

Bells of St. Mary

Calling all to Community

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St. Mary of the Assumption BFF Mom's Group By Kathleen Garnica

Books, Faith, and Friendship (BFF) bring together the moms of St. Mary of the Assumption, and they want to extend an open invitation to all moms of the parish to join them. Over 20 members meet monthly in 3 different ways – moms come when life allows and join in on what sparks their interests. “Books are the focal point of our group,” says Jackie Aaro, who joined the group soon after moving to the area and registering with the parish. “This is a friendly, welcoming, supportive group of moms looking to help each other grow together in support of our Catholic faith as we connect through motherhood. We foster community within our group by offering monthly book discussions, as well as play-dates and mom’s night out events. BFFs is an easy way to connect with other moms, make new friends and have fun,” adds Jackie.

The idea of this type of group started in 2016 as St. Mary of the Assumption opened its doors and an influx of young families joined. Meagan Rushe and Lynn Sabol inquired about starting a moms group with the DRE at the time and as God would have it, the BFF Mom’s group was formed and started the first book discussion in the spring of 2017. The meetings are informal and held at members’ homes. The group is currently discussing *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life* by Joanna Weaver. The play dates can be at local parks and mom’s night out can be, well, just about anywhere they want to gather for a meal, craft, or drinks.



Left side, low to high: Dora Benavides, Jackie Aaro, Rebecca Donahue, Jenna Denlinger, Leslie Thomas; Right side, high to low: Anita Brill, Patty Beers, Janine Lawrence, Melissa Koch

To help support one another on a daily basis, get the word out about events, but also provide privacy to the group, they use the Band APP. Whether interacting in person or through the online group, faith is at the center of what they do as they encourage and uplift one another through life’s ups and downs.

Jenna Denlinger and Leslie Thomas represented the group at the October Ministry Fair. “We welcome women of all ages. We’d love to learn from other Catholic moms who have gone through the child-rearing years; that would be awesome to have them as part of the group,” said Leslie. Several times a year the group extends its gatherings to include the entire family. In August, they hosted a family potluck picnic on the grounds of St. Mary after the 10:30 a.m. Mass; it was a great way to bring young families together and spread the word that they exist. The mom’s group is welcoming, positive, and fun – they hope you can join them!



Back L-R: Jenna Denlinger, Jackie Aaro, Patty Beers, Lissette Mansbridge, Anita Brill, Sarah Merkel, Lori LeMaster, Natalie Mercker Front L-R: Meagan Rushe, Lydia Bardua



Front: Lissette Mansbridge, Janine Lawrence, Lynn Sabol, Meagan Rushe Back: Melissa Koch, Jackie Aaro, Sarah Merkel, Anita Brill

To learn more about joining the BFF Mom’s group, please email stmarybff@gmail.com.

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Jan Donihoo Likes Being a Team Member

By Dan Darragh

For most of her more than 40 years in a sales marketing career Jan Donihoo was part of a “team” but it wasn’t until she began her second career at St. Mary of the Assumption that she really got that true team spirit.

Donihoo took over the post of business manager after Joyce Burgett left in July 2017. The administrative position involves being a steward of the financial resources of the parish and providing the day-to-day fiscal operational services as well as computer input/output services.

A native of Magnolia, AR, a small town in southern Arkansas, Donihoo is a parishioner and lives in the Crain’s Run subdivision near Austin Landing.

After college, her mother lived with her in Little Rock until she died. With a bachelors’ degrees in accounting, Spanish and business from the University of Arkansas, she worked for Vision Service Plan (VSP), a company that provides managed care for optometrists and ophthalmologists. “I worked in the division that made the eyeglasses and worked with doctors and their staffs to grow their practices.”

“I used to say I worked part time: I worked 12 hours a day but I got to pick my 12 hours,” she laughs. “I had calls to make but got to pick when I’d make them. I worked in the vision care field in Arkansas, but it was such a rural territory that I was covering four states and traveling about 1,000 miles a week. My brother lives in Cleveland and I had the opportunity to transfer up here, which got me closer to him and his kids. They are the only family I have.”

After 40 years in the business she retired for medical reasons. “I offered to volunteer here and was doing some administrative work out front when Joyce left and they were looking for a business manager”, she says, “I applied, along with many others, and was accepted”.

Donihoo says her biggest surprise since coming to her job here is “how much we enjoy working with each other. The team Father Jim has put together is wonderful, especially after working in such a singular career before. I was part of a ‘team’ in the past, however, I had my home office but my team manager and the rest of my team lived elsewhere. We were really spread out and did not spend much time together.”

Donihoo says it had been a long time since she worked in an office environment and it was “surprising that we do social things ever after work.”

As to her position, she says, “You know, running the church is a business too. You come to church for pastoral reasons but you also have the money part of it involved. There’s a lot involved here.”



Jan Donihoo at her computer at St. Mary of the Assumption

Youth Ministry Coordinator Jumps Into New Job

By Dan Darragh

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”

That quote from 1 Timothy 4:12 is the message Mike Hoendorf likes to get across to the teens under his guidance at St. Mary of the Assumption, where he took over the position of coordinator of youth ministry in May. And he does that every time e-mails them or anyone else.

The 33-year-old Vandalia native was hired following the departure of Mark Henderson. A short time later he was leading the local group of 19 youths and six adults to Nashville, Tenn., on the annual mission trip.

Hoendorf started using the Bible passage following his signature on his correspondence after he got the job here. “I wanted to have a passage that spoke to youth ministry and felt this is the definition -- my mission and vision -- of what I hope to do in this ministry,” he explained.

With the mission trip coming up soon after he was hired, it could have been a “baptism by fire,” but Hoendorf says it was not too difficult. “I have been working with youths ever since I graduated from high school, plus I was blessed that Mark had everything in order for the mission trip and left excellent notes for me. All I had to do was open the book and go with the plan.”

He says it was an interesting process, “getting to know these youths while you’re in the midst of a mission trip. I really feed off the youths’ energy, and it was a great opportunity get to know the kids better than just the Sunday night meetings.”

Nineteen youths and six adults from St. Mary’s joined 270 youths and adults from all over the country in Nashville, Hoendorf said. The program is sponsored by Catholic Heart Work. The youths were divided into 30 different groups, with each group being a mixture of teens from various states. They helped at a school for underprivileged kids get ready for the next year, worked at a homeless shelter and a senior living community and built many wheelchair ramps at various homes.

The youth ministry coordinator job puts him in charge of youth programming for grades 7-12, PSR (Parish School of Religion confirmation training for grades 7 and 8, and grades 9-12 youth leadership programming. “There is no real set program for the high school kids. It’s whatever we come up with,” says Hoendorf. He said he hopes to guide the youths in experiencing new styles of prayer and community building. “I want to get the energy level up so kids can’t wait for Sunday nights when we meet.”

He says he also wants to work for a smooth integration of the seventh- and eighth-grade students into the high school program and then the high-schoolers into the young adult program after they graduate. He is responsible for the new Young Adult program, but says they are mostly continuing to do their own planning for the time being, with him acting as a liaison with Father Jim.

Hoendorf attended St. Christopher Elementary School in Vandalia and went on to Chaminade Julianne High School in Dayton, where he was a catcher and middle infielder on the baseball team. “I started coaching baseball right after high school and have been coaching select, high school and college ball on and off for 15 years. I coached at the University of Dayton, was head varsity coach at Greenon High School near Springfield, and coached summer elite baseball for the Custom X Heat and Dayton Classics,” he says. Hoendorf attended Sinclair Community College for two years before going on to Wright State University where he earned a bachelor’s degree in business management, with a minor in marketing. Near the end of his college career a mentor asked him if he could do anything he wanted after graduation and Hoendorf told him he wanted to be a baseball coach, and the mentor said, “Well, then do it.” “So, I became a volunteer at UD and after a year I got on the staff. But after a while I realized I had a greater calling than coaching college baseball and traveling so much, so I returned to CJ as a substitute teacher. I should have listened to my mom and got a teaching degree,” he laughs. “I’ve always enjoyed working with kids. A while later, the position of assistant director of campus ministry opened up at CJ and he got the job.

Hoendorf stayed at CJ for 5 ½ years and began working on a master’s degree in pastoral ministry at UD, which he received this past May. “When I decided to leave CJ and went to UD to complete my master’s, I started to think about what I was going to do next,” he says. “I had been involved in youth ministry and was looking for something in campus and youth ministry. When I saw this job came open I realized the multiple connections I had to the parish through people I knew

and applied. When I first met with Father Jim and Doyle and JoAnn Key it seemed like a natural fit, especially considering how young the parish is. Fifty-two percent of the parish is under age 40.”

Hoendorf’s wife, Maddie, is originally from Toledo where she went to Notre Dame Academy but graduated from the University of Dayton. They have been married about a year-and-a-half.



Mike Hoendorf, the new coordinator of youth ministry at St. Mary of the Assumption, at work during the mission trip to Nashville, Tenn.



Mike Hoendorf, the new coordinator of youth ministry at St. Mary of the Assumption, at work during the mission trip to Nashville, Tenn.

Youth Mission Trip to Nashville, Tennessee

By Mike Hoendorf

From June 24-29, 19 youth and 6 adults from St. Mary of the Assumption attended Catholic Heart Workcamp in Nashville, TN. The St. Mary group joined over 270 other students, adults, and staff in Nashville, where they all stayed at Pope John Paul II High School. The group was very blessed to come home to an air conditioned building with great amenities each day, after working in temperatures all week in the mid-90's, with occasional storms. One of those storms that blew through on Wednesday night knocked out the power in the school for a few hours. St. Mary's own Marty Wilkins continued his amazing work during the week and helped restore the power!

A typical day at Catholic Heart Workcamp consisted of a 6:15 wake up call, followed by breakfast and morning mass/program, and then working at individual service sites from 8:30am until 3:00pm. Teams would arrive back for clean-up and some relaxation time until dinner around 5:15pm. Each night the Catholic Heart programming would begin around 7:00 pm, and included Praise and Worship music from PJ Anderson and his band, various thought provoking skits and activities, a time of prayer and reflection, a talk from Jimmy Mitchell, and one focused prayer activity each night. Two of those activities included Adoration and 4 Corners – which included an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and individual reflection.

The service aspect of the week in Nashville had the 270 participants being split up between 30 different small groups. These groups did a wide range of service in the greater Nashville area that included working at a homeless shelter and serving at a local private school with very little resources. At the school, the groups helped prepare for the upcoming school year by painting, doing landscape work, cleaning classrooms, moving furniture, and other odd jobs. Other St. Mary of the Assumption participants helped at a nursing home, helped do landscaping for an older couple, multiple people helped build wheel chair ramps at four different homes, as well as other various service opportunities. Each one of these groups took time during their service to also reflect on what they were doing and how God was interacting with them and those they served.

The week in Nashville was a time of growth, reflection, and community building. No two people had the exact same experience, but everyone encountered Jesus in some way! One of the student participants that had a very meaningful experience was Paige Wilkins, who will be a freshman at Fenwick High School this fall. The following is a short reflection from her about the week: *“The mission trip offered an opportunity to evolve a relationship with the Lord. Arriving at Catholic Heart Camp with moderate motivation, I acquired slight knowledge of the outcome of camp, the grown bond with Jesus. The service brought joy, but adoration brought intimacy with God. Adoration uncloaked a powerful devotion. As the Eucharist was positioned on the Altar, an overwhelming wave of tenderness and closure flowed. The group of students held their arms in the air as a surrender, a surrender to Him. As I did so, the palms of Jesus Christ situated in my own. A sturdy relationship assembled, ushering tears. Emotions of gratitude and submission grew rapidly. The hour of adoration compiled into an extraordinary week, and I am so appreciative of it.”*



Meet The Parish Council

By Jay Lees

Jay Lees is married to Nancy and has one daughter. He retired in 2007 and joined the church in 2009. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus, Communication Committee, Men's Fellowship Group, and is Mass Coordinator for the 6 PM Mass. Currently, he is serving a second term on Parish Council.

Julie Hobbs is married to Deacon Richard and has three children. Deacon Rich was ordained in 2010. Julie has served on the Education Commission, Vacation Bible School, Parish Council, and currently serving a second term on Parish Council. They have been members of St Mary for twenty years.

Anne Langsdale is married to Bob and has been a parish member since 1991. She was a Council member from 1991 to 2008. She serves as Eucharistic Minister and is a member of the Ladies Society. Currently, she is serving a second term on Parish Council.

Becky Iverson is married to Edward and has four children. Her family joined the church in 2012 and she serves as a Lector and Eucharistic Minister. She also serves on the Springboro City Council.

Michael Engler was married to Diane at St. Mary church in 2007. He served on Parish Council from 2011 to the present. He is the owner of Engler's Landscape Management Co. and maintains the grounds of St Mary church.

Dave Meno is married to Judy and has been a member of St. Mary since 2008. He is a C.P.A. and is a member of the Parish Finance since 2009. He is active in the K of C's, Men's Fellowship Group and a current member of the Parish Council.

Rob Bardua is married to Lydia and has four children. His family joined the church in 2010 and is a member of the K of C's. He also works as the Public Affairs Media Relations Manager at the Air Force Museum. He currently is serving the first term on Parish Council.

Father Jim Manning has served as pastor at St. Mary since 2007. He was president of Alter High School from 2005 to 2017. Following his ordination in 1975, he taught at LaSalle High School in Cincinnati, until 1988. He returned to Dayton in 1988, serving as associate pastor of St. Henry until 1991 and then as pastor of St. Albert the Great Parish from 1991 to 2006.

Doug Schaaf is married to Jodi and has seven children. He has been a member of St. Mary Church for twenty-two years. He is a member of the Men's Fellowship Group, Small Community Church Group, Eucharistic Minister, and a former PSR catechist for the second grade. He currently is serving the first term on Parish Council.

Ted Fleskes is married to Jan and has three daughters. He and Jan celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this year. They have been members at St. Mary for seventeen years. He has been in the Knights of Columbus for forty years, served over seven years on Parish Council, six years on Worship Commission, and all capital campaigns. Currently, he serves as Mass Coordinator, usher, Eucharistic Minister, and Parish Council.



Parish Council Members first row left to right include Jay Lees, Julie Hobbs, Anne Langsdale, and Becky Iverson. Back row left to right includes Michael Engler, Dave Meno, Rob Bardua, and Fr. Jim. Doug Schaaf and Ted Fleskes are not pictured.

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Any Ideas for Articles?

Do you have an idea for a story about an individual, a family or an organization at St. Mary of the Assumption that would be of interest to others in our parish family?

The Bells, a quarterly publication produced by several parishioners, is always looking for story ideas. Not only that, if you like to talk to people and always wondered what it would be like to be reporter, the Bells staff would like you to join them.

To make story suggestions, try your hand at reporting, or both, contact Jay Lees, (937) 985-6155, or jlees45066@yahoo.com, Kathleen Garnica, (937)974-1565, or kathleengarnica@hotmail.com; or Dan Darragh (937) 746-1914, or dandarragh2@gmail.com.