



Parent Newsletter

From the Head of School

Dear SDA Parents,

As the timeless Christmas classic states, “It’s *beginning to look a lot like Christmas*” at 2572 Kennedy Boulevard. The Christmas tree is up in Madonna Hall, the red bows are adorning the light fixtures on the first floor, and the Advent wreath is in place in the chapel. The Glee Club and Dominoes are rehearsing for their annual Christmas Concert on December 11th at St. Aloysius Church, which signifies the true start of the Christmas holidays for many of us!

November was an exciting month at SDA. The Academy held its 17th Annual Leadership Gala, which raises money for our scholarship program. The evening was a great success; with a new venue, a performance by the Dominoes, a Wine Wall, and both a Live and Silent Auction, the evening raised funds for scholarships for next year. Our three honorees, whom you will learn about in more detail in this issue, spoke of how Saint Dominic Academy influenced their lives for the better. My sincere thanks to those who were able to join us for this event!

The Leadership Gala was not the only November event at SDA! Young ladies in grades 7-11 were hard at work every day in ELAN, preparing for our fall musical production of ANNIE! Joined by students from Saint Peter’s Prep and All Saints Catholic Academy, their voices filled the stage for two sold out nights in mid-November. Additionally, our Dominican Youth in Action prepared Thanksgiving baskets for those who are less fortunate and classroom doors are becoming vibrant and merry, as students prepare for the annual Christmas Door Decorating contest!

As the darkness falls earlier during these next few weeks, we may feel moments of sadness at the lack of daylight. However, our hearts should carry the joy of the Advent season, knowing we can look ahead to Christmas Eve and to the coming among us, once again, of the Light of the World. Christmas is the beginning of the Greatest Story Ever Told – one that changed the world forever.

May you and your loved ones enjoy every blessing of this most holy season. Merry Christmas from all at Saint Dominic Academy!

Warmly,

Sarah Degnan Moje
Head of School

A message from the Academic Dean

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I would like to start by saying that my first four months as Academic Dean have been *pretty uneventful*. I am sure that, after this first statement, a number of images (and questions) have begun forming in your heads. Now, before I start receiving calls and emails over this, let me move on.

As we embark on something new, we do set expectations. *What would I do? How would I do it? What's in store for me? How do I make a difference?* I will be honest enough to tell you that I came in September 'expecting the worse' yet determined to give it my very best. I guess the formula is working! While I was ready for problematic students', parents', and teachers' visits, calls, emails, or letters (you know, the typical scenarios depicted in comic strips), I have hardly received any such that we were not able to deal with, and deal with well.

Three words... Teamwork and Positive Attitudes. The SDA Administration and Faculty set the tone for the school year and are leading by example, encouraging pride and respect in an effort to maintain a community conducive to meaningful learning and well-rounded growth for our precious young women. Our doors are open. Our hours are flexible. Our students know that they can come to us at anytime for anything that they may need assistance with. We have consistently encouraged them to believe that "They can!" And so far, so good!

While I teach AP Chemistry to Juniors and Forensic Science to Seniors, I have made a conscious effort to get to know our Freshmen and Sophomores not just by name, but I also try to keep track of how they are doing in their classes. Some have been invited for a helpful chat in my office, and some via quick catch-ups in the hallways or the classrooms as I do my daily rounds.

Towards the end of the first marking period, I have come to better understand that the transition from elementary to high school, especially high school at SDA with our rigorous curriculum, is actually a big challenge for most of our 9th graders. It is inspiring to note at this point that, with the help of their Administration/Faculty mentors, the Seniors in Fresh 101, and their Big Sisters, our 9th graders are adjusting fairly well and will soon shine like their bigger sisters.

Of the four classes, our Sophomores have had the most time to focus on their academics, club and sports involvements. Their SAT English and Math classes are in full swing. Mrs. Arguelles has shared how they are working on practice tests and learning tips and techniques from each other. The Sienna and Veritas Honors classes have been through two Enrichment classes for STEM and Religion, and have likewise attended a STEM Live Stream sponsored by the IBM Academy of Technology.

Our Juniors and Seniors have been really busy, both in and out of the classroom. Both grades have attended retreats that have addressed significant needs of theirs as classes, and have highlighted the need for a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Dr. Santora has taken his AP US Government and AP US History classes for a trip to the New Jersey State House. Ms. McKenzie has invited the Trade Marketing Manager of the Pepsi Company in Venezuela to speak with her Spanish 3H and AP Spanish classes. On December 6th, Dr. Ponnala took her Anatomy and Physiology class to Rockefeller University for a lab experience on DNA amplification via a process called Polymerase Chain Reaction.

Our 9th, 10th, and 11th graders are busy working on their project entries for an SDA Science Fair, winners from which will be fielded to the Jersey City Medical Center/Barnabas Health STEM Challenge scheduled for March of next year.

The Writing Across the Curriculum program is a regular fare and we are beefing up our College Writing skills development pursuits. Ongoing is our partnership with the Library of Congress Story Corp project.

Almost every classroom is equipped with a Smart Board, a Smart or an Apple TV. Every Senior is a proud owner of a Kindle, and the use of iPads has been fully integrated into the 9th and 10th grade classes. The highly interactive Google classrooms encourage collaboration and simplify management of daily activities and requirements.

All these and more and we have just been through a marking period and a half! We have been busy and I, for one, am loving it! I do not mind the paper work that always has a way of piling up, a to-do list that gets half-way done (if you're lucky), or sore feet from walking the halls on heels. Sometimes I think of myself as the *Energizer Bunny* or the *Little Engine That Could*. No batteries needed here, though. I run on the smiles, the thank-you's, the little hand-written notes that translate to pats on my shoulder, assuring me that ***I am part of a team that could and would.***

On that note, I would like to wish everyone the merriest Christmas and the brightest New Year!

Sincerely,



Mrs. Guen Farrales
Academic Dean

A message from the 7th & 8th Coordinator

Dear Parents and Guardians,

“Tis the season.” For weeks now merchants have been reminding us to do our Christmas shopping early and claiming they have the best sales available. Christmas decorations quickly appeared on store shelves encroaching on the space reserved for Halloween pumpkins and Thanksgiving turkeys.

As the Christmas excitement continued to build we found ourselves busy cleaning, planning festive meals, baking cookies, putting up trees, and decorating our homes and classrooms into magical wonderland showcases. Madonna Hall itself has been transformed by a splendid array of red and green ribbons, shiny ornaments, and bright, colorful lights.

In the midst of all this merriment, we were reminded that we have been given the gift of Advent, a quiet, reflective time away from the noise and the glare to prepare for the joy and promise of Christmas. Here at Saint Dominic Academy, our students had the opportunity to step back and wonder at the true meaning of the season especially in their religion classes and as they planned for and participated in our prayer services and Advent Liturgy. It was a time, too, for them to think of others and to make Christmas a little brighter for those in need. The Giving Tree is an honored tradition here at SDA and our students responded generously to help bring the Christmas spirit to others.

The days of preparation are swiftly coming to a close. It is time to hang the last stocking and buy that last present. Then take some quiet time to anticipate His birth and celebrate it with family and friends. Rejoice for “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be on His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” *Isaiah 9:6*

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and blessings in the New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ann McLean". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ms. Mary Ann McLean
7th and 8th Grade Coordinator

Around SDA

This year marked the 30th Anniversary of Walkathon!



Around SDA continues.....

Senior Trip to Kalahari Springs Resort!



Special times for the Junior Class!

Ring Ceremony on October 27



Taping of HARRY (The Harry Connick Jr., Show) on November 15



Bragging Rights

AP® Scholars: Three members of the Class of 2016, have earned AP Scholar Awards in recognition of their exceptional achievement on AP Exams. The College Board grants the distinction of AP Scholar to those students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams. **Amanda Gaccione**, currently studying at Providence College and **Kathryn Marano** a student at Caldwell College were named AP Scholars. **Carolina Creamer**, a current student at Stevens Institute of Technology, earned the distinction of AP Scholar with Honor having achieved a 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

Pre-College Awards: Five members of the Senior Class have been acknowledged with special recognition awards. **Purnima Prasad** received the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Medal for her outstanding academic achievement in the study of mathematics and science. She was also recognized by The University of Rochester with The Xerox Award for Innovation and Information Technology for her outstanding academic achievement in the pursuit of innovative approaches and an appreciation for the possibilities of technology during her junior year.

The University of Rochester recognizes one student for her outstanding academic achievement and leadership during her junior year and **Lauren Kelley** was awarded the George Eastman Young Leader Award. A third award from The University of Rochester, The Bausch & Lomb Honorary Science Award, was presented to **Aolanie Vargas** for her excellent achievement in Science during her Junior year. Aolanie also received an award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics, with scholarship stipend, from Lawrence Tech, in recognition of outstanding achievement and accomplishment.

Bryanna Mendez received the Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony Award for her commitment to Social Justice during her junior year and **Erin Bailey** was honored with The St. Michael's College Book Award for Scholarship and Service recognizing outstanding students who demonstrate a commitment to volunteerism and leadership in their community service endeavors.



Fall Sports Wrap-Up

The St. Dominic Academy Athletic program was one of the few schools in the area recognized by the N.J.S.I.A.A. and their affiliate officials associations for being disqualification free during the 2015-16 academic years. The school received a custom banner to commemorate this achievement.

Cross-Country: The St. Dominic Academy completed their 38th year having a wonderful season with a totally new team. The team continued traditions winning the Jersey City title for the 33rd time in 36 years, winning the South Hudson title for the 30th time in the meet's 33 year history, winning the Eastern Christian Invitational for a record ninth time and finishing 4th in their State Group (Parochial B). Eight of the girls were nominated for All county with six earning honors*.



From left John E. Nagel, **Danielle Prekop* '20**, **Jessica Wisowaty* '18**, **Celeste Aurora* '17**, **Megan Van Alstyne* '19**, **Nicolette Racz '18**, **Isabel DeBari '19**, **Maya Barnes* '19**, **Andrea Tlacuilo '19**, **Suhayla Johnson* '20** and Coach **Kristina Jimenez** the 2009 SDA Scholar athlete. Jimenez is now a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University.

Soccer: Coach Jorge Hernandez's Blue Devils doubled their win total from a year ago and finished 8-11-1 on the season. The team defeated Dickinson, Ferris and Marist twice, blanked Mary Help of Christians and had a nice win over Memorial. The team lost on penalty kicks to Secaucus in the HICIAL playoffs and were defeated by Villa Walsh in a state game. **Logan Hart**, **Erin Murphy**, and **Addison Pentz**, all '20 and **Julia Murphy**, '19 and were selected Second Team All League for the 2016 season.

Tennis: Our netters rallied from a slow start to show significant improvement finishing the season 6-13. A relatively new team directed by Coach Marilyn Wilson defeated Dickinson, Ferris, Lincoln, Snyder, Union City and stunned top seed and previously undefeated Kearny. SDA was eliminated from the county playoffs by North Bergen and the state tournament by Villa Walsh. **Angelia Avila '19** and **Grace Jordan '18** earned Honorable Mention All County selection in the post season coaches meeting.

Volleyball: Michael Kushnir's Volleyball team finished 3-11 with wins over St. Anthony, Hoboken and Weehawken. The team matured a bit as the season wound down. **Mary Kate Cannito** and **Sylvanna LeGall**, both '17 were picked as Honorable Mention All League members

Glee Club Sets Holiday Performance Schedule

The Saint Dominic Academy national award winning Glee Club and Dominoes, under the direction of Mr. Joseph Napoli, are ready for a busy and festive Christmas season.

They begin their performance schedule on Thursday, December 8, at 5:30 p.m. at the Blessing and Tree Lighting at the Cusack Care Center located at 537 Pavonia Avenue in Jersey City.

The official Saint Dominic Academy Christmas Show, "A Christmas Concert!" is on Sunday, December 11 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Aloysius Church, 691 West Side Avenue in Jersey City.

According to Mr. Napoli, "The season and its music fill me with remembrance of Christmases past and the songs and the faces of the girls who have performed in these past thirty eight concerts. Last Christmas, the Glee Club learned a multitude of new songs in anticipation of our pilgrimage to Rome. This year I returned to songs that have been Glee Club favorites from (almost!) the past four decades."

On Monday, December 12, the ladies will sing, as is tradition, at the Jersey City Hall tree lighting at 4:00 p.m. They will sing again at the Academy's Advent Liturgy held at St. Aloysius Church on December 15 and following the Senior Play on December 16. On December 21, they will sing at the World of ABC pre-school in downtown Jersey City. More performances are sure to be added to the group's very demanding schedule.

Notes from the SDA Parents Association

On behalf of the SDA Parents Association, I hope you all had a great Thanksgiving and had some quality time off. As the year rapidly comes to an end, we want to remind you that our dedication and commitment to help the students of St. Dominic Academy continues.

Thanks to all who attended, donated to and helped with the Mother/Daughter Brunch. Our profit from the brunch was \$3,326.00. Your varied contributions were truly appreciated.

Our main fund-raising activity, the **Calendar Raffle** will start shortly. We are targeting a profit of \$33,000.00 to help us install the air conditioning unit in Elan. We will need your help to achieve this goal.

Our general PTA meetings will resume in January.

We want to take this time to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Jennifer Bailey
President

Campus Ministry Update

During this holiday season, the Campus Ministry Department, Peer Ministers, and Dominican Youth in Action students, have been as busy as St. Nick getting ready for the birth of Christ. November began with DYAC's annual collection of food to make Thanksgiving baskets for those in need. All of our students, faculty and staff brought in items to fill our baskets, including a turkey! They were delivered to Sacred Heart School on Monday, November 21. The next day, we held a Thanksgiving Prayer Service prepared by our Peer Ministers. It included giving each student a small loaf of bread for them to bring home and share with their families at their Thanksgiving meals. We have much to be grateful for!



Upon our return from our Thanksgiving break, we leapt into Advent with a daily Advent calendar for each student along with encouraging students to pray and do Acts of Kindness for their prayer partners (which were assigned in September). Advent is a time of reflection on our relationship with Jesus and others. Our good acts and prayers help us to embrace this “waiting” for the birth of our Lord and enrich our own relationship with Jesus. The students have prepared our chapel for the birth of our Lord by writing down their good deeds for their Prayer Partner on a star and placing them on the wall of the chapel. The chapel is alight with their good works!

Advent also began our Dominican Youth “Giving Tree” where the students donate items for the students at Sacred Heart School. Our community is a true example of Christ with all we do for those less fortunate.

Peer Ministers worked on the 8th Grade retreat which was held on Friday, December 2nd. They took a tour of the sites where St. Dominic Academy had its beginnings in Jersey City. They surely followed in the footsteps of St. Dominic with their little pilgrimage.

Our Peer Ministers have been so enthusiastic about planning religious events/activities for our student body. They suggested that every religion class have an Advent Wreath and pray the daily prayers which have been such a beautiful tradition of our Catholic faith, starting with the blessing of the Advent Wreath. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be offered on Wednesday's during Advent.

Our Advent Liturgy will be held on Thursday, December 15, at 11 AM at St. Aloysius Church in Jersey City. Last but not least, the Peer Ministers are preparing a short prayer service for December 16th. They are going to present the Christmas story through the eyes of St. Joseph, the earthly father of God.

Wishing you all a blessed and peaceful Christmas Season for the “Lord has come.” Amen.

SDA's Annual Leadership Awards Gala is a Success!

The Academy held its 18th Annual Leadership Awards Gala on November 10, 2016 at Il Villaggio in Carlstadt, NJ. This year's Dominican Pillar Award honorees include two alumnae, **Stephanie Barbi '64** and **Marie Pompeo-Maffia '79**, who have both demonstrated unwavering support to their respective communities, professions and to their Alma Mater, St. Dominic Academy. Our third honoree, BCB Community Bank has been a long time, generous supporter of the Academy and our mission to educate and empower young women in the community.

Our event opened with a spectacular, extended cocktail hour featuring full open bar and various presentation stations, a dazzling array of silent auction items, all while enjoying music, a newly introduced Wine Wall auction which raised \$1,500 and 50/50 raffle resulting in a grand prize winner taking home almost \$11,000!

After heartfelt speeches from our honorees, the event continued with a multi-course sit down dinner and our guests were treated to a special performance by our award winning Dominoes. Our own Athletic Director and longtime coach, **John Nagel** conducted a very entertaining and successful Live Auction and Fund-a-Scholar segment rounding out the evening.

All proceeds from the Annual Leadership Awards Gala benefit the scholarship fund which supports young women who are academically capable of excelling at the Academy, but financially unable to do so. More than 40% of our families receive some form of financial assistance and we are extremely grateful for all those who supported this worthy cause!

Congratulations to the Cast of “Annie”

On both Friday, November 18 and Saturday, November 19, SDA presented the musical “Annie” to **sold out audiences**. The show was presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI) and all authorized performance materials was supplied by MTI (425 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019, www.MTIShows.com).

The show featured the talents of many SDA students. Sophomore **Amity Ajero** played the lead role of Annie, while freshmen **Julia Rinaldi** and **Rachel Perrie** played Miss Hannigan and Grace Farrell, respectively. Eighth grade student **Alyssa Fuentes** played Lily. Saint Peter’s Prep junior Connor Heaney played Daddy Warbucks. He was joined by fellow Prep students, sophomore Michael Appello who played Rooster and junior Jason Pope-Bayne who portrayed FDR, Lt. Ward and Bert Healy. The orphans and ensemble were played by **Abby Degnan**, junior **Megan Dowden**, sophomores **Caitlin Aristizabal** and **Jessica Stanley**, 8th grader **Charlotte Hennessey**, and 7th graders **Lyeba Jadun**, **Jade McAlmon**, and **Aisha Adeboye**. Ensemble members included sophomores **Alexa Gudiel** and **Alison Mah**, freshman **Valentyna Simon** and 8th grader **Jane Eid**.

The show was directed by **Ms. Stephanie DeSarle** and choreographed by **Ms. Judith Palacio**, both SDA teachers. Sophomore **Emma Morris** was the Stage Manager and the Stage Crew members were juniors **Katie Moody** and **Isabella Trinidad**, freshman **Katherine Quigley**, and 8th graders **Persia Valdivieso** and **Nastasja Gunnings**. **Ms. Jillian Mulrain** and the Art Class created the backdrop. Sandy, Annie’s dog, was played by Ms. DeSarle’s dog Buttons.





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Empowering Women for Leadership

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Need to know what's happening?

The SDA school calendar is easily accessible
on the schools website:

<https://www.stdominicacad.com/calendar/>

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