

March/April 2015



the

connecting the community of st. francis xavier parish

Navigator

St. Francis Xavier School earns national STEM recognition

St. Francis Xavier School has been selected as one of 14 recipients of the 2015 Innovations in Catholic Education award in recognition of its outstanding science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum.

The school is featured in the March issue of "Today's Catholic Teacher" magazine, which sponsors the national award. SFX was selected in the special category of "innovative projects in curriculum and instruction."

"The entire St. Francis Xavier School staff is extremely excited and privileged to be receiving this honor," says Bibiana Seislove, the principal. "This accolade is a testament to the hard

work and commitment of our teachers. Each and every one of them, in all curriculum areas, is dedicated to the advancement of STEM education at St. Francis Xavier School.

"I am so very proud of our school community, including our staff, students and parents for their commitment to making our school a leader in STEM education."

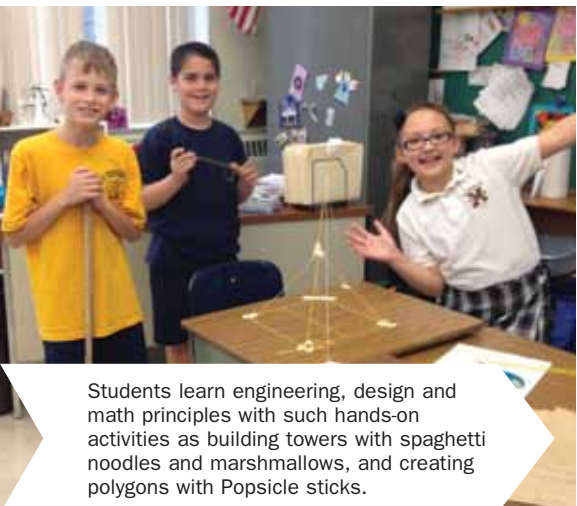
The school is in its second year of a three-year plan to incorporate a STEM focus in more lessons and classroom activities. Last year, thanks in part to a donation that was matched by an employer, every classroom participated in a STEM Day, in which students took on specific challenges.

For example, children in kindergarten through second grade learned about air movement, and third-graders made airplane gliders. Students in the fourth grade made towers while fifth-graders explored waves, testing various materials to see how they could create a "life jacket" to hold a soup can above water. Middle-schoolers made small cars out of peppermint candies and index cards, and raced them.

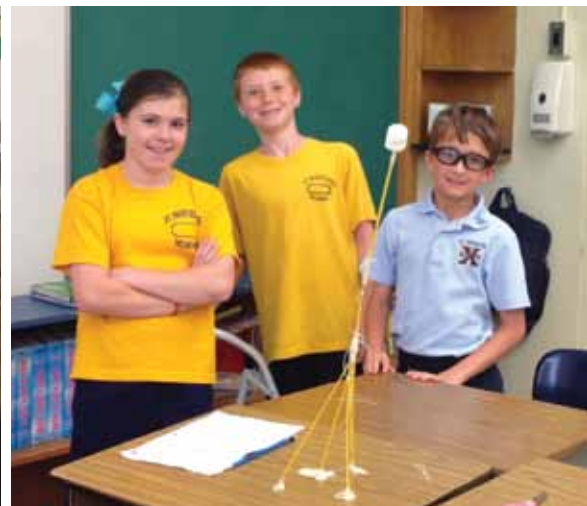
This year the school will hold two such days, and next year students will have one each quarter.

The STEM Days augment a robust curriculum that includes e-labs in each grade, many hands-on activities, weekly

***STEM** continued on page 2*



Students learn engineering, design and math principles with such hands-on activities as building towers with spaghetti noodles and marshmallows, and creating polygons with Popsicle sticks.



Saturday Vigil – 5 p.m., Sunday – 8 & 10 a.m., noon & 5:30 p.m.

Weekdays – 7:30 a.m. Monday through Saturday; 7 p.m. Monday, Thursday & First Friday of the month



Two earn Eagle rank

Keeagan Gallagher and Ryan Schweter have earned Boy Scouts' highest rank as Eagle Scouts. They join two others who earned their Eagles in 2014.

Both Keegan and Ryan earned the 21 requisite merit badges, served leadership positions within our parish-sponsored Troop 506 and attended numerous campouts and high-adventure trips.

Keegan, 18, a senior at Buckeye High School, built two portable bocce courts for the Medina County Board of Developmental Disabilities for his Eagle project. The project included the fund raising of more than \$300 and involved more than 75 volunteer hours to complete. He now serves as an assistant scoutmaster with the troop, and plans to attend Cuyahoga Community College to study nursing.

Ryan, 17, a senior at St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron, converted an unsightly non-working fountain at the Medina County Home into a low-maintenance rock garden. The project involved more than 25 volunteer hours to complete. He plans to attend the University of Dayton this fall.

According to the Boy Scouts of America, only 4 percent of all boys who join the Scouting movement attain the highest rank of Eagle.



Our newest Eagle Scouts: Ryan Schweter, left, and Keagan Gallagher

STEM

continued from page 1

computer classes and access to laptops, iPads and other technology. Extracurricular activities, such as Math Club, Chess Club and Science Olympiad teams, also are available.

Christina Bresnahan, who teaches middle-school science, says teachers are eagerly searching for new ways to expand STEM education in their daily classes. "As a staff we are excited about the growth we see in our students because of the STEM activities we have been able to provide for them," she says.

STEM education strives to integrate various subject areas to help students understand connections and potential applications in life. According to the Ohio Academy of Science, STEM education incorporates scientific inquiry and technological design through student-focused, project-based curricula to develop skills of communication, teamwork and collaboration, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving.

"So often kids don't see the connection and grumble when math was mentioned in science," Mrs. Bresnahan says. "Now they see that connection more often and understand how all subjects can play into one idea."

Teachers are seeing students respond in exciting ways. For example, kindergarten girls asked for pastel-colored building blocks so they could build what they liked. Tasked with building a tower out of only a 25-foot roll of aluminum foil, a group of seventh-grade girls discovered how the way they shaped the foil impacted the strength, weight and height of their structure. "I love to see that they often learn a concept we have not taught yet just by trying it on their own," Mrs. Bresnahan says.

One class built polygons out of Popsicle sticks and measured each angle. Then they were allowed to throw their creations like Frisbees, quickly learning that smaller angles made stronger polygons. "We also work a lot as groups or teams, and this is such an important skill for kids," she explains. "Planning together, building together and bouncing ideas off each other are skills all employers look for."

A group of teachers and Mrs. Seislove will accept the award during the National Catholic Education Association convention in April. The award complements the 2011 Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and several years of earning the Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education.

"We have a fantastic staff that is always looking for the new and best ways to teach our students," Mrs. Bresnahan concludes. "We want kids to leave here ready to take on the world around them in every way possible."



Students learned how structure, weight and angles affect the strength of their marshmallow and noodle towers.



How are you “Rediscover(ing) Catholicism”?

At Christmas, our parish gave away 1,500 copies of Matthew Kelly’s “Rediscover Catholicism” book with the hope that it would help reignite the faith of our parishioners and visitors. Did you read it? We know that several Bible study groups read the book and discussed it together, and about 30 people joined Father Thom each Monday for six weeks to discuss and dig deeper.

So we asked...how has the book helped you to “Rediscover Catholicism”? Here are some responses:

- “(I’m) having a better conversation with Him in prayer and starting to read the four Gospels.”
- “I’ve been praying for guidance from God as to what He wants me to do. This study has made me look at myself as capable of doing anything God wants of me and He will always be there to help me along the way.”

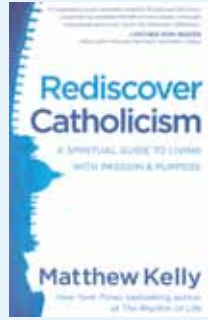
• “(I will) try to help others every day in some way to make things easier for them or to feel better about themselves. (I will) pray more, especially the rosary. (I will) read Scripture and the Bible more to better understand my Catholic faith and to thereby improve.”

• “I like the idea of reading the Gospel (and readings) before attending Mass. I’d like to change it a bit and read these things beforehand with my husband so we can both be more attentive and aware while being at Mass. Maybe even, discuss after Mass what we heard and how something spoke to us. I’d like to reread all of the highlighted (by me) parts of the book that spoke to me...nearly half the book!”

• “(I will) read more about our saints and not think...that they were so totally perfect. Their lives are so inspiring. (I will) make an effort to reconcile in confession more often than I am used to.”

• “Over the years, Lent has been about giving up chocolate or something else. Occasionally it’s been about doing something more. After taking part in the ‘Rediscover Catholicism’ series, Lent, for me, will not be about giving something up; rather, it will be about deepening my relationship with Jesus Christ, especially by growing in virtue and being more available to God in daily prayer.”

• “One of the ideas in the book that is emphasized was to read Catholic books and that spending just 15 minutes a day (every day) will bring about dramatic change in a person’s life. There are many good Catholic books in the St. Francis Xavier library in the back of the church. My recommendation is to grab one and begin the journey.”



Theology on Tap brewing in Medina County

Father Chris Cox and the St. Francis Xavier Young Adult Ministry are working to launch a Theology on Tap discussion series for Catholic young adults living in Wayne, Ashland and Medina counties.



Modeled after similar programs elsewhere in the Cleveland Diocese, Theology on Tap takes on topics of current religious or cultural interest – and engages that conversation in a nontraditional setting comfortable to many young people. The

event is open to anyone 21 years and older.

The first Theology on Tap will be Thursday, April 9, at The Galaxy in Wadsworth, featuring Pete Range, a former campus minister at Bowling Green State University. Range, who also previously taught at St. Martin de Porres High School in Cleveland, now works for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Toledo. He will talk about discerning life’s decisions.

The social begins at 6 p.m., and Range will speak at 7. A \$5 charge includes appetizers and the speaker. A cash bar will be available.

The Galaxy is near I-76 and state Route 94, at 201 Park Center Drive, in Wadsworth. For more information, visit www.sfxmedina.com.



Blessing of the Easter

Many Catholic families have a tradition of bringing baskets of the food they will eat on Easter to church on Holy Saturday to be blessed. The tradition is particularly common among families of Eastern European descent, but can be adopted by anyone.

Here at St. Francis Xavier Parish, baskets will be placed along the step in front of the altar on Holy Saturday for a 3 p.m. prayer service and blessing.

We asked parishioner Trina Custer to tell us about what the tradition means to her.

Q: How long have you had a tradition of bringing a food basket to church?

It was a tradition that I grew up with. As a little girl, I remember

watching my aunts help my Baba (Slovak for “grandmother”) take such pride in preparing her basket with all of the traditional Easter foods.

Once everything was perfectly placed in the basket, my mother would drive her to the Catholic church in Byesville, Ohio, and all of the women would place their baskets on the tables in the basement of the church. The basement smelled wonderful! I remember watching the pride on their faces as they removed their handmade basket coverings (“hlaboka” in Slovak) that protected their precious foods.

I remember the car ride home was filled with conversation about how everyone’s baskets looked (in comparison with Baba’s) – of course, Baba’s basket was always the best!

Q: Why is this a tradition you want to continue with your family?

I have never missed a basket blessing. Even when I was living on my own as a young, single woman in the Washington, D.C., area. Or, driving through the night (heading home from Disney World after watching our son and daughter march at the Magic Kingdom with the Medina High School band) in order to be on time for the 3 p.m. basket blessing.

Why do I/we make the effort? Our country was founded on faith, family and tradition and, it is exactly that which keeps our country strong and our families flourishing. As a mother of four children, it is important that I lead by example. They need to see that carrying on this tradition is much more than just a tradition or to honor my ethnic, loving grandparents but, more importantly, it is an outward symbol of our family’s faith that binds our love for each other and keeps us humble and hopeful throughout our lives.

As a mother, it is my hope that, by raising my children in this environment, they will confidently go out in the world as contributing members of society – keeping close in their hearts the traditions and values they hold dear and, never losing sight of who they are, how they were raised and what is truly important in life. That is true success!



PhotoS by Jennifer Webb

Mary, Anna and Nelson Custer help carry on the family tradition.





Baskets



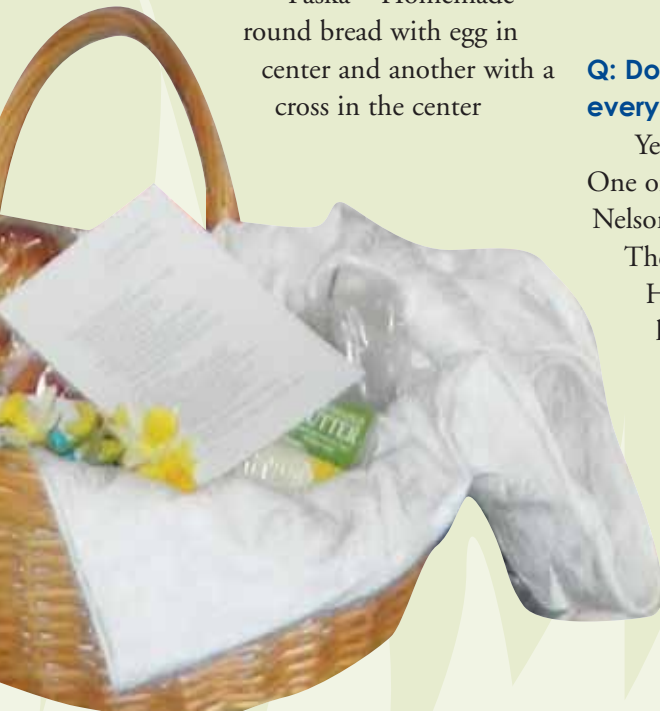
Father Thom blesses the baskets at last year's prayer service.

Q: What do you usually include in your basket?

- Hrutka – Homemade cheese (made from eggs, milk and salt – formed into a ball and hung in the basement to dry)
- Hrin – Homemade horseradish (ground beets and vinegar)
 - Paska – Homemade round bread with egg in center and another with a cross in the center
- Boiled bacon
- Kielbasa
- Ham
- Colored eggs
- Salt
- Butter
- Chocolate
- Rozki (Homemade walnut and prune pastries)

Q: Do you use the same basket every year?

Yes, until it breaks. Funny story... One of our first Easters together, Nelson was carrying the basket into St. Therese Church in Garfield Heights. Because he was not holding it by the bottom and it was sooooo heavy, it broke right through the bottom and EVERYTHING started rolling across Granger Road. Needless to say, we had a new basket the following year!



What goes in the basket?



You can bring a sample of each food you will eat. Some families even include a bone for the dog!

Baskets are lined with a white cloth and decorated with ribbons and greenery to symbolize spring, renewal and the Resurrection.

Here are some ideas of what you to include and their traditional meanings:

- Decorated, hardboiled eggs: Christ's Resurrection
- Lamb-shaped butter or sugar: Christ as the Lamb of God
- Bread: Jesus is the "Bread of Life"
- Ham: great joy and abundance
- Sausage: God's favor and generosity
- Smoked bacon: the overabundance of God's mercy
- Salt: prosperity and justice
- Cheese: the moderation Christians should have at all times
- Horseradish & pepper: the Passion of Christ and the bitter herbs of the Passover
- White candle: Christ as the "Light of the World."

Lastly, the basket is cover with linen, symbolizing Christ's shroud.



Go Navigators!

SFX CYO adds football team

For the first time in the parish's 155 years, St. Francis Xavier Parish will have a football team to cheer on this fall.

Registration is underway for the parish CYO program's very first football team, which this season will be comprised of boys and girls in the seventh grade. The following year's program will have seventh- and eighth-grade teams.

"We're really excited and just really grateful that we're getting this opportunity to get it off the ground," says Anthony DiMarino, a parishioner who's volunteering as the football commissioner.

For at least 20 years, youth in our parish who wished to play CYO football had to travel four nights a week to St. Ambrose Parish in Brunswick and join a team there. It wasn't feasible for many families to make that commitment.



Steve Dryer, left, and Anthony DiMarino are excited that St. Francis Xavier will have its first football team this fall.

Meanwhile, youngsters who played for Medina's recreational football leagues found that they weren't able to get much – if any – playing time after the sixth grade if they planned to attend a Catholic high school. Medina High School coaches look to the rec leagues as training ground for future Medina Bees.

This fall, a group of parents started talking seriously about their desire to see a CYO football program at St. Francis Xavier. In addition to Anthony, Larry Sullin, Chris Forgan, Kevin Blinkhorn, Steve Dryer and Holy Martyrs parishioner Mark Orzell all have sons who will be seventh-graders this fall.

Anthony offered to research the idea, and they presented the idea to Kim Tuckek, our "pastoral designee" (parish CYO athletic

director), and Father Tony Sejba. The group committed to remain with the program for years, even after their sons moved on to high school, to ensure the program continues.

As discussions progressed, sponsors and additional coaches came forward to offer their help, including Ric Benninger, a parishioner who coached many years at St. Ambrose. Anthony says it all seems providential. "What I thought was, the Lord wants this to happen. Too many things are opening up here," he says.

The goal of CYO is to teach young people to be more Christ-like in everything they do, focusing first on the individual participant and the athletic activity second. "Each participant, parent, coach, official and volunteer need to work together to bring our Gospel vision and values to life in every aspect of CYO programs," the CYO website explains.

And those are ideals shared by the men behind the football program.

"Not only are we going to teach these kids the game of football, but we're going to help them in their life skills," Anthony says. "That's a critical age right there. When we get together as coaches, I try to keep that in front of them. This is going to be more than just 'let's get our kids into a football game.' It's going to be developed here in Medina for our church for generations to come."

In this league, boys and girls who are enrolled at St. Francis Xavier School or enrolled and actively attending a local Catholic parish school of religion (including homeschool programs) are eligible. The ideal team size is 18 to 22 players.

Steve Dryer, who will serve as head coach and coached many years with the Medina Gridiron program, said he's looking forward to the football program. "I love teaching the kids," he says. "I love to see them grow and get better and enjoy the sport."

Several fundraisers are being planned to help offset the costs of buying new, top-of-the-line equipment that will make the game safe for players. Steve says his 12-year-old son, Carson, and his friends are excited about the coming season. "The boys are pumped because they're able to represent their school," Steve says. "I think it'll be exciting for the school and the parish."

Deadline for registration is March 31.

Practices begin Aug. 1. For more information, email Anthony at anthonydimarino@hotmail.com and to register, visit www.stfrancisxavierathletics.com.





Register your family for our Parish Day of Service!

This year, St. Francis Xavier Parish celebrates 155 years of sharing the joy of the Gospel as a vibrant faith community here in Medina. We've seen our parish grow from a fledgling worship site visited by priests riding the circuit to what has become the largest Catholic parish in Medina County.

Now we'd like to give back to our community as we fan out throughout the county to perform acts of service to our neighbors. On Saturday, May 23, we'll be working at area nursing homes, Cups Café, Birthcare, Project: LEARN and Camp Paradise. We'll visit our homebound parishioners, wipe down toys at the Medina Children's Home and pull weeds at the Battered Women's Shelter.

The type of work will vary from site to site. Activities will include painting, cleaning, sorting, gardening, washing walls or windows, or entertaining nursing home residents. We hope that you'll sign up as a family or ministry! (Children under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or an adult designated by a parent.) Encourage your friends and your children's friends to take part, and the impact will be even greater.

We'll need lots of prayer support back at "home base" as well, so if you aren't up to working at a site, consider joining a prayer team at church or your home. Some work will be done right at our parish "home."

Your volunteer shift may begin as early as 9 a.m. and last anywhere from a couple of hours to a little more, depending on the project you sign up for. We'll all quit by 4 p.m. so we can return to St. Francis Xavier Church for 5 p.m. Mass – yes, maybe still grubby from our work – so we can celebrate the Eucharist together as a community.

Then, we ask that you stay for dinner so we can swap stories about the good work done and hearts touched that day. We know this camaraderie is good for our souls.

Want to donate to the cause? Work gloves, shovels and cleaning supplies will be needed, in addition to water bottles for volunteers. We'd especially like to have



Anthony, Michael, John and Julianna Miller helped spread mulch on parish grounds last summer.

T-shirts for everyone who participates. Watch the parish website (sfxmedina.com) for a specific list of items needed.

On May 3, sign up to participate in the Church Basement.

Won't you join us? Let's take our faith out into the world and give thanks for God's blessings on our 155 years by sharing our gifts with the community.

A team of parishioners is planning the Parish Day of Service, but we need YOU to make this happen! Have questions? Contact Jennifer Webb at 330-764-8946 or jwebb@stfrancisxavier.info.

The church sacristans need YOU!

Did you know that our church is cleaned every week by a team of parishioners?

Groups of about five volunteers gather on Fridays or Saturday mornings to wash the marble and floors in the sacristy and vestibules, dust, vacuum, and clean the windows and bathrooms.

Each team is assigned only three or four times

a year, and the work takes less than two hours.

This vital ministry needs more people to help! Many of the longtime volunteers are no longer able to do the work. Responsible teens and adults are welcome. Many hands make work light.

Please call Jeanne Rebeschter at 330-725-5745 and say you'll lend a hand.



St. Francis Xavier

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www.sfxmedina.com

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page 8



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 14

6th Grade Edge Retreat
9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Inspiration Hills

Boy Scouts St. Patrick's Day
Dinner/Dance

6:30 p.m., Church Basement
Tickets may be purchased
from any Scout parent
or call rectory for details.

March 21

Adoration for Life
8-8:30 a.m., Church

March 28

Easter Egg Hunt
1 to 3 p.m., School
See bulletin and website for
registration details.

March 30-April 3

Spring Break (no school or PSR)

April 12

Divine Mercy Sunday
3 p.m. prayer service, Church

April 29

Edge Closing Mass
7 :30 p.m., Church

May 3

Parish Day of Service
Sign-Up Sunday
After 8 a.m., 10 a.m., and 12
noon Masses, Church Basement

Looking ahead...

Vacation Bible School

June 15 to 19

The Edge Camp

Camp 1: June 22-26
Camp 2: June 26, and
June 29-July 2

Visit sfxmedina.com for
registration details!

Holy Week liturgies

Holy Thursday (April 2):

7 p.m. Mass; Adoration of the
Blessed Sacrament, 9 p.m. to midnight
Xavier Room

Good Friday (April 3):

9 a.m. Morning Prayer; Liturgy of the
Lord's Passion, 3 and 7 p.m., Church

Holy Saturday (April 4):

9 a.m. Morning Prayer; Blessing of the
Food Baskets, 3 p.m., Church

Easter (April 4 & 5)

Vigil:

8:30 p.m., Church

Sunday:

8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 12 noon, Church

8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Medina High School Performing Arts Center

