of my best memories are of kids and parents getting together after a game for ice cream or a meal, laughing and talking over the highlights of the day. As I look back on those happy days, I cannot help but think that something is gained but also lost when kids move on to competitive high school sports. I bet many of our Saint Mary’s graduates who became accomplished athletes would say they never had more fun than when they put on the blue and white with their friends to meet their cross-town rivals.

So there you have it. Five quick words to describe our experience at Saint Mary’s. We miss those days, and our family is eternally grateful that we had them. We wish you the same. Go Monarchs!

Steve Horan (back row, first on left) and fellow coaches with their team, circa 2001 or 2002.
Moving to the Big Apple to make it as an actor seems like a plot for a movie – not something that happens to someone in real life. Even more fantastic is the thought of someone you know reaching for that dream and succeeding. As an actor in New York City with a job at a theatre company, Meghann Garmany is following her passion, and making that dream a reality.

Meghann’s performing debut can be traced to a Girl Scout troop right here on Gayton Road: she’s an alumna of Saint Mary’s Catholic School. Meghann graduated from Saint Mary’s in 2001, and she attended Saint Mary’s from kindergarten through eighth grade. I asked Meghann to share some of her memories of school here, to which she responded: “Where do I begin?!

“My time at Saint Mary’s is one of the most treasured times of my life,” she said. “It really defined me as a person.”

Blessed from the start

Meghann’s class was special, she said, in that after first grade, the group was never split. They were at Saint Mary’s before the middle school extension was built, and therefore were together as a group of students from second through eighth grade.

“We were kind of raised there,” she said. “We were a family.”

Meghann came back to Saint Mary’s last summer to be part of the wedding of one of her classmates, Casidhe Horan Troyer. (Casidhe’s father, Steve shares reflections on his time as a basketball coach and Saint Mary’s parent on page 3.) Several other girls who graduated with Meghann and Casidhe also attended the wedding. Casidhe’s wedding program included a letter to the wedding guests welcoming them to Saint Mary’s, where her school friends’ parents looked out for her as if she were their own.

“You know the saying ‘It takes a village to raise a child?’” Meghann said. “We were a prime example of that.”

Supporting cast

Meghann talked about supportive teachers and classmates who, as surrogate family, encouraged and challenged her and each other.
“I don’t know that I’ve ever worked harder in my life,” she said. “We challenged each other. We brought each other up. We wanted to make our teachers proud like you want to make your parents proud.

“We had great role models,” she said. “All of our teachers were always supportive, always pushing us to be our best. Someone was always willing to push me to get better, or to at least believe that I could.”

**Following her passion**

After Saint Mary’s, Meghann went to Goochland High School, which is where she gave acting a serious try, and knew she was in love with the arts. At Virginia Tech she majored in theatre, was cast in her first play, and “it was history from there,” she said.

She graduated from Virginia Tech in the spring of 2009 with a B.A. in Theatre Arts and moved to New York City the following October. She’s been there ever since.

As Core Company Member and Director of Social Media at Everyday Inferno Theatre Company, Meghann is performing and also fundraising. The afternoon I spoke to her she’d been going back and forth with the artistic director and producing director of the company, planning a staged reading at the theatre called *If on a Winter’s Night*.

“In acting, you are constantly looking for work,” she says. “Whatever you’re doing at the moment will end. Each show is maybe six months to a year, so time is spent job hunting and strategizing, trying to figure out what’s next. It’s life on your toes!”

Whatever comes next, Meghann is grateful for the supporting family of friends from Saint Mary’s that continues to inspire her today: “You cannot find a more closely knit village than we had at Saint Mary’s,” she said.

If you’d like to learn more about Everyday Inferno Theatre Company and lend your support, visit www.EverydayInferno.com. You can find them across social media platforms, as well.

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**#GivingTuesday Matching Gift Highlights Saint Mary’s Generosity**

After the Thanksgiving holiday, and then the love-it-or-not shopping spectacles that are Black Friday and Cyber Monday, a new “day” has come into being: Giving Tuesday (often written with a hashtag -- #GivingTuesday).

The website https://givingtuesday.org says the idea for the day was created by the team at the Belfer Center for Innovation & Social Impact at the 92nd Street Y in New York City. Giving Tuesday, launched in 2012, is meant to kick off the charitable season, when many people focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving. The site states: “… #GivingTuesday has become a movement that celebrates and supports giving and philanthropy with events throughout the year and a growing catalog of resources.”

With the help of a generous anonymous donor, Saint Mary’s Catholic School decided to become part of the #GivingTuesday movement this year. The donor family promised to match contributions on November 29 and 30 up to $6,000, in hopes of securing at least $12,000 total for the school’s Annual Fund.

So – did the community of Saint Mary’s step up and make it happen?

We did – and then some! More than 60 givers stepped up to the matching challenge, raising not just $12,000, but more than $23,000 for Saint Mary’s Catholic School in those two days. This generosity brings the Annual Fund to within 10% of the 2016-17 goal.

Many thanks to the anonymous donor family and to the many who took time to give a gift to the Saint Mary’s Catholic School Annual Fund. If you’d like to help us reach our annual goal of $60,000 in record time, you can make a gift today – every dollar makes a difference. Click the “Annual Fund” link at the upper left at www.saintmary.org.
Saint Mary’s 50th Anniversary Homecoming Mass and Celebration on September 24 was an evening to remember. Hundreds of alumni and their families came together to visit and remember their days at Saint Mary’s Catholic School.

Special guests for the evening included Sisters Elaine McCarron and Patricia Worley, the first two principals of Saint Mary’s Catholic School, as well as Virginia Gish, a former sister and teacher at the school. These three women traveled with another sister from their order, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, near Louisville, Kentucky.

Dr. Janet Cottone Garzia, principal of Saint Mary’s from 1983 to 1988 and teacher before that, also attended with her husband, driving from Lake Mary, Florida.

Many other former and current teachers and students, and parents of alumni, joined in the celebration, which featured food by Morrissey’s Catering and live music from Rock-and-Soul band The Remnants.

“I feel blessed to have been a student at Saint Mary’s, and to be able to help plan and then take part in this celebration” said Patty Daylor, class of 1976, whose sister and brother also graduated from Saint Mary’s. “This community is like an extension of my family, so this felt like a family reunion almost!”

Sister Patricia Worley was the second principal of Saint Mary’s, and said she was overwhelmed to see so many former students that at times she had no words to describe her happy emotions.

“There are a lot of good Catholic schools out there,” said first principal Sister Elaine McCarron. “Saint Mary’s is one of the best. It’s pretty special.”

Watch for an email to come your way with a short clip of an interview with Sisters Elaine and Patricia, and Virginia Gish, filmed during the night of the celebration. Please contact Development Coordinator Jennifer Janus at jjanus@saintmary.org if you’d like to see the video and do not receive it by the end of February.
Upcoming Events

Kid Pan Alley:
January 12-27, 2016

Culminating Concert on
Friday, January 27, 7 p.m.

Musician and songwriter Paul Reisler will spend several days as part of an artist-in-residence program at Saint Mary’s. Paul’s nationally known program is called Kid Pan Alley (www.kidpanalley.org). He and music teacher Heidi Taylor will work with students in grades K through eight to write music and songs. They’ll produce a CD, and have a culminating concert on Friday, January 27. Grades K through 3 will perform from 6 to 7 p.m. in the church, and grades 4 through 8 will perform from 7:30 to 8:30.

This residency was made possible through a grant from Virginia Commission for the Arts, and also has been paid for in part by the Saint Mary’s PTO.

Email Jennifer Janus at jjanus@saintmary.org for more information.

Father Ron Nuzzi

On Friday, February 24, 2017 at 7 p.m., Saint Mary’s will host Rev. Ronald Nuzzi, Ph. D. Father Nuzzi is the senior director of ACE RISE (Alliance for Catholic Education: Renewing Identity, Strengthening Education) at The University of Notre Dame. His talk will be:

The Future of Humanity Runs through the Family: Parenting Worth Heralding.

In the midst of the busy pace of our daily lives, it’s easy for our awareness of God’s presence to get lost in the shuffle. As juggling parents, how do we strengthen our own relationship with God and our own faithful convictions? How do we shepherd our children toward awareness of God’s love and mercy and call to service?

Please join us for the talk and desserts and coffee afterwards. A movie night and free childcare for children ages 4 to 14 will be available in the school gym while Father Nuzzi is speaking in the church.

Tickets to hear Father Nuzzi are $5/person online, or $10 at the door. Visit www.saintmary.org to buy yours today!

Sister Nancy Murray, OP
(sister of actor Bill Murray)

Wednesday, April 26, 7 p.m.

St Catherine of Siena: A Woman for Our Times

Through the magic of theatre, an Italian accent and an old-fashioned Dominican habit, Sister Nancy’s dramatic skills allow her audiences to get to know the real Catherine and her message about God’s love for all.

Saint Mary’s Catholic School PTO Gala & Auction

Saturday, April 29, 2017
The Jefferson Hotel, Richmond

Watch www.saintmary.org for more information about this terrific event!
Steve Horan and his daughter Casidhe Horan Troyer (Saint Mary’s class of 2001) at her wedding in June 2015 – Casidhe was a Saint Mary’s basketballer and her dad a coach (see his reflections, page 3). Casidhe is now working on her Ph.D. at the University of Michigan.