



SAINT AUGUSTINE SAINTS NEWS

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SINCE 1858

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

From The Principal

Dear Alumni, Parishioners, and Friends,

As we journey through this beautiful season of renewal, we are filled with gratitude for your continued support and belief in our mission. Because of you, our students are not only learning—they are thriving in faith, academic excellence, and character. Faith continues to be the heartbeat of our school. Through weekly Mass, daily prayer, and meaningful reflections, our students are continually formed in compassion, service, and spiritual awareness. These experiences shape not only who they are as learners, but who they are becoming as young people of faith.

From January through April, our school community has been alive with growth, achievement, and joyful moments. The arrival of spring not only brings a sense of renewal but also offers a meaningful opportunity to celebrate the vibrant life of our school community and reflect on the journey we have undertaken together.



Our classrooms remain focused on building strong readers, confident writers, and critical thinkers. Throughout the winter and early spring months, our students have demonstrated measurable academic growth through benchmark assessments and continued preparation for the Spring MAP Growth Test. This progress is a testament to the dedication of our teachers and the perseverance of our students.

We are especially excited as we approach our Science Fair, where our students will showcase

their creativity and scientific thinking. Their projects, ranging from environmental studies to engineering models, reflect not only knowledge gained but curiosity ignited. Moments like these remind us of the power of hands-on learning and student discovery.

As the year draws to a close, we also look forward to celebrating our eighth-grade class at graduation. While we will miss them dearly, we are proud to send them forward, well-prepared to excel in some of the finest high schools throughout the district.

Looking ahead, we are excited to once again offer our Summer Learning Program. This program will provide students with continued opportunities to strengthen their skills in mathematics, reading, and creative writing, while engaging with IXL learning tools in a supportive and enriching environment. It is always a joy to see our students continue their growth even beyond the traditional school year.

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Career Day speakers encourage students



Mark Zimmerman



Monte Ingram



Mark Dickson



Richard Cooper



Marlysha Liddell



Dana Banks

The annual St. Augustine School Career Day on the morning of March 19 featured 14 speakers who encouraged our PK3 through 8th grade speakers to challenge themselves and to work hard, as they continue their studies.

Mark Zimmerman, longtime editor of the *Catholic Standard* newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington, spoke about covering all the popes and U.S. presidents since 1984, when he came to Washington, D.C., after graduating from the University of Missouri. He came from a family of construction builders, and he told our students that he found his career in constructing sentences and paragraphs and telling peoples' stories.

Zimmerman also spoke about how technology has changed journalism, including how reporters and editors fact check, since in the 1980s, one might call a librarian or consult a dictionary or thesaurus in fact checking, while today, the Internet gives reporters and editors a resource they can use. Many of the stories he writes and edits are just as likely to get published on the *Catholic Standard* website as get published in the hard copy edition. His ultimate goal is to illustrate and write a children's book.

Monte Ingram spoke with our students about his job as a construction executive. His

company develops computer systems that allow construction workers to communicate. A parishioner at St. Augustine, he wore a safety vest typically found in construction sites and compared his position to that of an assistant coach on a football team.

During his career, he helped build the Pentagon after the damage wrought by the 9/11 terrorist attack. He's also flown to the North Pole for 15 years as part of his role in supporting a scientific research project there.

Ingram earned his bachelors and masters degrees from George Mason University and wanted to be an astronaut when he was younger. He has worked in construction for 30 years and launched his company 23 years ago.

A parishioner, Ingram also spoke about the importance in his career and personal ethos with treating people with respect.

Mark Dickson spoke with our students about his career in political consulting and lobbying. He also spoke with students about attending a Catholic school like St. Augustine in his native Chicago. In addition, he urged students to work hard and take care of the details. He mentioned serving in the military and how once he was ordered to clean the bathrooms with a

toothbrush.

A Chicagoan, Dickson is an attorney and an alumni parent who said that he works hard ultimately to provide for his family and create wealth that can benefit them.

While others may have made excuses or done a poor job, he and his roommate took the task on, and it turned out that the onerous assignment was a test from his superiors that ultimately led to his receiving a promotion as a result of his completing it successfully.

Richard Cooper Jr., '54, native Washingtonian and lifelong parishioner, spoke about the Civil Air Patrol, an all-volunteer organization whose primary mission is searching and finding missing planes in the U.S. He told students that as they enter their teen years, they can be increasingly involved in the Civil Air Patrol, including preparing to receive their pilot's licenses. Young people can also study in a Cyber Academy and attend a Geo Spatial Camp through the Civil Air Patrol.

Marlysha Myrtill Liddell, a longtime parishioner and school parent, spoke with our students about her work as a civil rights attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice since 2010, which she initiated after undergraduate studies at Barnard College in New York and the University of Notre Dame Law



Ghelatia Araia



John Butler



Michaela Ehimika



Raquel Vargas Aiaz



Sheila Overton

Center. DOJ gets involved in civil rights law, she said, in helping to protect the civil rights of those who are discriminated against based on factors such as how they speak, the color of their skin, and their status as incarcerated individuals.

She decided in seventh grade that she wanted to be an attorney, after seeing *The Cosby Show*. Her career has included clerking for state and federal judges. She ultimately has found that the toughest part of being an attorney is seeing both sides of issues.

She spoke about the 250th anniversary of the United States approaching on July 4 and how this occasion is a good time to reflect on the “bold ideals” that the founding fathers of the U.S. had. It’s probably not realistic to think any of us could read the entire Constitution and memorize it, but we can come to understand that ideals in the document, which have ultimately come to fruition generations later.

Clarion Johnson, M.D. told the students about the progress he has seen in medicine, since he became a doctor. For example, 80 percent of children with leukemia have a cure to their disease.

“I have seen progress,” said Dr. Johnson, who spent most his career as a doctor for a Fortune 500 company, which led him to travel to more than 100 countries.

He grew up in a challenging environment and credits Catholic

education with changing his trajectory, which ultimately led to his graduating from Yale University Medical School.

“I lost a lot of friends to drugs and bullets,” he told the St. Augustine middle schoolers during one session.

He said that he wasn’t attending Career Day for the donuts but to find candidates to replace him as doctors and health care professionals.

Shelton Paul Liddell, Marlysha’s husband and a parishioner and school parent, spoke about his work as an engineer at Lockheed Martin. He’s supported several federal civilian government agencies.

He earned a second masters degree in Systems Engineering with a focus on information Assurance. Liddell earned his bachelor’s degree in Computer Science at the University of Mississippi, with his first Masters degree in Computer Science from Jackson State University.

Technology is changing rapidly, Liddell told the students. Back in 2009, when he was starting his career, it would have been hard to predict the importance that artificial intelligence would have.

“Study hard and never think you have all the answers,” he advised the middle school students during one session.

Liddell said that he likes working with people and on a team there are opportunities to learn from others,

with the opportunity for teammates to also learn from him.

As a part of his career development, Liddell has been an active member of the National Society of Black Engineers.

After working in the Clinton White House, **Dan Lezmes** focused his career on satellite communication sales, since he felt it would be a better way of supporting a family. He told the students during Career Day that to be successful in sales, one has to learn to be competitive, to have discipline, and a willingness to learn.

“You have to apply yourself,” he said.

As an account manager for a global satellite company, he was engaged in providing complex services and systems for airlines, charter jets, and ships around the globe. The nature of his work is that he did not focus on one-time sales but on developing relationships over time. He also had to learn how to effectively communicate with his sales manager, as well as technical team and other support staff.

After being gently admonished by his CEO for talking too much during a client meeting, Lezmes learned to listen more and eventually concluded that the best client meetings were those where the client spoke a lot. He reminded students that we should listen more than we speak, since we have two ears to listen and one mouth to speak.

Continued on page 4

John T. Butler, a longtime parishioner, spoke to students less about his career as a teacher, high school and college administrator and fundraising professional and more about the importance about lifelong learning. He told the middle schoolers, for example, if they study a craft for five hours a day for five years, they can master it, since they will have practiced it for 10,000 hours.

“You’re learning,” he told his listeners. He also asked the students about their career interests.

Dana Banks talked about her State Department 26-year career, which included assignments at headquarters at Foggy Bottom, as well as Haiti, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, and Togo. Diplomats advance U.S. interests abroad and in the U.S.

She said that diplomats focus on the “last three feet,” which is the advancement of U.S. interests in countries and how our policies and actions impact them. She learned three languages in the course of her work, which diplomats think is important because it allows them to talk with the people they work with in their native tongue.

Raquel Vargas de McFields, a St. Augustine School parent, spoke about working as a medical lab technician. A native of Nicaragua, she earned a bachelor’s degree in clinical laboratory science. She spoke with students about how medical lab technicians have to follow strict quality control protocols to ensure the specimens they collect and analyze are not corrupted.

John Leeke, Ph.D. ’53, a native Washingtonian, spoke about his career as a teacher, which included

working as a trainer for the National Education Association, which he came to see as a form of teaching.

Much of his work during his career involved working with Fortune 500 companies to help make them more inclusive of people of color, including as executives. Last year, he wrote his memoir, *American Change Agent*, and he has been actively promoting it through appearances and readings.

Sheila Overton, M.D., a longtime parishioner, spoke about her career working in women’s and children’s health as an OB/GYN, wearing her white coat from her profession.

She spoke to the children about the need for more African Americans, Latino’s and other minorities in the medical and nursing professions and explained what the process of becoming a doctor involves. She gave students an opportunity to participate in mock-medical situations involving using a stethoscope, a blood pressure cuff, and other medical instruments, and she answered many questions.

Michaela Ehimika, a parishioner, spoke with our students about her work as a senior product manager for Amazon. She helped launch an Amazon app in South Africa, and she told the students how such an app needs to be stress-tested before its debut, and how technology companies such as Amazon tend to work in two-week increments or “sprints.” She spoke with the students about creating Products Requirements Documents, which companies such as Amazon use as an evolving guidebook in creating new products.

Ghelatia Araia ’12 came back to her alma mater to speak about her work in healthcare, which she has begun

since graduating from American University with her bachelor’s degree and New York University with a Master’s in Public Health.

She attended St. Augustine School from fourth through eighth grade and was the first student from the school to earn the Prudential Spirit of Community Award and also the first to go to the NBC Washington studios as a part of the city-wide spelling bee.

She’s studying for the MCAT exam, with an eye toward applying for medical school and is working with MedStar Washington in kidney dialysis after previously working for the U.S. Health and Human Services Department. She has developed a particular interest in *prevention and treatment of diabetes*.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026



Our eighth-grade Class of 2026 has received admissions offers to the following schools:

- Archbishop Carroll High School
- Bishop McNamara High School
- DeMatha Catholic High School
- Elizabeth Seton High School
- Georgetown Visitation Academy
- Gonzaga College High School
- St. Augustine High School (Calif.)
- St. John’s College High School
- Stone Ridge Academy of the Sacred Heart

Congratulations to these students, as well as their families, and the staff at our school.

Alumni Notes*Alumni Notes*Alumni Notes



Gianni Boler '06 earned her bachelor's degree in Women's Studies from Bennett College for Women. Residing in New

York, she is pursuing graduate studies at Columbia University part-time while continuing to grow her nonprofit organization, Kipstry Inc., which she launched in 2024.

Kipstry Inc. is a 501(c)3 focused on providing financial literacy resources to women in underprivileged communities in the New York tri-state area. "Our mission is centered on helping women build emotional stability and economic confidence so they can create sustainable, empowered futures for themselves and their families. I am currently leading the organization full-time and working to expand our programming and partnerships," she added.

Gianni said that she was saddened to hear about the passing of Ms. Delores Grymes, long-time kindergarten assistant teacher, who passed away in April 2025. "She was such a meaningful part of my childhood, and I'm grateful for the role she played in my early education," she added. She has good memories and gratitude for her other St. Augustine teachers, such as Mrs. Lorrain Lee, retired middle

school teacher and vice principal, as well as Dr. Sandra Brown.



Kris Pandohie '94 wrote earlier this month on our Facebook page: "I'm so thankful that this school taught me Black History, a

sense of black pride, and knowing my worth as a (then) young man of color. I'm so delighted from my heart to see that the legacy is continuing here at Saint Augustine! Love my Alma Mater! Our history is way too rich to not celebrate it!"

More than 50 inmates were baptized at the Prince Georges County jail in Upper Marlboro on Feb. 10, in an action that may have been the first of its kind in a Maryland house of corrections.



Gregory Bearstop '79, inmate services division chief, played a key role in the full immersion baptism of the

white-clad 54 inmates at the county gym, since he approved of Moving Forward Ministries initiating work at the Upper Marlboro jail.

Through his leadership, the jail now has regular major denomination services every week, including

Christian, Jewish, and Muslim prayer. The jail hosts a Catholic Mass every other week.

The inmates were baptized in the "name of Jesus Christ," but since the Gospels record Jesus as telling us we needed to baptize others in the "name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," it is dubious that these baptisms would be valid in the Catholic Church.

Bearstop attended St. Augustine from Kindergarten through eighth grade and grew up in the parish. Exploring a religious vocation, he attended the Redemptorist seminary in Baltimore for minor seminary (high school) and spent years in the order's formation program but left before priestly ordination, pursuing a career as a therapist initially, before he began working for Prince Georges County 25 years ago.

The Prince Georges County jail houses inmates who are awaiting trial, including sentencing, and who are not released on bail.

Bearstop has also advocated for minors being held in the jail to receive their right to an education through Prince Georges County Public Schools. In addition, he is working with the University of Chicago graduate school and other partners to try to ensure that all inmates who wish to receive mental health services could do so.

Major Donor Dinner highlights

Two dozen St. Augustine School donors gathered over dinner on March 7 to hear a progress report from the school's leadership.

Dr. Anika Logan, second-year principal, made a presentation at the annual Major Donor Dinner, which took place at the St. Augustine cafeteria. Fr. Patrick A. Smith, pastor, and Lawrence H. Parks, II, parish finance council chair and strategic governance committee chair.

Fr. Smith spoke about the "Jubilee of Hope" and how one should not lose sight of the importance of the virtue of hope, even after the conclusion of the Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church.

A lifelong parishioner and alumnus of the school, Parks called 2025-2026 "a very challenging time," which has impacted St. Augustine's enrollment. Due to economic challenges and current White House priorities, "People are losing their jobs," he said. Those losing their jobs could include GS-4 government employees and USAID workers with two degrees, he added.

At the same time that the local economy has been impacted, "Teachers need to be paid," so operating a parochial school can be a challenge. Parks said that the school welcomes any ideas about how to increase enrollment, which is at 141 but needs to be increased to at least 180 for the school's financial health.

Donors give to support parents in difficult positions because they empathize with those parents' plight, Parks said.

Parks also said that St. Augustine School is a nurturing community,

and he told a story about how a high school student who is a St. Augustine alumnus came back to the school to talk with his teachers after his father passed away.

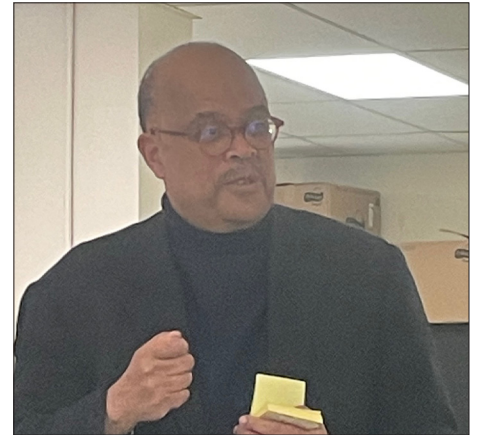
St. Augustine School is doing well in fundraising, according to Parks, because of Fr. Smith's integrity and role as a priest. "Father can just ask," he said. "They trust his integrity," he said of St. Augustine's parishioners and donors.

Fr. Maurice Sands, executive director of the Black and Indian Mission Office (BIMO), made a brief presentation, after Fr. Smith invited him to speak. Fr. Sands, a Native American priest from the Archdiocese of Detroit, talked about how schools such as St. Augustine instill discipline and can produce good citizens and marriage partners, and that much of the work in such schools is unglamorous and day-to-day labor.

"The work isn't glamorous and in many cases, it's mundane," he said. Based out of Foggy Bottom and founded by St. Katherine Drexel, BIMO is a longtime St. Augustine School supporter.

Dr. Logan spoke about how the school is trying to build on a tradition of academic excellence. She spoke briefly about the school's improved MAP test scores and use of technology in its library and computer room.

During the question and answer session, Alex St. James, a parishioner and alumni parent, said he thought the school could increase enrollment by offering transportation for students from Prince Georges County. Parks said he would look into this option.



Lawrence H. Parks, Jr., Esq., an alumnus of the school and lifelong parishioner who serves as chair of the Parish Finance Council and School Government Committee, spoke about how donors give in part because of their empathy to those in need of assistance.

Bill Murray, the school's development director, told the donors that St. Augustine was having its strongest fundraising year to date, with \$420,000 in individual donations and foundation grants received since July 1. He thanked the donors for their support. He said that the financial aid drive in the fall raised more than \$60,000, including donations by about a dozen first-time school donors.



Continued from page 1

From the principal

We are truly thankful for your prayers, well wishes, time, and generous support. Because of you, our students have access to high-quality instruction and resources, our teachers are empowered to deliver excellence, and our school continues to grow in both faith and academic strength. You are part of every success story we celebrate.

We invite you to remain connected and continue supporting our mission. By sharing our story with prospective families and staying engaged with our school community, you help ensure that the legacy of St. Augustine Catholic School continues to flourish. Together, we are building something truly special.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in our mission, and investing in the future of our students. May this Easter season bring you peace, renewal, and abundant blessings.

Educationally yours,

Dr. Anika Logan

On Feb. 19, as a part of our celebration of Black History Month, we put on a production, *250 Years, Black History Is American History, A Taste of Hamilton*. Mr. Ron Riley, Math department chair, wrote and directed the performance, which took place in the St. Augustine Room.



Saint Augustine School thanks children's author Kristen Lucken and her donation of 60 copies of her picture book, *Little Striped Caterpillar*, to our library and PreK through First Grade students. Reggie Govan, a parishioner and friend of the school, facilitated this donation.

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

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In Memoriam

Janis Gaskins Foster '60

*Alan C. Harrod, C.S.C., former
director of services to the elderly
and homebound, St. Augustine
Parish*

David Satterwhite '76

Barbara (Spurlock) Brown '70

May the souls of the faithfully
departed, through the mercy of
God, rest in peace.

Correction

In the Winter 2026 issue of the St. Augustine Saints newsletter, we misspelled the name of Janis Gaskins Foster '60 in the In Memoriam section. We regret the error.

www.staug-dc.org

Rev. Patrick A. Smith
Pastor

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

Dr. Anika Logan
Principal

alogan@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.