

SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

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SINCE 1858

Welcome to the
Home of the Saints

Mrs. Lee reflects on return as acting principal

When Mrs. Lorrain Lee got the call from Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, she did not believe it at first.

She had retired from working at Saint Augustine Catholic School in 2016, which included teaching and serving as vice principal, and was living with her husband in North Carolina after they had sold their longtime District of Columbia home on North Carolina Avenue. Sister Gloria, Saint Augustine's principal, was asking her to return to the school to serve as Acting Principal from the start of the 2019-2020 school year until Nov. 12, the end of the first quarter, while Sister Gloria recovered from surgery.

"I didn't believe it at first," Mrs. Lee said of Sister Gloria's request. "I needed to hear it from him," she said of Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor of Saint Augustine. "I didn't mention it to my husband until I had spoken with him."

Mrs. Lee had gone from wanting to be a substitute teacher



and administrative assistant at Winterville, N.C., where the Lees have lived since 2016, to coming back north to Saint Augustine. "For some reason, I didn't answer the calls," that came in as a result of her local public school inquiries, she said. Her luck has not been always so good in North Carolina, since she lost her car to flooding there before her husband replaced it as a birthday present.

The Master's program in

Administrative Leadership from Trinity University Washington that she completed before retiring has helped Mrs. Lee with some of the situation she has faced this school year.

Mrs. Lee has had the good fortune of seeing Saint Augustine's enrollment climb from 185 students in 2018-2019 to 196 this school year. She appreciates the warm

continued on page 6

INSIDE PAGES

<i>From the Interim Principal.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>CBN-DC Sixth Grade Essay Contest Winner.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Welcome New Teachers.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Development Corner.....</i>	<i>4</i>

<i>Mrs. Delores McDonald, RIP.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Seventh grader wins bank essay contest.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>St. Augustine's STEM Tradition.....</i>	<i>7</i>



Note: Ms. Lorrain Lee has been appointed by Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor of St. Augustine Catholic Church, as Acting Principal of Saint Augustine Catholic School through Nov. 15, while Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, our principal since 2008, recovers from surgery. Mrs. Lee retired in 2016 after serving as a teacher and vice principal at Saint Augustine for 33 years.

From the Interim Principal

A Happy Return

Dear Alumni, Parents, and Friends,

As I entered into the building, I realized how much I missed Saint Augustine School. Sister Gloria informed me how happy she was that I accepted the position of Acting Principal. At that point, I thanked her for entrusting St. Augustine School to me. Even though I have been in the education field for 38 years, I was still a little nervous. Often, I find myself saying, "OO, Wee Jesus."

The students, old and new, gave me such a warm greeting. I tell them when they speak to me to

"speak with a smile" because I am happy to see them. The teachers bring different personalities with a lot of ideas, but they know that together we can get the job done. The veteran teachers were excited to see me and expressed many ideas for the year. The veteran and rookie teachers love to share information. Because of that, I tell them they are all Principals.

For such a time as this, I am happy to be here.

And I thank God for this opportunity.

Yours Truly,
Mrs. Lorrain Lee

CBN-DC Sixth Grade Essay Contest Winner

Presented at CBN-DC Reception Aug. 29 at the Cathedral of St. Matthew

Essay Prompt: The three pillars of a solid Catholic education are faith, knowledge, and service. How are these three pillars influencing your life and preparing you for high school and beyond?

Excerpt: Faith has strengthened my relationship with God, because I pray and trust Him more. I also go to church every Sunday. I also go to Sunday school and learn about God. I have learned so much from this experience. It is not easy, but I am thankful for all the blessings that God has given me. It is also important to

remember that we are called by God, not just by our own actions or words but by the power of His Word. We cannot live without Him. He is the One who gives us strength and wisdom to overcome any situation. He is the One who will help us through any difficulty in life. He is the One who will give us hope when we need it. He is the One who will guide us in every step of our journey.

-Aklasheya Ashenafi

Aklasheya, who is now a seventh grade student, entered our school in Kindergarten. She says her favorite subject is Math.



Aklasheya Ashenafi

Welcome New Teachers



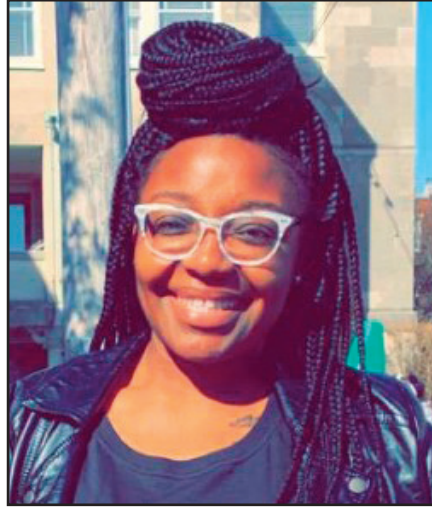
Shamayne Taylor

Ms. Shamayne Taylor (Pre-Kindergarten Aide) is a former St. Augustine School parent, whose son, Tyrone Crossland, Jr., graduated from our school 10 years ago.

"I'm excited about my role and my responsibility," which includes a role in school hospitality and aftercare, Ms. Taylor said. "It's like being home." She enjoys teaching through kinesthetic learning, dramatic play, arts and crafts, hand held learning manipulatives, interactive movement games, and creating group and individual creative learning lessons.

Ms. Taylor is establishing a learning environment for her 3- and 4-year old students with her fellow teachers. Ms. Taylor is the mother of four children, and she is working on her undergraduate degree, studying Early Childhood Education at Trinity University Washington.

Ms. Erica J. Harmon (Kindergarten) is a Salisbury, Md., native who has taught previously at St. Francis of Assisi School in Baltimore and Baltimore City Public Schools. "I'm ready to get back in



Erica J. Harmon

the classroom," she said in August.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Morgan State University and is working on a Master's in Elementary Education from Grand Canyon University. Ms. Harmon wants to establish a structured environment where students know what to expect and also clearly understand what positive and negative behaviors are and what the consequences of behaviors are.

Ms. Harmon served as administrative director at a mental health non-profit before becoming a teacher and taught health in her first instructional role before eventually teaching Math and Science to first through third grade students.

Ms. Ashleigh Talbert (Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4) grew up in Maryland and is an alumna of Elizabeth Seton High School and Coppin State University, where she studied Sports Management with a minor in Journalism. She is a former Americorps volunteer. She served as a Pre-Kindergarten teacher at a STEM-focused school in Virginia



Ashleigh Talbert

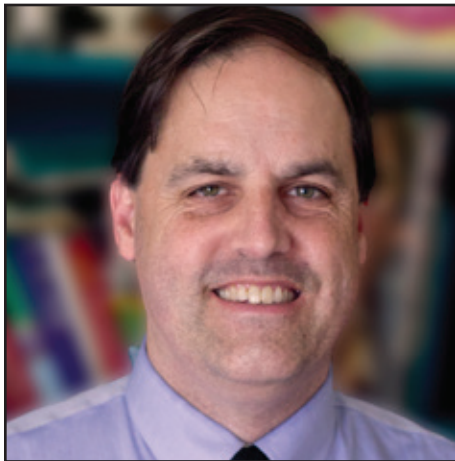
and also worked at Playworks, a national non-profit that creates structured play at low income schools to build social and emotional skills. Ms. Talbert wanted to teach at a school closer to home and had a good experience attending Seton, so she was interested in teaching in a Catholic school.

"It's fun," she said of teaching Pre-Kindergarten. "There's never a dull moment." She hopes to "bring a little of me to this school."

Veteran teacher Ms. Jacquelyne Thornton, meanwhile, has moved from Kindergarten to second grade this school year, replacing Mrs. Catherine McDonnell, who moved to North Carolina with her family after teaching at Saint Augustine for 15 years.

The community in action

William Murray



William Murray

We often hear the cliché, “It’s the community” or its related expression about raising children, “It takes a village.” We hear these expressions so often that their meaning sometimes becomes blurry, lacking focus.

On Oct. 3, at the Catholic Business Network DC (CBN-DC) Sixth Annual Gala, the community made a strong showing.

Catholic means “universal,” a reflection of the scope of the Catholic Church’s scope and mission. Among nearly 300 people attending at the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown were attorneys from parishes like Saint Augustine who charge upwards of \$500.00-\$600.00 an hour, and tables away were young people dressed in jeans, perhaps not used to formal events.

Archbishop Wilton Gregory of Washington gave the invocation, and our pastor since 2004, Fr. Patrick A. Smith was named Religious of the Year, with Vincent C. Burke, III, of Brown Advisory named Business Person of the Year.

Being at the Gala made me

Development Corner

more conscious of the *raison d’être* of our schools and how they are central to the Church’s mission. At my table sat two converts to Catholicism and a friend I have made in recent months through CBN-DC, a business owner who spoke to me about how important Catholic schools are and how frequent reception of the Eucharist is the key to his happiness. Sitting at another table was Mr. Gerald Smith, a District native and convert to Catholicism at St. Augustine who is principal of St. Thomas More School, S.E.

In his introduction of Fr. Smith, Mr. Lawrence H. Parks, II, ’75, lifelong parishioner, spoke about how Fr. Smith puts the “mission in motion”

at Saint Augustine and “speaks truth to power.” He also paid tribute to how Fr. Smith has helped foster a donor “give back” culture for parishioners and alumni, especially, at St. Augustine.

In his acceptance speech, Fr. Smith said that he did not singlehandedly save Saint Augustine Catholic School from closure in 2008-2009, and that it was due to the strength and conviction of St. Augustine Parish that the school is in a stronger position now. After all, St. Augustine was a parish formed out of the Blessed Martin de Porres Chapel in the basement at St. Matthew’s Church in 1858 where parishioners decided to form a

continued on page 5



Betty Stallworth (left) with her daughters Dr. Monica Stallworth ’66 and Andrea Verstraete ’74 at the CBN-DC Gala on Oct. 3.

The community in action

parish school before they built their own church.

He also paid tribute to his family, how his late parents sent their eight children to Catholic schools not solely through his father's income but also through the assistance of family members, including an aunt and uncle who were career District of Columbia Public School teachers and principals, prevented from sharing their talents in the Catholic schools system because of racial segregation. They sacrificed financially to enable their nieces and nephews to receive a Catholic education.

Seeing 15 or so parishioners

and friends of St. Augustine, including our former parochial vicar, Fr. Steven Carter, who is now pastor of Christ the King Parish in Silver Spring, the support for our school and Fr. Smith's leadership was evident. Betty Stallworth and her daughters Dr. Monica Stallworth '66 and Mrs. Andrea Verstraete '71 attended, part of a three-generation St. Augustine family, with Robert Verstraete '10 and Emory Verstraete '13 growing up in the parish and attending the parish school.

Meeting a new St. Augustine Catholic School parent who is Baptist but a strong supporter of Catholic education – he rattled off the names of four schools one or more of his four children have

attended, which sadly are all closed – it struck me that the Catholic Church, like St. Augustine, has a charism of openness and welcome to those who are not Catholic, even though Catholics aren't always the friendliest people.

After the new school parent spoke about his support for African American institutions and what led him to choose St. Augustine, I left the event hopeful for the future of St. Augustine School and Catholic education in the city because it has community support.

William Murray is development director at St. Augustine Catholic School. You can reach him at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org or 240-418-5427.

Mrs. Delores McDonald, RIP

Mrs. Delores McDonald, the former Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten teacher at Saint Augustine, recently passed away after an illness.

Mrs. McDonald retired from our school in June 2018, having taught for more than 30 years, including the final eight at Saint Augustine. Mrs. McDonald taught Kindergarten during the 2017-2018 school year and Pre-Kindergarten the previous seven years. She came to the "Home of the Saints" after previously teaching at Holy Redeemer School on New Jersey Avenue, which was similar to Saint Augustine because it is a Catholic school founded to serve African-American children during a time when educational opportunities were limited.

"She went beyond the call of



Mrs. Delores McDonald

duty," said Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, principal of St. Augustine, in a 2018 interview. "The children's learning was her priority. She wanted the children to read fluently."

Many parents responded to Mrs. McDonald's work with their

children. As one parent wrote in a 2012 online review of Saint Augustine Catholic School, "Mrs. McDonald's incredible talent nurtures confident babies who become literary, mathematical and scientific blue ribbon geniuses. Yes, the babies can read, manipulate numbers and conduct experiments when they leave her nurturing class!"

"I believe that a very young child can learn without stress," Mrs. McDonald said in a 2015 school video. "I believe in differentiated instruction, so that wherever a child is, I will meet them there."

As we give gratitude for Mrs. McDonald's work at our school and her considerable talents as a teacher, we pray for the repose of her soul and for her family.

Seventh grader wins bank essay contest



Arabia Roberts

Learning about personal finances for any 12-year old can present significant challenges.

After all, there are check cashing outlets, payday loans, credit card offers, savings accounts, and the stock market, not to mention home equity lines of credit, credit scores, and mortgages.

In late August, Arabia Roberts, a seventh-grade student at Saint Augustine Catholic School, won a \$1,000 savings account in a bank-sponsored contest after writing a 250-word essay in June about what she learned about personal finance after reading two books for children.

"I learned money laundering is a crime and CD's do not play music," Arabia wrote in her essay. "Offering collateral for a loan is an alternative to getting a payday loan." Arabia first enrolled at Saint Augustine in the first grade.

Arabia learned that it is best to bank with an institution where her deposits are guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Arabia read two



books: *I Got Bank! What My Granddad Taught Me About Money* by Teri Williams, who is the chief operating officer at OneUnited Bank, a community development bank based in Boston, and *Danny Dollar Millionaire Extraordinaire* by Ty Allan Jackson.

Her mother, Tonya Wright, found out about OneUnited Bank's "I Got Bank!" contest last spring through a Facebook posting. Arabia was one of 10 students with a winning essay, after young people ages 5 through 12 entered the contest from 30 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. With five

branches in California, Florida, and Massachusetts, OneUnited Bank claims to be the largest Black-owned and FDIC-insured U.S. bank and the first Black Internet bank.

"Working for others may work for some people, but I prefer to be my own boss," Arabia wrote, reflecting on her reading the two children's books on personal financing, which included one protagonist who is an entrepreneur. She knows she wants to be her own boss in part because her mother has told her Arabia does not take direction well.

Reflecting on the African proverb "Each One, Teach One," Arabia would like to build up her personal savings by offering tutoring and homework assistant services to underserved inner city kids for Math and Reading in her community this school year.

"I'll save most of my money and spend on needs and not wants," Arabia said.

continued from page 1

Mrs. Lee reflects on return as acting principal

reception she got from the students, a substantial number of whom she recognizes from her previous tenure at the school, and meets with Sister Gloria every Monday to give the nun an update on the school's progress.

"The teachers seem to be excited about the school year," Mrs. Lee said. "When you keep the teachers happy, they can do a tremendous job." Mrs. Lee thinks the Saint Augustine staff is more diverse than when she worked

at the school previously, and she likes the school's integration of technology.

"You just have to make the right decisions," Mrs. Lee said. "If you put a rule in the handbook, and you don't follow it, what's the point? No rule is a rule if it's not being carried out."

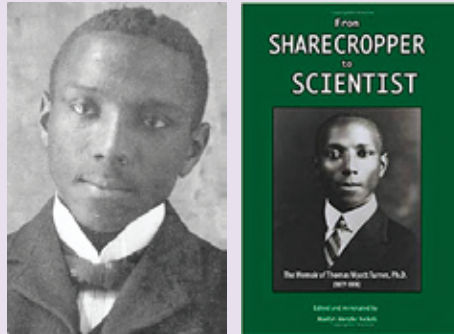
"Exciting but nervous," Mrs. Lee described her return to Saint Augustine. "This fulfills my dream," that she has had of being a principal. Mrs. Lee has not had to change her sleep habits upon returning to Saint Augustine, since she continued to get up at 5 a.m. in retirement.

St. Augustine's STEM Tradition

Fr. Patrick A. Smith likes to say that St. Augustine has a very proud tradition in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

When he was 14 years old, the future priest met Dr. Thomas Wyatt Turner, a botanist and professor emeritus at Howard University who had such a love of learning that he walked from Hughesville, Md., to attend Howard. One of nine children, Dr. Turner's parents were formerly enslaved.

Dr. Turner had a second love: Catholicism. Even during a time of persistent racism, his devotion to Catholicism was such that he refused a scholarship to attend an Episcopal prep school - even though almost all Catholic high schools did not admit Black students - because he would have had to convert to the Episcopal faith. In Southern Maryland, St. Peter School in Waldorf, founded in 1956, was the only Catholic parish



school that was never segregated. The head of the Episcopal prep school is said to have been impressed by Turner's character in turning down the opportunity.

A founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples in 1909 who was later honored with a lifetime membership and fought for the rights of Blacks to vote, Dr. Turner was a longtime St. Augustine parishioner who later founded the Federated Colored Catholics, which tried to fight racism in the Catholic Church, including the refusal of many seminaries to admit Black candidates for the priesthood.

While he worked at Cornell University in 1918, where he had been the first Black person to earn a doctorate, Dr. Turner examined potato fields in Maine for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and later in his career examined plant diseases in Virginia under the USDA's sponsorship.

Dr. Turner passed away in 1978 at the age of 101, just a couple years after Catholic University of America gave him an honorary degree, after it had also refused to admit Black students earlier in the 20th century.

His memoir, *From Sharecropper to Scientist: The Memoir of Thomas Wyatt*, was published in 2018.

Working with Sister Gloria Agumagu, HHCJ, and the school's staff, as well as dedicated volunteers such as Reginald Berry and school parents, Fr. Smith is seeking to continually improve the STEM program at St. Augustine, with Dr. Turner as an inspiration.

Supporting Saint Augustine through the CFC and United Way

Do you work for an organization that participates in the United Way or Combined Federal Campaign programs? Please consider supporting St. Augustine Catholic School (CFC #20000/United Way #9670) during this open enrollment season. We have been working in the community since 1858, faithful to our mission in promoting students in PreK-3 through 8th Grade and their intellectual and moral growth so that they may provide leadership



in a global society.

If you have any questions or would like to let us know you have made a pledge, please contact Bill Murray, development director, at bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org or 240-418-5427. You can also visit our website at www.staug-dc.org. Thank you!

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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.