

SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS



Our Legacy of Enduring Faith



From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Alumni, Parents, Parishioners and Friends –

On June 11, we celebrated the Feast of the Holy Trinity, which also happens to be the 159th anniversary of our parish, a community of believers made in the image and likeness of our Triune God!

Back in 1858, the Black Catholic community in Washington that would become known as the parish of Saint Augustine worshipped in the basement of St. Matthew's Church under the patronage of Blessed Martin de Porres. Immediately, they

set out to build a school to educate their children. After 18 years and thanks to the hard work of pastor and parishioners – many committed every evening after work to lend their hands to various phases of construction – St. Augustine Catholic Church was completed and dedicated on June 11, 1876, Trinity Sunday.

The community moved up from the basement into the new church that one Catholic newspaper described as, "so grand in its conception and finish to rank it among the finest church edifices in the country" (The Catholic

Mirror). The interior included the handicraft of one of Italy's most gifted artisans, Lorenzo Seattagha, who emigrated from Naples, Italy, to Baltimore to complete the fresco work on the church. During this same period, a team of educators that visited and evaluated schools in the U.S., Canada, Ireland and France visited Saint Augustine School in the early 1880s and had this to say after their visit: "We are free to confess, in all sincerity, that we have nowhere seen schools in which better was maintained and more proficiency in studies exhibited than in the Catholic colored school in Washington..."

By 1946, under a cloak of secrecy and to the shock and disbelief of parishioners, the magnificent church – admittedly in need of serious repairs – would be sold and torn down. Embittered and betrayed, the community once again worshipped in a basement for the next 15 years, this

continued on page 7

Inside pages

Leaving a legacy of teaching.....2

From the Principal's Desk.....3

*Former pastor Fr. Kemp honored
on 50th Anniversary of Ordination.....4*

Field trip to Indonesian Embassy.....5

Congratulations to the Class of 2017.....5

*St. Augustine Students honored
for volunteerism.....6*

Career Day.....7

Leaving a legacy of teaching



Diana Hellinger

Diana Hellinger's family story is one of perseverance and survival. Her grandfather was killed in Turkey at the end of World War I. Diana's father Richard Giragossian survived the Armenian Genocide and fled Turkey for Greece at the age of 7. He eventually served as an OSS agent during World War II, allowing a family-run dry cleaner to serve as a staging area for sabotage attacks on the German occupiers. He spoke 10 languages and could play 10 instruments by ear, according to Doug Hellinger, Diana's husband.

In 1950, the Giragossians moved to the U.S. when Diana was two years old. Diana eventually attended Skidmore College, majoring in History, after the family settled in Troy, N.Y., where her father operated a pharmacy and luncheonette, where Diana worked.

Doug met his future wife in 1975, and they were married in 1984, three years after she sold a secretarial firm she had operated. She served as executive director for the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project from 1988 to 1997.

In 1999, Diana came to St. Michael School in downtown Silver Spring, where she first taught fourth and sixth grade students, eventually instructing students in Language Arts for 13 years.

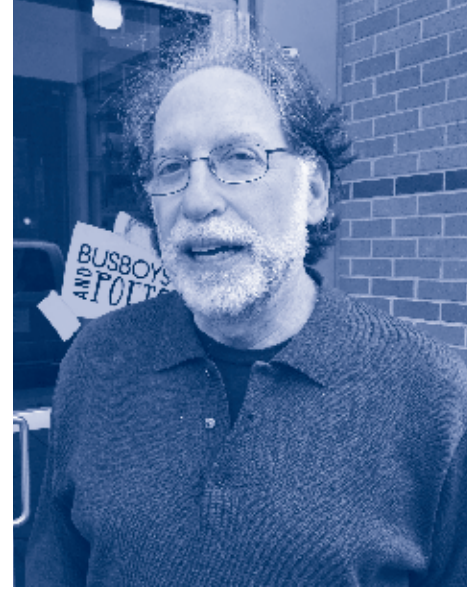
"They had no gym, no lab, and it was an old building," Doug Hellinger recalled. "(Diana) loved the student population," which largely consisted of children of immigrants and African-American students. Although neither is Catholic, the Hellingers found a home at St. Michael School, and Doug was a regular at school events.

"She was always correcting essays," and "Mrs. Hellinger" was known for being a stickler for correct grammar, Hellinger said. Despite her best efforts, the enrollment dropped during her tenure from more than 300 students to approximately 150 pupils before the school's 2012 closure.

Despite the challenges, Diana Hellinger stuck to her high standards and taught English Language Arts from the perspective of social justice, while also infusing in her students a love of poetry and other forms of literature. Her students won First, Second and Third place in a Montgomery County essay competition on the meaning of "freedom and justice for all," in the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights.

In February 2013, when Diana turned 65, her husband threw a big party for her, six months after St. Michael's closed. About 130 parents, students, and alumni came to the house, creating "the party of the century," Doug Hellinger said.

In the year after St. Michael closed, Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, contacted Diana about tutoring at Saints Augustine Catholic School.



Doug Hellinger

Regrettably, by December 2014, Diana found she had cancer, which led to her passing away on Aug. 12, 2015.

Seeking a way to memorialize his late wife, Doug Hellinger visited Sister Gloria at St. Augustine in December 2016, and when he walked through the school's doors, he felt he was back at St. Michael. "'I saw what Catholic schools did for kids," he testified.

In December 2016, Doug Hellinger set up the Diana Hellinger Education and Justice Fund at St. Augustine School, to assist the school with tutoring expenses, financial aid, and social justice textbook purchases. The fund has raised more than \$13,000.00 to date.

To make a tax deductible contribution to the Diana Hellinger Education and Justice Fund, please send enclose a check made out to St. Augustine School and insert it in the envelope enclosed with this newsletter. Write "Diana Hellinger Education and Justice Fund" in the check's memo line.

From the Principal's Desk



Dear Alumni, Parents, Parishioners and Friends,

The 2016-2017 school year has been exciting, as our school is filled with motivated and hard-working students. It has been enjoyable to see the growth in our students and the excitement in their eyes as they are actively engaged in enriching activities.

Congratulations to our Vice Principal, Ms. Helene Cropper, who has been outstanding during her first school year as vice principal. Thank you for such a great school year, and we appreciate your leadership. We also thankfully embrace our Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Kyana Woods, who has been a great asset to us this school year.

I can't believe that it has been nine years since our parish took over the day-to-day governance of Saint Augustine School. During

my nine years as principal, I have seen most of our alumni graduate from prestigious high schools and colleges, and some have ascended to prestigious professions such as accounting, business, government, law, medicine, and science. Bravo, my dear alumni, for not letting us down! We will continue to pray for a bright future.

Joining this group of alumni is the 2017 graduating class. I am **so proud of them**, as they have accepted many challenges and now ascend to the next level. Congratulations on moving on to high school, for you all have done a great job! I encourage all of you to stay focused, and work hard. God bless you as you go.

This academic year, our students have partaken in many great activities such as exciting field trips **to the Indonesia and Saudi Arabia embassies, a pumpkin patch, Native American museum, and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.**

The Science Fair this year was beautiful and showed great variety in our children's creativity. They were able to display their hard work and creations to the entire school and parents. Thank you to all the volunteers who served as judges and also to Ms. Jenny Soriano, our Science teacher, for her hard work.

Our school was awarded by Saint Augustine Catholic Church with a Solidarity Award in regards to the Spirit of Faith Award for encouraging our students to put their Catholic faith in action. It is important that we build a strong base of faith into our children.

Lastly, I would like to thank our

hard working staff, teachers, and parents who have helped keep Saint Augustine Catholic School outstanding and in a place conducive for learning. Thank you for your time and support of our school. We couldn't have done it without you. I pray that all of you have fun and a safe summer and that you may return to Saint Augustine with a positive spirit and an active mind.

God Bless,

Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ
Principal



Winofe Mideska'13 at her Archbishop Carroll High School graduation with Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, principal of Saint Augustine (right), and Sister Bibiana Okoro, HHCJ, director of religious education (left). Winofe received a \$63,000 scholarship to attend American University in Washington, D.C.

Former pastor Fr. Kemp honored on 50th Anniversary of Ordination



A three-hour Mass on May 7 at St. Augustine Catholic Church served as the final of three Masses to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Rev. Raymond B. Kemp's ordination to the Catholic priesthood.

Fr. Kemp, who told the Archdiocese of Washington newspaper the Catholic Standard that he "found his faith" during his time at the parish in the 1960s and 1970s, asked those who wanted to honor him on his Golden Jubilee to make a donation to support the Fr. Raymond Kemp STEM Chair Fund at St. Augustine Catholic School.

To date, donors have given more than \$80,000.00 to support the Fr. Raymond Kemp STEM Chair Fund, making significant progress toward its \$150,000.00 goal.

Fr. Kemp is known for establishing the Gospel Choir at St. Augustine, emphasizing the importance of implementing the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church, and for investing in the youth of the parish and neighborhood, especially the young men, during a time of crisis in Washington, D.C., following the riots of 1968. Using his personal

touch, dedication to others, and his sense of humor, Fr. Kemp has been able to reach many whom others might not have been able to reach.

Fr. Kemp's other anniversary Masses took place at Our Lady of Mercy in Potomac on April 30 and Georgetown University on May 6. St. Augustine Catholic School offers a deep and profound thank you to the more than 250 donors who have given to support our school in honor of our former pastor. One can give to support this initiative online at www.staug-dc.org.



Congratulations to our First Holy Communicants – May 14, 2017

Spelling Bee Champs

Seventh Grade student Maurice Hall represented Saint Augustine Catholic School at The Washington Informer 35th Annual Spelling Bee, which was held at NBC-4 on March 9. Maurice competed with 28 students representing various schools in The Washington, DC Metropolitan area.



Field trip to Indonesian Embassy

In March, Saint Augustine fifth grade students took a field trip to the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

Located in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has more than 250 million inhabitants who inhabit more than 800 islands and speak more than 300 languages, creating very unique governance challenges. Indonesia has the largest majority Muslim country in the world, although it also has a significant Hindi population.

The students studied Indonesian history and culture before their Embassy Row visit, according to Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, principal. "The students asked a lot of questions," she said. The embassy's cultural attache, who hosted the group, was impressed by the students' knowledge of his country's history and culture, according to Sister Gloria.

The students learned that Indonesia's democracy is very vibrant, with relatively few long-serving incumbents. "It's not a static government," Sister Gloria commented.

Ms. Donna Edwards, former principal of Saint Augustine, coordinated the visit, and Mrs. Cheryl Hanton, fifth grade homeroom teacher, and Mrs. Lorrain Lee, former vice principal, also attended the field trip.

Congratulations to the Class of 2017

Members of our graduating eighth grade class have received admissions offers to the following schools:

- Academy of Holy Cross
- Archbishop Carroll High School
- Bishop McNamara High School
- Elizabeth Seton High School
- Georgetown Visitation Preparatory School
- Gonzaga College High School
- McKinley Technology High School
- Parkmont School
- St. John's College High School
- Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School
- Washington Leadership Academy Public Charter School

Congratulations to their families and also to our eighth grade homeroom teacher and middle school English Language Arts teacher, Ms. Karen Ross, who helped guide our students through the high school admissions process.

St. Augustine Students honored for volunteerism



Debora Abera

Last month, Debora Abera, a sixth grade student at Saint Augustine, received a Prudential Spirit of Community award for her volunteer activities. Not to be outdone, two other St. Augustine students won President's Volunteer Service Awards, receiving letters signed by President Barack Obama.

Abera was honored as one of the District of Columbia's top youth volunteers at the May 7 ceremony at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Debora came to St. Augustine in Pre-Kindergarten and volunteers regularly to read to younger students and organize books at her local public library. She has also helped serve beverages to homeless people at the Safeway Feast for Sharing at the Mt. Vernon Convention Center, which helps about 5,000 people around Thanksgiving.

She received the Prudential award for organizing a coat drive for the community through her church. She collected and gave away 250 coats through the initiative.

Meanwhile, Jasmine Grooms

earned a President's Volunteer Service Award. While she has volunteered in a voter turnout drive and with the homeless, she is most proud of her work with a Girl Scouts summer day camp, which she has worked with for two summers. Abera received the Silver Award, the highest honor a Cadet in the Girl Scouts can receive.

Not to be outdone, Bamlak Yilma, a sixth grade student at St. Augustine, also earned a President's Volunteer Service Award from the White House. She participated in the same coat drive through her church that Debora Abera helped direct. Keeping a journal, as directed by her teacher, helped her make the most of the experience. "Money is not the only thing that can make a person's day," she wrote.

"You don't need money or a crowd," to impact peoples' lives, according to Yilma, who has attended St. Augustine for five years. "You can accomplish a lot with family, friends, and community." She wrote that through such a volunteer initiative, she learned she can impact people whom she has not even met.



May Crowning – our students continue a school tradition by showing their love for the Virgin Mary.

Holy Name Society Breakfast



Fr. Mark Zittle, O. Carm., who works in campus ministry at Fordham University in New York, served as our keynote speaker at the June 4 Holy Name Society breakfast for the graduating eighth grade class at St. Augustine. Felix Adeniyi '17 won a Holy Name Society high school scholarship at the event. Lawrence H. Parks II '75, president of the Holy Name Society, gave an update on the school.

Photos by Jacques Benovil.

Career Day



Leslie Giddens Robinson, a Saint Augustine parishioner, talks with middle school students about her career in health care, focusing on assisting large healthcare providers in administering Medicare and Medicaid programs.



William Wright, customer service specialist with the DC Fire and EMS Department, tells students that his department pays competitive salaries and benefits.

Saint Augustine students got a quick lesson in on-call work during the March 17 Career Day at the school.

The four-man crew representing Station 9 from the DC Fire and Emergency Management Services Department on U Street had their radios on for a reason. Always on call, they had to be ready to leave Saint Augustine School at a moment's notice. During the second round of Career Day talks in the morning, the crew ran out of the Saint Augustine Room to respond to a call.

Luckily for Saint Augustine students, there were a dozen other speakers present at Career Day to talk with them about career ranging from child welfare, federal government economics, international development, lobbying and public affairs, non-profit work, public affairs, software development, venture capital and entrepreneurship, and the U.S. Coast Guard. William Wright, customer service specialist with DC Fire and EMS, spoke on behalf of the department after his four colleagues from Station 9 hastily departed.

Lt. Patrick Bennett from the U.S. Coast Guard told students how he was not a very strong high school student academically and lost a football scholarship as a result of being present at a brawl with students from a rival high school, but that he took advantage of the opportunity that admissions to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy provided him and has taken advantage of the opportunities.

Mr. Mylo Mannya from Open Box Software spoke about working for a company that designs software for real estate management companies. He talked with students about the company culture and what it was like going to work for the company in his native South Africa. His wife, Shingi Masanzu, who is also a Saint Augustine parishioner, spoke about being a lawyer at the World Bank.

Leslie Giddens Robinson, a Saint Augustine parishioner, spoke with students about how she initially worked in providing health care to patients and later started her own consultancy and helped larger healthcare companies with setting

up programs to have healthier outcomes with lower healthcare expenses for Medicaid and Medicare recipients.

Valerie D'Costa, a Saint Augustine parishioner, had a special message for female students: that they too can ascend to management and "be the boss," no matter what anyone else tells them. She recently left the World Bank after a lengthy career there and responsibilities managing projects.

continued from page 1

From the Pastor's Desk

time in the basement of the parish school. Hopes of a new church ended in 1961 when it was decreed that St. Augustine Parish would merge with St. Paul's on 15th and V Streets, a parish notoriously unwelcoming to Black Catholics.

Twenty years later, on November 12, 1982, after a petition from the parishioners and pastor, Archbishop James Hickey decreed that "Saints Paul and Augustine Church" would "henceforth bear the title of the Parish of Saint Augustine." Our legacy was preserved so that the mission of Catholic education, social justice, and enduring faith and worship could continue.

As we invest in our children through our school, today we imitate the enduring faith of those who went before us. Thank you your contribution toward keeping our proud legacy alive today. Imitating the enduring faith of those who went before us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Fr. Patrick A. Smith".

Fr. Patrick A. Smith

Office of Alumni Relations/Development
St. Augustine Catholic School (PreK-3 to 8)
1421 V Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
202-667-2608

Non-Profit Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 966
Southern Maryland

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS • VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2 • Spring 2017

www.staug-dc.org

Rev. Patrick A. Smith, pastor

fatherpat@saintaugustine-dc.org
202-265-1470 (church office)

Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, principal

sistergloria@saintaugustine-dc.org
202-667-2608

Bill Murray, development officer

bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org
240-418-5427

Story ideas for the newsletter? Please contact **Bill Murray** at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org.

Would you like to update your address for our records?
Please complete an alumni contact form at www.staug-dc.org/alumni.html.

We welcome inquiries from alumni, former students and anyone interested in our school.