

# SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

• VOLUME 13, NUMBER 4

• FALL 2021

SINCE 1858

Welcome to the  
Home of the Saints

For Parents, Alumni, Parishioners and Friends of St. Augustine School in Washington D.C.

## There's No Substitute for In-Person Learning!

One of my favorite stories to tell goes back to my seminary days in the late 1980's. Here is the abbreviated version: My youngest sister was scheduled to be married here in Washington, DC while I was studying abroad at the North American College in Rome, Italy, where I attended the seminary. Due to the strict seminary policy about flying back to the United States, I didn't think I was going to be able to attend the wedding. I told my sister as much, and she, like me, was very disappointed. Well, it turns out I was able to work out a plan to stay on top of my studies and soon after permission was granted for me to fly home. But I decided not to tell my sister and make it a surprise! In fact, the only thing I did repeatedly tell her was "I will be there in spirit!" But no matter how many times I said these words she would respond the same way: "Patrick, I know you will, but it's just not the same!"

My sister was right. It isn't the same: not even close. Whether being somewhere "in spirit" or being in class "virtually"... It is not the same by a long shot! That is why it felt so good seeing all the children back in school this fall. My first opportunity to gather with them was at the Opening School

### From the Pastor



Mass, listening to them praying the Rosary before Mass, singing the hymns, serving as altar servers, proclaiming the Scriptures, and coming up for Holy Communion or a special blessing. No, there is NO substitute for actually being here in person, being blessed by each other's physical presence.

But this should come as no surprise to any of us. "Being there in spirit" wasn't even good enough for God! God knew we needed more so, over 2000 years ago, God did something utterly amazing and surprised the world even

more than I surprised my sister over 30 years ago: He showed up in the flesh, in the Person of Jesus! Because he now had a body, God could walk with his people and talk with them and eat with them and work with them and lead by example. But there's more. He could cry with them; suffer and die for them, be buried in a grave and then rise – for them!

My flight arrived in Washington the day before my sister's wedding. I promised that I would call her from Italy that afternoon. So I did make the call, but from my neighbor's house next door! After chatting for 10-15 minutes, I asked her to hold on for a moment. One minute later, I walked into the house while she was still holding the phone with the brother that she believed was on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean more than six thousand miles away. But it wasn't true. I was there the whole time. Keep that in mind the next time you are convinced that God is somewhere far away.

If we have learned nothing else over the past year and a half of being "socially distanced" from each other, I

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# God is the shield for our, our protection during this time

Dear Parents, Parishioners, Alumni and Friends,

I welcome you, dear Saint August Family, to the Fall season.

In the words of King David in Psalm 3:3, "You my God are a shield for me."

Yes, God is the shield for us, our protection during this time when we strive to live out our 2021-2022 theme: *Be alert, firm in your faith and be courageous.*

Please find below our religious activities for September and October.

September: Alert to God's promptings, we prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary as we meditated on the sorrowful events that happened to her and our Lord. We meditated on the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

October: Celebrating our families



## From the President's Desk

at Friday Masses. Names will be posted in the last week of September so that families can join the school Mass on the date for their family.

Daily recitation of the Holy Rosary.

Each day we pray the mystery for the day and remember the continents as follows:

Monday	Asia
Tuesday	Americas
Wednesday	Europe/ Pope Francis.
Thursday	Africa
Friday	Australia/Antartica

Students in grades 3-8 will make the mission Rosary during after care from 3.30 -4.00pm to be given to home bound parishioners.

Fall in love with the God who loves you so much.

God bless

**Sister Emmanuella**  
President

## Ruth Robinson Scholarship Fund

We are pleased to announce the first two recipients of the annual Ruth Harris Robinson Scholarship Fund are Victoria Codogan, and Phylcia Martin. The Ruth Harris Robinson Scholarship Fund was created to help current Saint Augustine students, from grades 6-8, who achieve academic success as well as perform community service or volunteer to continue their Catholic school education. Receiving such financial aid makes Saint Augustine School tuition rates even more reasonable and affordable.

The Ruth Robinson Scholarship Fund honors longtime parishioner and school teacher Ruth Harris Robinson, whose dedication to both the church and the school have been well documented.

We congratulate Victoria and Phylcia on receiving their scholarships and wish them continue success in their academic and faith journey.

## From the Archives



*Do you remember when we squeezed more than 30 students in a class, and when three or four students used side chalkboards to complete projects, while the rest of the students wrote at their desks?*

## Congratulations to Cheryl Hanton



On Monday, Aug. 30, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Ms. Cheryl Hanton received a certificate honoring her for 45 years of service at Saint Augustine Catholic School.

At that event, the opening Mass for the school year for the Archdiocese of Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington and Mr. Christopher Buchleitner, assistant secretary for school operations and student services at the Archdiocese of Washington's Catholic Schools Office, presented Ms. Hanton with her certificate. Ms. Hanton teaches fifth grade at Saint Augustine Catholic School.



# A Front Row Seat to Change in Her Native City

Growing up on the 1500 block of W Street, N.W., right around the corner from Saint Augustine School, *Erica Doe '02* had a front row seat in witnessing rapid change brought about by gentrification in her native city.

The daughter of Liberian-born parents, including her mother, St. Augustine parishioner Esther Garbla, Erica attended the parish school from Kindergarten through eighth grade, when she matriculated to attend St. John's College High School.

There were aspects of growing up in the Ward 1 neighborhood that were endearing, such as ordering breakfast on Saturday mornings – two eggs with jelly – with her mom at AM/PM, the corner store at 14th and U Street that closed years ago. Other aspects, such as homeless people sleeping on the Malcolm X playground and finding crack vials there and seeing people who were high, had a negative effect, causing her to avoid places like the playground when she was young.

“That would have never been tolerated in Gaithersburg,” Erica observed about a public school playground near her father's suburban house in Montgomery County.

As she prepared to move to New Orleans in late August to enter the doctoral program at Tulane University, Erica reflected on how her childhood and young adult experiences have led her to seek a career where she can advance mental health wellness, particularly for young, African-American youth, examining the impact of their neighborhoods and surroundings on their well-being.

Interviewed shortly after her virtual YWCA Youth STEAM Summer program had completed – where she worked with 65 middle and high school females from the District of Columbia through her work as youth program manager at the YWCA – Erica could better talk with the campers about the positive and negative impacts of



*Erica Doe '02*

gentrification because she had lived through it in W Street.

Gentrification is causing some young people in parts of Southeast and Northeast Washington to move in with family members, go to less expensive parts of those quadrants, or live in group homes, with the expectation that they could move back into their neighborhoods after developers build new buildings. Such social change usually benefits those who own property, since they can decide to sell at a profit or hold on to their property, as opposed to those who are renting, who have less control over their destiny.

Gentrification can clearly lead to a shake-up in a young person's surroundings, causing displacement, a loss of community, and some distrust between newcomers and longtime residents. On the positive side, gentrification, which occurs when wealthier people move into urban neighborhoods, can lead to lower crime rates, better educational opportunities, and better delivery of city services.

As an educator who is focusing on mental health, Erica says that her early experiences with marginalized populations, such as individuals experiencing homelessness and transgendered sex workers, while they were disquieting and perhaps alarming when she was growing up, have better enabled her to understand and empathize with such individuals as an adult.

Erica appreciates the role that St. Augustine Parish played in the early 2000s in supporting the residents of three apartment buildings on W Street, including the one where she grew up and where her mother continues to reside – in forming a coop, as opposed to having residents accept \$10,000 per household buyout offers from developers. She's also very grateful for the work that teachers at St. Augustine did with her, including fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Cheryl Hanton, and Mrs. Kathleen Mann.

She also benefitted from the work of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, including her third grade teacher, Sister Stephen Beauford, O.S.P., and Sister Dorothy Huggard, O.S.P., first grade teacher. Erica has met many young people her age who had to endure safety risks when attending quality schools outside their District neighborhoods, and she is grateful that St. Augustine was a short walk from her W Street apartment.

Erica has earned a Master's in Social Work at Syracuse University, in addition to a Bachelor's in Urban Studies with a concentration in Sociology from Columbia University. Through her work as a young adult, she has worked in Los Angeles and South Africa and is excited about entering graduate school at Tulane.

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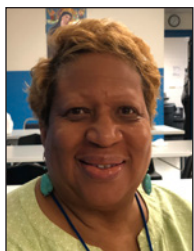
## From the Pastor

pray that we have learned to never take for granted the value of showing up for each other in person. It makes all the difference in the world. This is why I am grateful to all of you who actually “show up” for Saint Augustine School by your presence, your prayers and your financial support. Anything less, well, it just wouldn't be the same!

With you in the Lord's Vineyard,

**Fr Patrick A. Smith, Pastor**

# New Staff Roundup

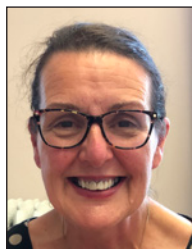


**Mrs. Nikki Harris** (PreK 3 and 4) is welcoming eight new PK3 students to St. Augustine this fall, in addition to at least two returning PK4 students. She has 15 years of experience as a teacher, including as a PK4 teacher at a DC charter school.

She came to St. Augustine School in part because she is attracted to the school's religious identity and mission, which she initially learned about through the St. Augustine School website. "There's a difference when kids don't have that moral compass, she said. A District of Columbia native, she is excited about returning to in-person classroom learning this fall and understands that acclimating the children to socialization will take some attention.

Mrs. Harris holds a bachelor's degree in Child Development from Southwestern University and a Master's degree in Early Childhood Teaching and Diversity from Waldon University. In addition, she holds an advanced certification in Elementary Reading and Literature. She has

substantial experience as a Catholic school parent, since her children attended Annunciation Catholic School, Gonzaga, and Stone Ridge.

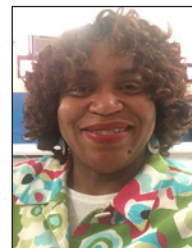


**Mrs. Susan Macyko**, R.N. (School Nurse) moved to Maryland in 2006 with her military family, and she has worked as a school nurse at Little Flower School (2010-2012) in Great Mills, Md., Cardinal Hickey Academy (2012-2020) and Archbishop Neale School in LaPlata (Since 2015). She works two days a week at St. Augustine, having started work at the school in March 2021.

Since she holds a DC nursing license, Mrs. Macyko can train school personnel to be delegated nurses when she is not present, so they can serve as medication technicians. She has created medical records for each student, ensuring that medication paperwork is properly retained.

"My role is to keep the kids safe," Mrs. Macyko, the mother of four children, said. She implements DC Department of Health mandates and guidance from the Archdiocese of

Washington Catholic Schools Office. She is beginning graduate studies at Catholic University of America this fall, which she hopes will lead to her pursuing a doctorate degree in Nursing.



**Ms. Yvonne Taylor-Stewart** (3rd Grade) brings 23 years of experience as a Pre-Kindergarten through Third Grade teacher to her 16 students at St. Augustine. A native of the District of Columbia, Ms. Taylor-Stewart taught for 10 years at Whittier Elementary School through DC Public Schools, as well as 13 years through The Bridges Academy, a private school in the city.

In her first weeks at St. Augustine, she has felt the "welcoming, family environment" at the school. "They embraced me," as she familiarized herself with the school, she said of the staff. Ms. Taylor-Stewart holds a bachelor's degree in African American Studies and Education from Howard University and is studying for a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education from the American University.

"I love what I do," she said.

## Christian Service Project

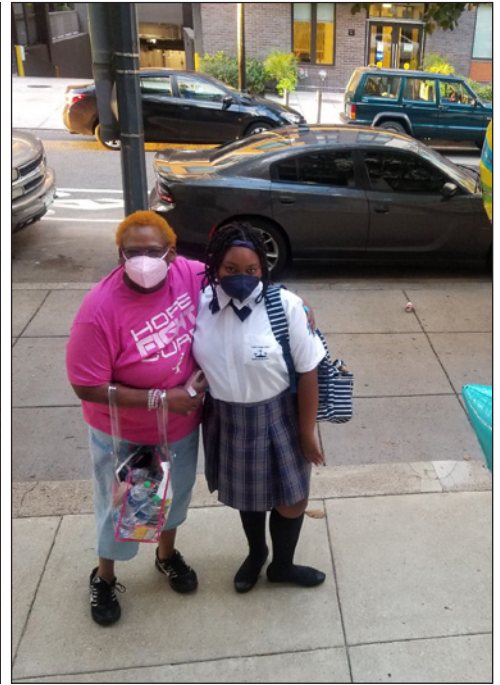
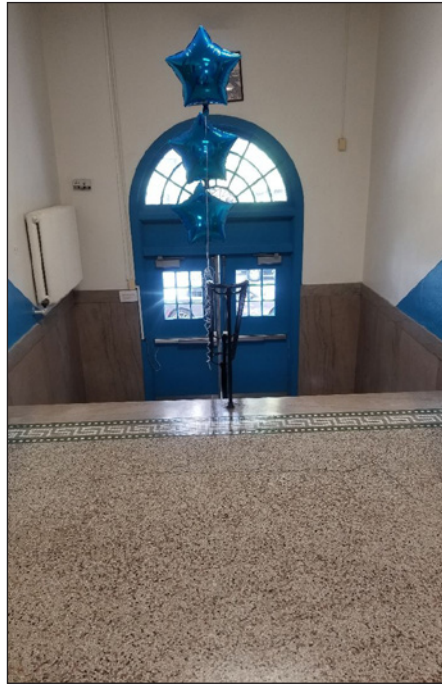
For their September Christian Service Project, the sixteen members of the eighth grade class prepared 50 bags of nourishment for the less fortunate at the Central Union Mission, according to Raven Wilkins, Sr., principal of the school. They also wrote words of comfort for the receivers, according to Wilkins, who headed up Christian Service Projects at his alma mater, Archbishop Carroll High School, where he worked before coming to St. Augustine in 2008.





# First Day of School

Tuesday, September 7, 2021



## Ambassador Johnny Young (1940-2021)

Longtime St. Augustine parishioner Johnny Young, a supporter of our parish school, passed away on July 24, 2021.

Ambassador Young, survived by his wife Angelina Young, children David and Michelle, and grandson Phoenix, served in 11 overseas assignments for the State Department over 37 years. Born into poverty in Savannah, Ga., and raised in Philadelphia, he served as ambassador in four countries in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, overcoming many obstacles faced by African Americans as legal barriers of segregation were taken down.

Johnny Young's funeral was held at St. Augustine Parish on August 6, with Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor, serving as the celebrant, with his burial at Rock Creek Cemetery.

According to the funeral program, Ambassador Young's assignments included ensuring



Slovenia's admission into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, risking his life during a coup attempt in Guinea, a West African nation, and promoting "exceptional relations" with Bahrain, a Persian Gulf state.

Johnny Young served as executive

director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services (2007-2015) before his retirement.

Ambassador Young and his wife supported St. Augustine School through the years, particularly after the parish resumed day-to-day management and financing of the school in 2008. He spoke at Career Day at St. Augustine several years ago, and the Youngs also hosted a reception for St. Augustine School donors at their home in Kensington, Md.

St. Augustine School received more than \$16,500 in donations from the friends and family of Johnny Young during the two months after his passing, following his family's request that in lieu of flowers, those who would like to honor Ambassador Young should give to the parish school or the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.

# Artishia Dasher-Dixon '94

Although *Artishia Dasher-Dixon '94* spent just two years at Saint Augustine Catholic School before graduating from the eighth grade, the school left an indelible impression.

Whether it was the late Mr. Leon Roberts, the music teacher and parish choir director, or Ms. Lorrain Lee, middle school social studies teacher, Rev. Msgr. Russell Dillard, pastor, or the principal, Ms. Acosta, Dr. Dasher-Dixon received a unique formation during her seventh and eighth grade years on V Street.

"It was a different level of preparation," for high school after attending a Catholic school before, she said. She remembers singing in the choir, cheerleading, and playing CYO basketball, not to mention Ms. Lee's Taste of the Town project, through which students brought potluck meals into class.

"Ms. Lee treated us like we were family, as though we were her own children," Dr. Dasher-Dixon said.

The daughter of longtime parishioner Ms. Peggy Matthews and the niece of Angelica Richardson, who both sing in the St. Augustine Gospel choir, Dr. Dasher-Dixon's godmother is Ms. Bea Judon '64, longtime



church secretary. She attended high school at School Without Walls in Washington, D.C., before graduating from the University of Maryland with a bachelor's degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Dr. Dasher-Dixon has received two Master's degrees in Forensic Psychology and a doctorate in Forensic Psychology from Walden University. Dr. Dasher-Dixon served as a parole and probation officer in the District of Columbia for 10 years, trying to find practical ways to decrease crime and recidivism, and followed that with community work at the DC Department of Health for a year. She also worked as a Psychology Associate at the Maryland Correction Institution

in Hagerstown, Md., enduring a 90-minute commute, and has an additional experience working with adults with developmental disabilities.

In July 2017, she married her "first love," Roland Dixon, an Archbishop Carroll High School alumnus whom she met when she was 14 years old. The couple have a 7-year old daughter, Ahlaila and reside in the District.

Hired in September 2018 at the Jewish Social Service Agency in Rockville, Md., Dr. Dasher-Dixon has seen her career steadily progress the last three years. She supervises seven staff members and a portfolio of six programs, including Wraparound Montgomery, which benefits 46 families and 55 youth in Montgomery County, and the Collaborative Care Program, which serves five families through group homes services, Bridges of the Future Program, and the Mind Craft Program, which operates through 24 mental health professionals at 12 schools.

Her three previous attempts to serve as a supervisor had not come to fruition. Perhaps with the additional education and work experience that Dr. Dasher-Dixon gathered, the time was right for her to take on more responsibility and become a leader.

## CFC/United Way Support

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](mailto:bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org) or 240-418-5427. You can also visit our website at [www.staug-dc.org](http://www.staug-dc.org). Thank you!



# Marketing the School: A Community Effort

Principal Raven Wilkins, Sr. is up to the challenge!

We're not talking about the work of welcoming all students back for in-person learning during what we hope is the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, as significant as that work is.

We're speaking about marketing the school, as efforts to let more families know about an educational institution that ten years ago Middle States evaluators described as "a hidden gem" in Ward 1 of the nation's capital.

According to Principal Wilkins, who formally served as Admissions Director for several years in the school, retention of students from the 2020-2021 school year is strong. But the school, originally built as a Mackin High School, has the capacity to accommodate more students than the average elementary school. The challenge is finding new parents, thus, the need to spend more time marketing.

These days, one is just as likely to find Wilkins talking with a school parent or staff member as checking out the school rating websites, our Facebook page or website, or fielding inquiries from prospective parents. He has formed a Parent Ambassadors group to get parents more engaged in the process of helping us attract more families. Recovering from the second pandemic in our school's history (1918), this is an exciting time rich in new possibilities and growth potential.

Committed to academic excellence, affordability and Catholic identity, Saint Augustine School is a great choice for any parents looking for a truly enriching experience for their children. First, the majority of our teachers are veteran educators who have spent many years honing their craft. They know how to teach and to maximize their children's ability to learn. Our impressive high school placement record which includes some of the best and strongest Catholic high schools in the city, is proof of this.

Saint Augustine School also offers the most affordable tuition rate in the



*Raven Wilkins, Sr.*

Archdiocese of Washington (\$6,500 per child). Under the care and guidance of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, three Religious Sisters work full time in the school to assure that a strong Catholic identity is celebrated and sustained. At weekly Mass the pastor, Fr Patrick Smith, engages the entire student body through engaging homilies and persistent affirmation of each child's worth and dignity in the eyes of God.

In addition, our parish school runs an impressive array of after school activities, such as Fencing Club, Chess Club, Reading Circle, S.T.E.M. activities, arts and crafts, drawing, cooking, Girl Scouts, various sports, and much more. Mr. Wilkins has scheduled a series of open houses from October through April to give prospective parents an easy way to tour the school. One can find more information about these events on our website at [www.staug-dc.org](http://www.staug-dc.org).

From a social media project spearheaded by Mike McDonnell, a North Carolina-based public relations consultant and former St. Augustine parent, to increased focus from our school's principal, Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor, and the School Governance Committee, are exploring and new and innovative ways to tell our extraordinary story; the story of Saint Augustine Catholic School. But one of the best way to increase ones success is identifying challenges that can hinder growth and expansion.

While the District of Columbia's population climbed from 601,728

residents in 2010 to 689,545 in 2020, according to the Census Bureau, the Black population of the city dropped from 305,125 to 285,810 during this timeframe, as the nation's capital becomes more gentrified. Meanwhile, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, the city may have lost as many as 19,000 household during the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. This means the city is among those that has had the highest population loss since the pandemic's beginning. It is likely that more people who moved out were looking for a less expensive place to live or had more freedom to work from home during the pandemic and beyond.

While, from one perspective, the reality of a decreasing population in D.C. among the primary demographic represented in our school could be seen as a challenge for us, there is another possibility: Seeing this as a great opportunity to further grow our population by upping our marketing game! After more than "X" years working on the development end of Saint Augustine School near the time our school exited the Center City Consortium 13 years ago and began independently financing the school, we have seen the quality of instruction along with other opportunities the school offers students get only stronger and stronger.

We have so much to celebrate and therefore share with the children of our neighborhood and city, surrounding Maryland counties and nearby Virginia. If anyone is looking for a great school to enroll in that they can also afford thanks to the committed support of parishioners, alumni and generous benefactors, they need look no further than Saint Augustine Catholic School in the heart of Washington D.C.

In the meantime, we appreciate your prayers, your referrals of parents to our school, and your ideas, as we seek to unveil the "hidden gem" that is our school by making more families aware of and enroll in our school community for many years to come.

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On Thursday, September 15, Saint Augustine School students: Yohannies Owens, Feben Belay, Abigeya Ashenafi, Kai Lanuza, Yohanna Owens, Kalkidan Belay, and Lulia Berhane joined Mary Temam, an alumna, in participating in a national podcast with national best-selling authors Jewell Parker Rhodes and Jason Reynolds through the St. Augustine School Reading Circle, an aftercare activity.

[www.staug-dc.org](http://www.staug-dc.org)

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Story ideas for the newsletter? Please contact **Bill Murray** at [bmurray@saintaugustine-dc.org](mailto: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](http://www.staug-dc.org/alumni.html).

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