



St. Brigid School

Excellence Faith Community

2020-2021 Newsletter

Perspectives from Parents

Things We Value about SBS

- Traditional Math Program
- The Pledge of Allegiance
- School-wide, student led prayer
- Public Speaking
- Cursive Handwriting!
- Older students mentoring younger students through classroom buddies
- Uniform Code
- Diverse community of color, country of origin, and faiths
- Celebrating Mass as a community

-Ann Marie Poulin, Parent of middle school student and an alumna

continued on page 7



Why I Teach at St. Brigid

Teaching children is not an easy job. A person enters the teaching field for many reasons, but most commonly because they feel committed to making a difference in the life of a young person.

During the pandemic, people have developed a deeper understanding and respect for the profession.

Teaching at a Catholic school requires a firm dedication to the mission of a Catholic education, and what many people may not know, a significantly less compensation package than public or private schools, to ensure tuition rates remain affordable to many.

Why would a teacher dedicate his or her life to a career knowing more money could be made elsewhere?

continued on page 11

A Message from
Fr. Paul
Pastor
Our Lady of Hope Parish



This year has challenged us in many ways. Our assumptions about healthcare, our political system, where it is safe to be and even what we may all call truth have been rattled. Where do we go to ask and answer these questions and even bigger ones such as why am I here? What really matters?

Catholics and all Christians find those answers in Jesus, who said he was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Our spiritual tradition, then, is not a set of rules or practices we once followed as children. The Christian Way is a way of living and growing in the deepest wisdom available to us, the fruit of thousands of years of human living, suffering, rejoicing and seeking meaning and purpose. Sharing that wisdom and the example and friendship of Jesus is the reason and purpose for our school, a school founded in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy and guided by the Jesuit educational vision. We strive by word and example to share that vision and tradition – and Jesus - with your children

As we move through Lent and toward another Easter, I encourage you to revisit this source of wisdom and to renew your connection with the Risen Christ. Celebrate Easter this year not only as a family custom but a lived experience of the victory of life, hope, and faith over all the forces of evil, fear, and despair in your life and the life of our world.

I send my hopes and prayers for your blessing this Easter Season by sharing these words of an Easter question I first read years ago:

"with the beckoning and dawning of another Easter day, can the fragile, yet extraordinary words of Jesus propel us to a wider awareness, a gentler compassion? To the rediscovery of the sacred in ourselves and in our world?...To a different journey in a listening companionship with the prophets of our time-the wounded and the weary who announce the Kingdom and carry in their stories the seeds of the morrow?...that sacred future where, impossible as it may seem, we love our neighbors as ourselves."

God, help us to live fully and openly and hopefully, to trust in grace and believe in resurrection,

Fr. Paul Sullivan, S.J.
Pastor



A Message from Mr. Burke, Principal of St. Brigid School

Dear Friends of St. Brigid School,

The 2020-2021 academic year finds St. Brigid School adjusting to life during a pandemic, providing its students with a formative education rooted in the Catholic faith, and experiencing an increase in enrollment. St. Brigid School demonstrates the ability to adjust to the many changes that seem to arise almost daily. This is a year of reimagining what school looks like and our community meets the challenges head on and continually learns to adapt to a most unusual time by remaining focused on its mission to educate children.

The education provided to the students is purposeful and comprehensive. We aim to educate the "whole child" in mind, body, and spirit to become people with a strong moral compass rooted in the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Our goal is to provide opportunities for each child to grow both spiritually and academically. Classroom instruction plays a great role in preparing each student to develop their gifts as children of God. They use these gifts to make our school community and world a better place.

Outside of the classroom the school provides opportunities for the children to share their gifts through numerous community service activities designed to promote the act of giving to others and to walk with those who may need a helping hand. The education our students receive is second to none and is driven by a shared vision that strives to form young people who will in a few short years be our future leaders.

St. Brigid School is a forward thinking school, with an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world. Our mission to educate the children for a future we do not know is fueling our growth. Each day new families contact the school for admissions information and our classes are filling very quickly. This can be attributed to our ability to provide a high quality, faith-based education that makes our school a beacon of light that attracts people to our campus on Stevens Avenue.

I invite you to read our newsletter and to share the St. Brigid School experience with your friends and neighbors. Tell them what makes our school the best place to learn, grow, and form a relationship with God in Greater Portland. Thanks for being part of our story.

Sincerely,

Bill Burke
Principal

From School Board Chair: Ruth Summers



I am so pleased to work with the leadership of St. Brigid School in the development of our School Board of Directors. As the board Chair, I look forward to reaching out to current parents/guardians, community leaders and alumni to work toward ensuring the success of St. Brigid School for years to come.

I believe this past year has shown how strong and resilient our teachers, students, and families are in a time of uncertainty. Our teachers, principal and staff should be commended for the amazing experience our students have had during this school year. I look forward to seeing you in the drop off or pick up line. Very soon, we will be able to visit the playground, chat in person, and enjoy fellowship at school events.

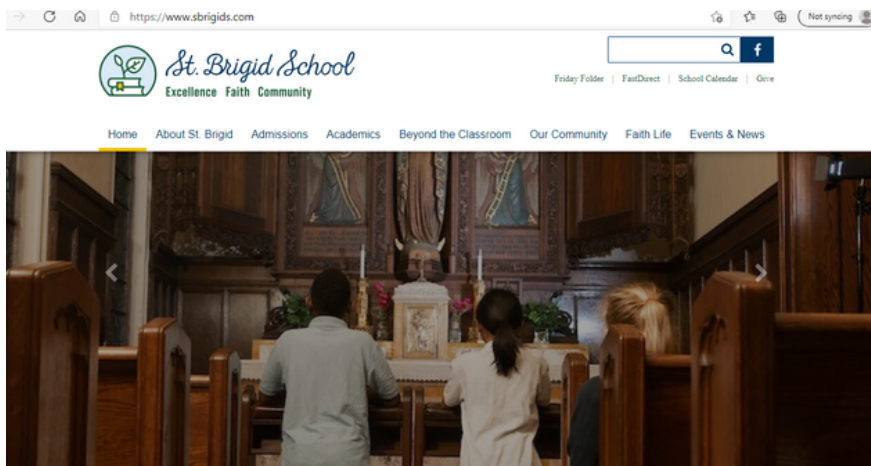
School Board Members: Vin Ciampi, Rhiana Leavitt, Sibyl Pitcock, Michael Rogers, Jim Marcisso, and Cindy Rague

Awards of Excellence

In 2019, St. Brigid School was named the "Best Preschool" and the "Best Private Elementary School" in Down East Magazine's Reader's Choice poll. It was an exciting honor to receive!

In 2020, St. Brigid School was a finalist in the Reader's Choice poll for the "Best Private Elementary School". The recognition plaques arrived to us recently. We are humbled by being recognized 2 years in a row for the outstanding work that goes into being a great school!

Thanks to the administration, faculty, and staff for their dedication and perseverance. We are also grateful to our parents, students, parish, and all of our supporters. It takes all of us working together to be our best!



Our New Website, logo
and brand launched in
November 2020!

To view it, visit:
www.sbrigids.com

"There are times in each of our lives when we have to decide: change or more of the same? Perhaps you are there. What will you choose?"

MATTHEW KELLY



How Covid Changed Things

The challenges of operating during the pandemic were many. New protocols and procedures were necessary to implement in order to continue to provide a meaningful educational experience. While Covid caused us to change the way we do some things, those changes were beneficial. We asked our teachers for some positive things that changed for them and in their classrooms due to Covid. Here are a few:

"My faith has been deepened during the pandemic through community with others, especially my students, who daily invite their friends to share the troubles of their souls, they pray together, help each other, and they trust God is near. My daily walks during remote learning gave me ideas for creative writing prompts. Had I not had the time for this, some wonderful pieces of writing might never have been written by my students."

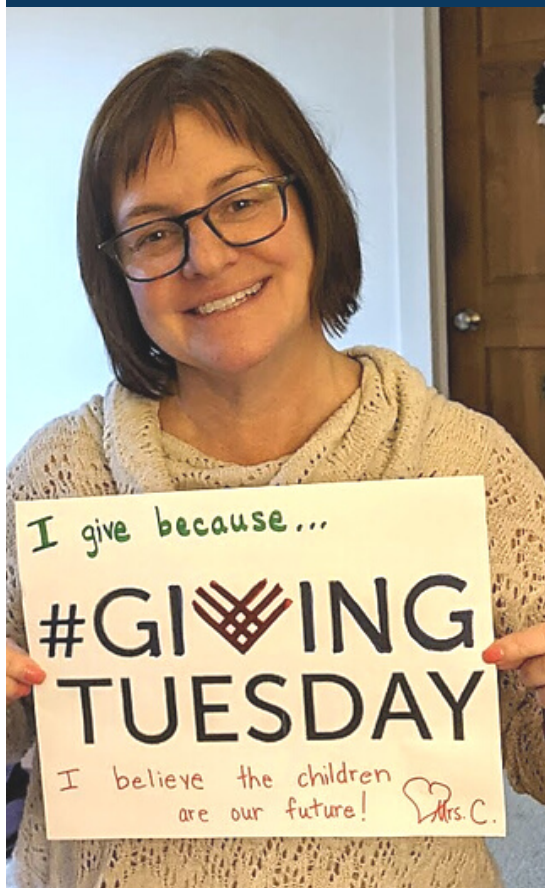
-Lori Newman, Middle School English Language Arts Teacher

"We can't go to our church, so there is more prayer in the classrooms, creating more empathy for others, as we pray several times a day. We are using more technology, presenting visuals, doing drawing lessons, and live-streaming content which is important in the education of the 21st century learner."

-Jennifer Culpovich, Kindergarten Teacher

"I have never prayed so much in my life! My family, the school families, and my students are never out of my thoughts. From the moment I get in my car at 6:45 am each day, my mind shifts to how I can keep everyone safe and do my job at the same time. The most positive thing I have seen is how fantastic the kids are throughout this whole thing. They never complain about all the new protocols. We are all thanking God each day and are still in school and succeeding."

-Cindy Halpin, Third Grade Teacher



Welcome New Staff Members

- **Sommer Toutain**
School Nurse, Parent of
Kindergarten and second grade
students
- **Sallie Rich**
School Nurse, Parent of fourth
grade student
- **Rachida Ouamar**
Daytime Custodian, Parent of
third and fourth grade students
- **Julie-Beth Blancas-Ruiz**
Director of Before and Aftercare
Floating Sub, Parent of
kindergarten and third grade
students
- **Danielle Salvaggio**
Floating Sub, Parent of first,
third, and sixth grade students
- **Yevgenia Soshnikava**
Aftercare Associate



Welcome New Teachers

Ashley Burton
Lead Preschool Teacher

Ashley is an alumna of St. Brigid School! She is so thankful to be able to teach in person, spending each day with her students and sharing the amazing experience that is St. Brigid School!

Ashley says "The best part of her day is every morning when we sing good morning to each child at morning meeting. It's a great way to start the day and watch as the children smile and cheer their friends on."

Lena Breton
First Grade Teacher

Lena Breton joined our staff in 2020 to teach first grade. Lena has been teaching for over 30 years in Catholic schools. She brings prayer to the classroom by way of a daily decade of the rosary, and encouraging her students to pray for others.

Lena says "My favorite part of the day is when I am teaching and students grasp the concept. I can see the joy in their eyes that they finally caught on."

Corynne Jarosz
Seventh Grade/Religion Teacher

Corynne is a Seventh Grade homeroom teacher and Middle School Religion teacher. She is a Catholic school graduate and feels it is great to have that connection with her students by sharing experiences through common faith.

Corynne says "My favorite part of the day is homeroom time--the day has so much potential at its start! I enjoy being able to talk with my students about their day ahead or anything else that is on their minds."

Natalie Haskell
Middle School Social Studies

Natalie is a graduate of University of Notre Dame. She is the former Faith Formation Coordinator at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, and Lead Tutor at Smartthinking. She joined us this year to teach 7th Grade Social Studies, where she is excited to bring her faith experiences and knowledge to the classroom.

Katie Ryerse
Middle School Math

Katie is a Math teacher for 6th, 7th, and 8th Graders. She is a graduate of Kennesaw State University. Through constant training and development, Katie has learned to put theory into practice while leading a classroom. She keeps students engaged by designing meaningful, purpose driven lessons. She believes this purposeful design helps her to differentiate students with different needs.

Perspectives from Parents

continued from page 1

We chose St. Brigid School because it not only provides a solid foundation for academic growth, but also values service to our community, reinforces our Catholic faith and welcomes all!

We value the dedicated teachers and staff at St. Brigid. We are especially thankful for Sam's early elementary grades teachers who recognized that he learned differently. They helped us identify his learning profile and worked with us as partners to support and encourage his tremendous growth as a student and person. Even in the midst of the pandemic, every morning at drop off we are greeted by staff who *know* Sam and his classmates. *That's priceless!*

The administrators have not missed a beat during the pandemic, staying ahead of the curve to keep students and families engaged in learning full-time in person. While not every tradition or activity can take place, the spirit of service still shines whether it is a food drive, Catholic Schools Week, making cards for the residents at Park Danforth, or planning for the annual Field Day. There's always a project or event to unite St. Brigid families and give them the opportunity to serve others.

A special shout out to Mr. Burke, who once took Sam outside to shovel snow when he was too distracted in second grade to sit still and learn!

-Ann Marie Poulin, Parent of 7th Grader



Not only do our parents recognize what a gift a St. Brigid education is, but the students do as well! One first grader often sets up a spa in her home and she donates the proceeds to St. Brigid. Her mom Suzanne Lafreniere says, "Claire sets up a spa at home in a spare room and takes reservations for appointments.

Options include: Yoga, shoulder rub and a face mask. She loves raising money for her new school and is constantly asking family members if they would like to make any reservations."

-New Parent of 1st and 4th Graders

"St. Brigid School has influenced my daughter's character and personality. Valentina has a big heart. She had a great time making cards with me for hours and days, for the residents of Park Danforth. We made them with so much love." A project that she did outside of school, on her own with a friend. "I am sure this experience will make her always think about others in need, with kindness. And she will know with a little of her time she can make others feel happy and loved. St Brigid always give back to the community and I hope she will continue to do the same in her life."

-Mariella Lengua-Balbi, Parent of 4th and 7th Graders



St. Brigid School

Excellence Faith Community

We chose St. Brigid School for two reasons: We heard very positive things from people who have been there and I had a very positive initial conversation with Mr. Burke.

I have so many positive things to say about our experience over the last year. I always feel a part of the community despite not being able to be in person for activities. My daughter is learning a lot and is always happy when I pick her up at the end of the day.

Finally, I love the emphasis placed on kindness and giving back to the community.

- Emma Tripp, New Parent of 1st Grader



Annual Appeal

Giving to our Annual Appeal is easy!

If you believe in the benefits of a Catholic education and would like to support our school, no donation is too big or small.

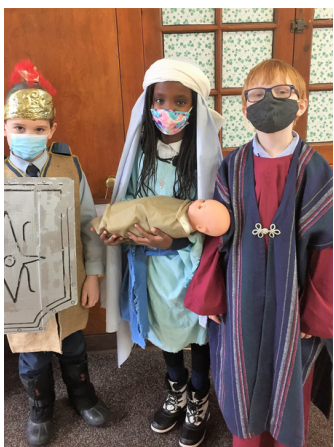
Donations may be sent to our office:
St. Brigid School
695 Stevens Ave.
Portland, ME 04103

You may also use the link found on our website under the Our Community tab.

<https://ourladyofhopeportland.weshareonline.org/ws/opportunities/annualappeal>



We adapted, we learned, we grew!



Sponsor a Student

Our students, with varying economic circumstances, come from 30 communities across southern Maine. Regardless of this, there is nothing more important than a well rounded education to ensure the future success of our ever-changing world. Annual tuition for our Kindergarten through 8th Grade program is currently \$6,850.00 per year.

Consider a gift to sponsor a student for a full year, partial year, or on a monthly basis. Your generosity will be appreciated and the outcome could be life changing for a young person.

Contact Courtney Morgan, Director of Development at 207-797-7073 to sponsor today!



St. Brigid School
Excellence Faith Community



New this Year: School Nurses

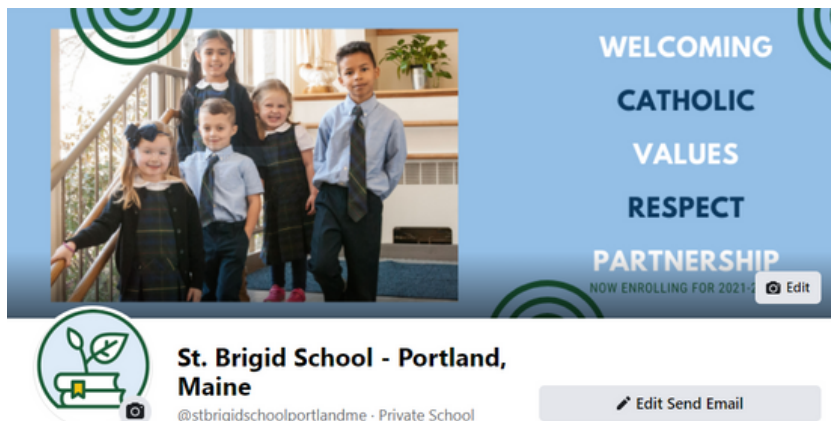
With PPP funding, we were able to hire a school nurse this year. We chose to do a job share position, and have two fabulous additions to our staff: Sommer Toutain, RN and Sallie Rich, RN. Our nurses will continue in this position next year!

Meet Sommer:

At the beginning of the school year, I had not the slightest ideas that I would be working here, and quite honestly, the thought of starting a new job amid all the other changes that were taking place was a little scary! But I was excited! I put my trust in God and had faith that this was part of His plan for me and my family. When you have that mindset, it makes anything a bit easier.

The best part about working here is the wonderful people! The families and staff are so supportive and dedicated to making St. Brigid the very best. You certainly don't find that everywhere you go.

Follow us on Facebook!



"There is something truly special about SBS and I'm so grateful to be a part of it!"

School Nurse/Parent
SOMMER TOUTAIN

Meet Sallie:

"I'm so happy to be a nurse at St. Brigid School! My favorite part of the day is the morning. I love greeting the students with a smile and a wish that they have a great day.

Listening to Mrs. Bull's morning prayer helps me to start the day with gratitude and connection to God.

Throughout the day I feel blessed to provide a safe space for students who need a friendly ear to listen, put bandages on scrapes, make ice packs for bumps and to connect students with their parents when they need to go home.





continued from page 1

Here are some reasons our teachers are committed and dedicated to teach at St. Brigid School; proving that the things that differentiate us as a school community are worth the time and energy they put in, tenfold!

"My favorite part about working at St. Brigid is the strong community spirit! Everyone is supportive and kind to one another. I am happy to work somewhere that shares my faith!

- Corynne Jarosz, Middle School Religion

"It gives me great comfort to be surrounded by a strong sense of faith. As an alumna of St. Brigid School, I am grateful for the chance to give back to the community that helped shape me into the person and teacher I am today"

-Ashley Burton, Lead Preschool Teacher

"Mr. Burke, the principal, and the faculty and staff are supportive and great to work with. Everyone is friendly and willing to lend a hand when you need help."

- Lena Breton, First Grade Teacher

"The miracle
is not
that we do this work,
but
that we are happy
to do it."

ST. THERESA OF CALCUTTA



Alumni Highlight: Katelyn Gendron Class of 2013

Are you a graduate of St.
Brigid School,
St. Joseph's School,
or St. Patrick's School?
We would love to hear
from you!

Fill out the Keep in
Touch form on our
website under the
Alumni Tab

www.sbrigids.com



Katelyn is currently attending Northeastern University. She is in her 4th year of a 5-year combined bachelor's and master's program, including three 6-month internship experiences. She is working toward a BS/MS in Civil Engineering with a concentration in structures.

"My favorite St. Brigid memories were during Catholic Schools Week. We all looked forward to celebrating together as a community through the many events planned. The week showed how great our school spirit was and how invested everyone was not only in the St. Brigid community but the larger community as well. We volunteered in several community service projects during the week, and I enjoyed how we came together to share our talents and resources with those in need."

Katelyn reflects on how St. Brigid School prepared her for High School and College: "Being offered advanced Math and English classes at St. Brigid combined with the dedication of my teachers allowed me to take several AP classes in high school. These classes gave me college credits that put me ahead and allowed me to pursue a combined bachelor's and master's while being able to work three

6-month internships, all in 5 years. Mrs. Sargent, Science teacher (retired), also did an outstanding job preparing students for high school and college. She stressed the importance of outlining course content and other organizational skills, areas other people in high school and college struggled with."

Most of Katelyn's teachers are still part of our faculty. "My favorite memories of my teachers are Mrs. Newman's poet of the week and Mrs. Garrett helping me with math. Mrs. Newman read every student's poem each week, showing her dedication to the students and their learning. She wanted everyone to listen to each poem carefully and absorb how each student conveyed their thoughts.

Mrs. Garrett was another teacher who was extremely beneficial for my learning. Even after I was not taking math classes with her, I would often go to her for help, and she would always take the time to explain the material. These teachers and other teachers at St. Brigid dedicated their time encouraging other students and me to always aim for our highest potential while providing the assistance we needed along the way.

St. Brigid School helped me develop my faith by being able to go to church every week, taking part in the harmony group throughout middle school, and having religion class. These helped me to form a stronger sense of community and faith with my classmates and teachers. These things encouraged me to take on leadership roles during the Mass, as I regularly enjoyed reading the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass and sometimes came up with intentions for the prayer. The opportunities to take part in church as well as act out the Stations of the Cross in 8th grade strengthened my faith. Teachers and students were always encouraging each other to take part in these events, and we always did them as a community, so you never felt alone or out of place in expressing your faith. Katelyn is set to graduate in 2022."

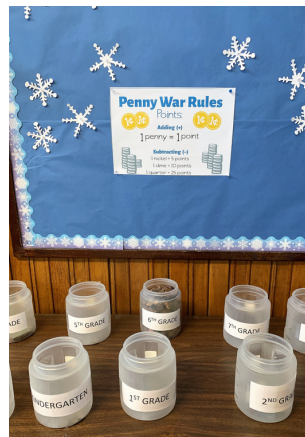
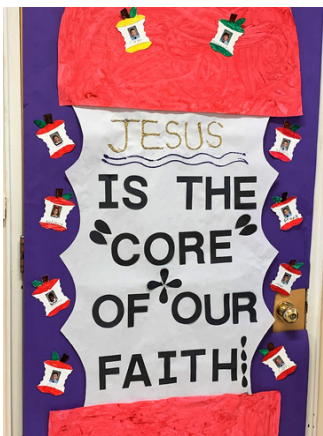
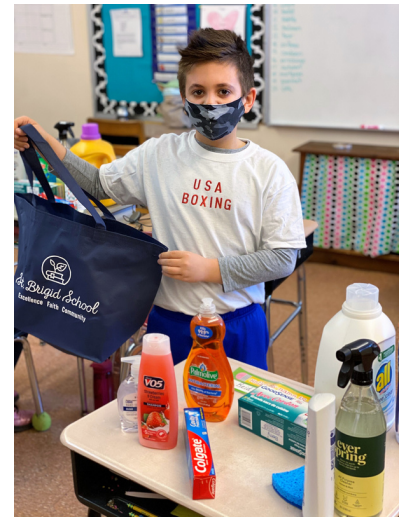
Home and School Association

Our parent group, the Home and School Association was faced with the challenge of presenting community building events and activities with respect to the Covid guidelines. It was a year to think creatively to preserve the events that were possible, while keeping our community safe.

Late in the summer, they hand delivered welcome bags to new students and parents, in a socially distant manner. They were able to adhere to gathering guidelines by hosting 2 sessions of a welcome pizza party outside in our parking lot so that new families could meet the teachers, staff, and other parents prior to the start of school. Favorite events such as Grandparent's Day and Santa's Workshop were successfully held in safe and meaningful ways.

The H.S.A. are working on the planning of a family event tentatively scheduled for the spring. In addition, the Care Committee assisted with a Food Drive and school wide service projects during Catholic Schools Week that benefited Sacred Heart/St. Dominic's Food Pantry, Maine Needs, and the Matthew 25 Project.

Thank you to chairs Rene Hoglund and Christine Kennedy-Jensen, care committee chair Katherine Brunelle, Catholic Schools Week chairs Danielle Salvaggio and Jessica Trombley, board members Kate Kutz, Meredith Rousseau and all the parents and staff who participate in our Home and School Association.



A Message from Courtney Morgan, Director of Development

Just like most events in 2020, fundraising during the pandemic looked different! We had some challenges but we have been successful with the help of our generous parent community, parishioners, alumni, and supportive friends. Each year St. Brigid School relies on fundraisers and our Annual Appeal to generate revenue to fund financial aid, enhancements to the curriculum in the way of new text books and computers, and to offset the gap in the operating budget that isn't covered by tuition dollars.

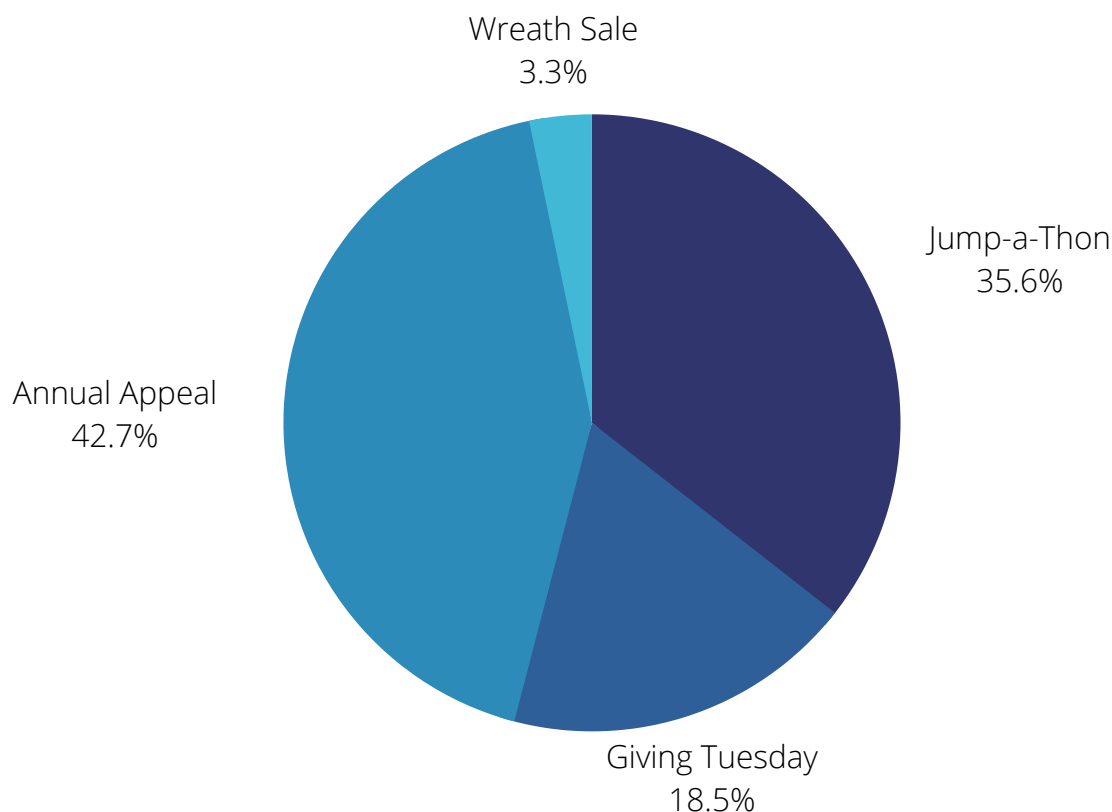
In October, we had our first Jump-a-Thon which raised over \$20,000. Students completed 46,754 jumps during the Jump-A-Thon and as a result of surpassing the fundraising goal, received a snow cone from Snowology 207. "The Jump-A-Thon was an exciting way to bring the whole St. Brigid community together," said Melinda Bedard, a parent co-chair of the event. "Not only was it a successful fundraiser, but seeing the students having fun and reaching their goals was unbelievably rewarding."

For other events, the Wreath Sale generated \$1,500. Giving Tuesday brought in \$13,000 in one day and our Annual Appeal has raised \$30,000 to date. According to the Portland Diocese Catholic Annual Appeal Report, we also benefit from the Catholic Appeal which "goes to help cover the cost of lay teacher positions, provide grants to parishes and clusters with schools, and fund the Office of Catholic Schools."

If you haven't made your gift to the appeal, won't you consider supporting us today?

A link to online giving can be found on our website at www.sbrigids.com or use the envelope enclosed with this newsletter.

We are so grateful for such a supportive community who values Catholic education!

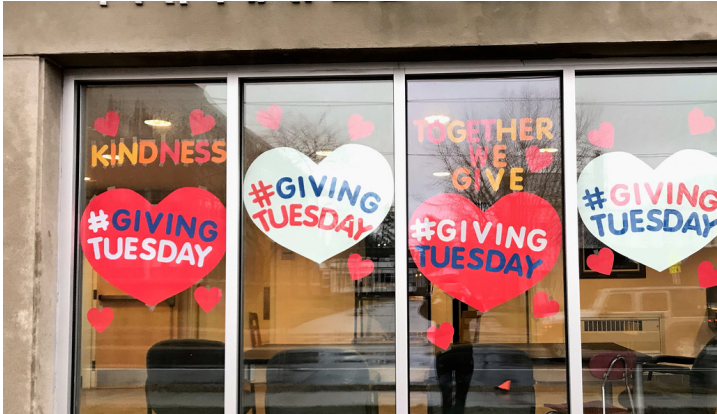


Online Auction Coming April 19 through April 30, 2021

We will be presenting our online auction "Sharing Our Story" at <https://www.biddingforgood.com/StBrigidSchool> in April. Please check out the link anytime between April 19 and April 30, bid on items, and support a great cause!

We are seeking: sponsors, gift card and service donations, and volunteers to make this virtual event a success! Please contact Courtney Morgan at courtney.morgan@portlanddiocese.org if you would like to help, make a donation, or sponsor the event. It's a great way to promote your company or local business!

The Jump-A-Thon and Giving Tuesday were a great success!



Wish List

Parking Lot Paving and Striping
Rubber Matting in Playset Area
Two Basketball Hoops for Playground
Sand and Refinish All Hardwood Floors
Two AED's
50 More Chromebooks

For more information on how you can help fund items on the list, contact William Burke at:
william.burke@portlanddiocese.org

or

207-797-7073



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695 Stevens Ave. Portland, ME 04103 207-797-7073