

Divine Connection

January 2007 Newsletter for Alumni, Friends, Parishioners, Parents,
Grandparents, & Partners in Education for Divine Mercy Catholic School



Re-accreditation News!!!

Every 7 years, each Catholic School is required to undergo a process of Self Study in order to put together a School Improvement Plan in preparation for re-accreditation. On September 27 thru 29, 2006, a team from the Florida Catholic Conference visited Divine Mercy School in order to validate the School Improvement Plan and to recommend re-accreditation of Divine Mercy School to the Florida Catholic Conference. I am sincerely grateful to all of our stakeholders who participated in the process and would like to share with you the School Improvement Plan and the Visiting Team's Report. Kindly visit our website at www.dmccs.org to view them. While there, if you have not had occasion to take a virtual tour of our beautiful school, I invite you to do that as well. May God continue to shower blessings upon our school community past, present, and future!

Mr. Ron Gagnon,
Principal

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Join in celebrating
Catholic Schools Week...

Visit the Open House for Divine Mercy
Catholic School

Sunday, January 28, 2006

9:00am—Noon

Tour this Blue Ribbon School and meet the Principal, faculty, and school parents that share in the faith-filled journey of their child's education.

**You're invited ...
Early Childhood Program
Information Night**

**February 1, 2007
7:00pm, The Social Hall (in the Dome)**

**Teachers will be present from our
PreK-3 through Grade 2 classes.**

**Visit us on the web at www.dmccs.org or
call the school office at
452-0263 for more details or to
arrange for a tour.**

Message from the Principal's Desk ... Ronald G. Gagnon

Dear Friends of Divine Mercy School,

This is such a special season when we are called to put our differences aside and to celebrate family, friendship and community in the name of Jesus who has called us to do so. We celebrate Emmanuel who is "God with us," who walked among us and taught us how to live. We remember that He left us with the words: "By this shall all men and women know that you are my disciples – that you love one another."

Let this be our commitment this Holy Season – to love one another as He has loved us! May this be the hallmark of our Divine Mercy School Community and the legacy that we leave our children! This is the binding ingredient of which true "Peace on Earth" is made!

In behalf of the faculty and staff of Divine Mercy School, I wish you all a very holy New Year and God's choicest blessings.

Sincerely,

Ronald G. Gagnon,
Principal



From Chargers ... to Minutemen ... and Beyond!

(by Holly Hicks)

Graduates of the Divine Mercy Classes of 2002 and 2003 welcome graduates of the class of 2004 into the Cocoa Beach Jr./Sr. High School National Honor Society late last year. The students are in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Cocoa Beach. Pictured from left to right are: **Chris Sebesta (2002)**, **Jeff Ivey (2003)**, **Josh Neiderriter (2002)**, **Peter Harris (2003)**, **Laura Roosa (2002)**, **Ryan Ivey (2004)**, **Michelle Perkins (2004)**, **Dusty Rose (2004)**, **Brenton Hicks (2004)**, and **Ryan Julian (2004)**. Laura Roosa is now attending Cornell University, Chris Sebesta is attending Clemson University and Josh Niederriter is attending the University of Florida.





You no longer have to shop till you drop ... it's much easier when you purchase SCRIP from Divine Mercy School! SCRIP are gift cards to local restaurants, shopping, and attractions both near and far! Check out many retailers from the website at www.glscrip.com. Places like American Airlines, Carrabbas, Outback, Macy's, JC Penney's, Dillard's, Bath and Body Works, Disney Parks and Cruises, and Publix (for a limited time) ... just to name a few! You receive a gift card at face value and DMCS receives a portion of the profit from the sponsor. Thanks to your support, DMCS has already profited over \$2,500 this school year for the benefit of our children.

WHERE, OH, WHERE DID THEY GO???? THE SCOOP ON GRADUATES OF THE CLASS OF 2006 ...

(by Libby Schmidt)

Together from kindergarten or first grade, many of the class of 2006 had experienced a safe and loving atmosphere. The choices for high school expanded to Merritt Island High School, Edgewood High School, Cocoa Beach High School, and Melbourne Central Catholic.

Where, oh, where did they go and what are their impressions of their school?

Lively, friendly, new experiences, great diversity of students, variety of teachers with varying levels of demand, challenging, and an early struggle to find one's way around were a few of the descriptions by the students. Those attending Merritt Island High School are: Brandon Batts, Katie Beardall, Maureen Deegan, Joe Di Domenico, Lisa Gawronski, Alex Guertin, Marie Hartley, Ashlyn Harnett, Eric Huppert, Wesley Madyda, Jonathon Wagner, and John Willis.

Exciting, small school feeling, fun, kinda hard, not intimidating, and more freedom were the descriptions of Jordan Hicks, Christin Provancha, and Zachary Robertson in the International Baccalaureate Program at Cocoa Beach High School. Andrew Cisowski, Michael Harris, and Andrew Kiernan agreed, and added more exciting and more opportunities.

Commuting to Melbourne Central Catholic are Kaitlin Donovan and Samantha Kolb. Their comments were expanded opportunities, more lenient, great variety of students, including foreign students.

The lone Edgewood High School student is Gina Chitko. She described the school as challenging with excellent teachers. She felt especially well prepared in Science and Social Studies.

Brandon Gagnon is alone attending the newly-built Viera High School. What an awesome facility. I'm sure finding one's way around was not easy. What great fun to be a member of the first ninth grade class!

Cocoa High School drew Megan Witck. She said, what an opportunity to make new friends. There are so many more opportunities and she likes it very much.

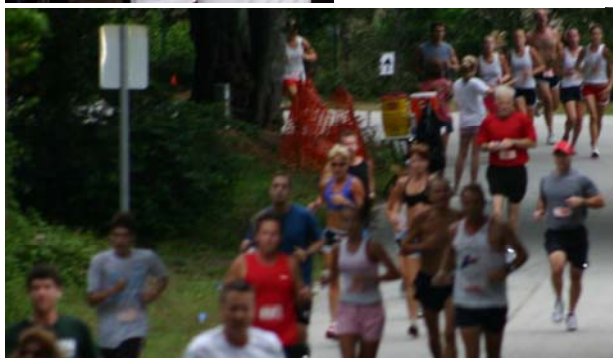
A large number of the students are in honors classes and many made the honor roll for the first nine weeks. Many have become active in volley ball, basketball, football, tennis, soccer, chorus, drama and chef's club.

Running on Island Time

(by Lori Hicks)



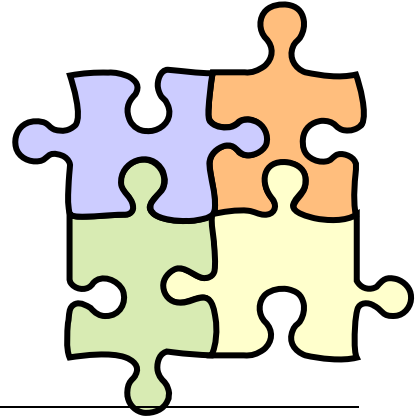
Divine Mercy School held its first ever 5K fitness walk/run! Over 250 enthusiasts shared in this community event, cleverly known as "Running on Island Time!" Walkers and runners of all ages enjoyed the sounds of reggae music brought to us by our own school parent, Alpheus Adams (pictured left). In keeping with the island spirit, winners of the many age brackets took home a palm tree as their trophy. Much appreciation goes to the many volunteers that made this event become such an overwhelming success. Tremendous thanks goes to the 5K Committee (pictured below) that kept "pounding the pavement" over the summer months to make this happen – (back row, left to right) Mary Beth Beutler, Matthew DeNote, Paige Sierra, Rick Harris; (front row) Kara Niedermeier, & Race Director Debbie Wells! Join us next year as we hit the street again, 'running on island time!'



Divine Mercy Catholic School Alumni Information

Help complete the alumni puzzle for you or someone you know!

Please mail to: Divine Mercy Catholic School
Attn: Alumni
1940 N. Courtenay Pkwy.
Merritt Island, FL 32953
Or Fax to: (321)453-7573



Name (include maiden if different): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Your birthday: _____ Last Year Attended DMCS: _____

Please share your memories of Divine Mercy School, and how it has impacted your life!

Please share information about your life since leaving Divine Mercy School. Include your higher education, employment, achievements, and tell us about your family. We would love for you to include pictures! If you prefer to tell your story and share pictures via email, please send to hicks1@dmccs.org :

Your input will provide useful information for historical data, and will allow us to keep you informed of special events for alumni. Thank you for your gift of time!

More Alumni Highlights...

Cocoa Beach High School Shares Academic Accolades about Divine Mercy Graduates!

(by Holly Hicks)

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program offers students the opportunity to take challenging college-level courses while still in high school and to receive college credit, advanced placement, or both for successful performance on the AP Exams. About 18 percent of the more than 1.3 million high school students world wide who took the exams performed at a sufficiently high level to merit the recognition of AP Scholar. Students took the exams in May of 2006. **Joshua Niederriter, Divine Mercy class of 2002**, earned the National AP Scholar Award by earning an average grade of 4 or higher on a 5-point scale on all AP exams take and an individual grade of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams at the end of his senior year. AP Scholar with Honor was awarded to **Richard Weakley, Divine Mercy class of 2003**, for earning an average grade of at least 3.25 on all AP exams taken and grades of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams taken at the end of his junior year. The AP Scholar Award was given to **Ryan Julian, Divine Mercy class of 2004**, for completing three or more AP exams with a grade of 3 or higher taken at the end of his sophomore year. Way to make us proud!



ing dental school. **Alberto Bursian** (pictured far right) is a DMCS graduate of the **Class of 2004**. Alberto is currently a junior at Merritt Island High School, where he was given the honor of being selected for the J. Kyle Braid Award. This is an award recognizing students that represent outstanding accomplishments in academics, athletics, and overall character. A leadership camp is held each summer in Colorado, and only four students are selected to attend from the high school. **Monica Bursian** (front, center) represents one of Divine Mercy's finest future stars, and is proud to be a 4th grader at DMCS, and also enjoys volleyball and basketball. Keep shining "Bursian Bunch!"

Island Girl Invited to the Big Apple!

(by Mary Beth Beutler)

Lauren Dickson, 2003 graduate of DMCS, performed at the 80th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City on November 23, 2006. Lauren was selected by the Universal Cheerleading Association, which took notice of her skill and hard work during a summer cheerleading camp. Girls from the United States participated in the parade performance for an audience of 60 million-plus viewers.

During her week stay in New York, Lauren not only rehearsed for at least two hours every day but enjoyed some sightseeing including the Empire State Building, St. Patrick's Cathedral, "Tarzan" on Broadway, Ground Zero, Fifth Avenue, Central Park, dinner at Tavern On the Green and ice skating.

Lauren is a senior at Edgewood Junior/Senior High and along with her many academic accolades she's received along the way, she was also selected as Edgewood's Homecoming Queen. Congratulations, Lauren!



Bragging on the Bursian Bunch!

(by Lori Hicks)

There is a common thread in the beautiful children of Henry and Leslie Bursian ... many accomplishments, and yet very humble attitudes. Former graduate of DMCS, **Enrique Bursian** (pictured far left) will soon complete his undergraduate degree from University of Florida, and is currently remaining hopeful as he follows his dream of enter-

PACE SPONSORS ENJOY STUDENTS

(by Libby Schmidt)

Adults sitting with students at Friday mass, reading a story to them at Halloween, a wife and husband sharing a Thanksgiving dinner, watching as students practiced for a program, or even being asked to help retrieve balls that went over the fence-----these are activities in which the PACE SPONSORS have been involved.

PACE (PARISHIONERS ASSISTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION) is a newly instituted program for Divine Mercy School. PACE has given parishioners an opportunity to assist in the classrooms through donations of \$100 and to become participants in any activities of the class. The donation allows the teachers to purchase supplementary items for their classroom. So far, special books, a software program and a new rug for the reading circle, have been purchased.

The Council of Catholic Women donated money to each classroom, as well as the extra curricular areas of art, library, music, Spanish, Student Services, and Technology. Individual Council members were assigned to various classes. The women have been delighted with the opportunity to be involved with a class of students. The students have welcomed the attention of the adults and have written notes of thanks to them.

Parishioners are invited to pick up a PACE brochure in the Narthex, the church or school offices. Questions about PACE can be answered in the School Office. Consider becoming a PACE Sponsor!

Pancakes & Santa's Workshop!

Special thanks to Suzi Kube, Debbie Friedman, and their team of many volunteers that made this event so special for the children of our school and parish!

Christmas Concert & Car Giveaway!

Special thanks to Elizabeth Moore for her efforts in bringing beautiful music and pageantry to us through the sounds of the children in the Christmas Program on December 15th.

Thank you also to the many, many supporters of our 2006 Car Giveaway! And to Becky Barnas and the Car Giveaway Committee—you outdid yourselves again! To everyone—your contributions will directly benefit the children of our school!

Coming Soon ... 2007 Divine Mercy Golf Tournament!!!

February 24, 2007, 12:30 pm, Baytree National Golf Links

For more details on sponsorship or player entry, please contact Chuck Fiorentino at (321)266-5796 or visit the tournament website at www.tournevents.com/dmccs .



Golfer School Dad's in last year's DMCS Golf Tournament; pictured from left to right, Eric Skahn, Art Arnold, David Colb, & Pedro Medelius.



Giving Children a Hand

It takes a village to raise a child. - African Proverb

Many have asked how they can help the children of Divine Mercy School. Opportunities abound for people to become involved in supporting our school. This can be through one's gift of time during the school hours, in supporting the school's annual fundraisers, or in making a financial contribution towards Divine Mercy School. We invite you to take part in Giving Children a Hand!

Volunteering in the School:

If you would like to become directly involved with the children of our school, please contact the school office at 452-0263, and request a volunteer form. This form allows you to select from many volunteer opportunities; including reading grannies, clinic and lunch program, and classroom help in our many areas of academic and personal enrichment. (Please be aware that all volunteers must have cleared fingerprints from the Diocese of Orlando. If you need additional information on this process, please contact the school office.)

Supporting Fundraisers:

Divine Mercy's fundraisers are in direct support of the educational needs benefiting the children of our school. The anticipated profit received from our major fundraisers are used to determine the annual budget, and help to keep tuition rates down. To date, DMCS has relies on the support of an annual 5K Run/Fitness Walk, car give away, spring carnival, golf tournament, dinner/dance/auction, and tennis tournament to realize its dreams. Please check out the calendar of events, and share in the fun-raising, while supporting our school!

Financial Contributions:

Herbert Hoover once said "Children are our most valuable natural resource." If you would like to make an investment in the children of our school, or give an opportunity to a child that could not otherwise afford Divine Mercy School, please consider the following gift programs. This can be something you do today or consider in your estate plans.

- **PACE (Parishioners Assist with Catholic Education):** This program gives individuals or corporations an opportunity to sponsor a student through a contribution to the Fr. Molloy Tuition Assistance Fund, sponsor a classroom by purchasing a wish list item for a particular grade, and/or sponsoring the school by contributing to the Development Fund or the School Endowment Fund
- **Corporate Matching:** Many corporations, such as Boeing, offer corporate matching to employees for their financial support of educational institutions. If you are aware of other such matching programs, please inform the school office.
- **Grants:** You may know of educational grant opportunities for which DMCS would be eligible to apply. You may also wish to serve on a grant writing team.
- **Fundraiser Sponsorship:** An opportunity for individual or corporate sponsorship including monetary gift or in-kind donation, in support of school fundraisers.
- **Support Businesses that Give Back:** Mention DMCS when you shop at Office Depot, use a Target credit card, & turn in your Campbell's soup labels & Box Tops.



STOP ... and kick-off Catholic Schools Week!

Santa Maria Bar-B-Q
Chicken, Ribs,
Beans, Coleslaw & Dessert

Saturday, January 27, 2006

5:30 p.m.
The Dome
Tickets \$8 / person

Mark Your Calendars!

Date	Event	Place & Time	Contact for more Info. * School Office 452-0263
Tues., Jan. 23, 2007	Early Childhood Registration	School Office	*
Sat., Jan. 27, 2007	Santa Maria Bar-B-Q Dinner	The Dome @ 5:30 pm	*
Sun., Jan 28, 2007	DMCS Open House	School 9:00am-Noon	*
Thurs., Feb. 1, 2007	Early Childhood Program, Information Night	Social Hall 7:00 pm	*
Sat., Feb. 24, 2007	Golf Tournament	Baytree	Chuck Fiorentino 266-5796 or via website www.tournevents.com/dmccs
Thurs., 3/22/07 thru Sun., 3/25/07	Spring Carnival	Divine Mercy Soccer Field (check times)	Maria Wilson 452-8345 or mwilson33@cfl.rr.com
March (TBD)	Registration for 06/07 School Year	School Office	*
April or May, 2007 (TBD)	Dinner Dance & Auction	Dome @ 6:30	Lori Hicks 453-2861 loriphicks@bellsouth.net
Sat., May 5, 2007	First Communion	Church @ 10:00am	Cori Lockhart 452-5955
Fri., May 11, 2007	Bacc. Mass & Breakfast	Church @ 8:30am	*
Mon., May 16, 2007	Graduation	Church @ 7:00pm	*

Please provide names of people you believe might like to receive *Divine Connections*. We will check our alumni/friends list and add or update the names and contact information. Please mail below to school office or email hicksl@dmccs.org

Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____	Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____	Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____
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Kids Make a Difference! *(by Martha Medelius)*

Four Divine Mercy students and one former student recently joined other area Catholic students in participating in "Make A Difference Day." The event took place on October 28th at Resurrection Ranch in Melbourne, a shelter which provides assistance to people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. Participants cleared vegetation and spruced up the grounds, transforming the appearance for the appreciative residents. The students, Nadine and Charie Tidwell, Sam Gillette, Dana DiDomenico, and recent graduate Joe DiDomenico, were joined by Divine Mercy teachers Sharon Gillette and Angela LaBarbera and parents Vicky DiDomenico and Lyne Constantino. Students, parents and teachers from Melbourne Central Catholic, St. Josephs, and Our Lady of Lourdes also participated. The founder of Resurrection Ranch, Arlene Coulter commented, "There's never been anything like this in the almost 19 years we've been here. If you want to get something done, get Catholics." (Florida Catholic)

Gillette, who organized the project for the Divine Mercy students, said that the most exciting part of the experience was the visual, seeing their efforts turn into something beautiful. Some of the volunteers at one point were clearing an area of vegetation which was so dense that it totally covered a small pond underneath. Gillette was working in another area, and she said when she came back and saw the pond, which was now ringed with decorative rocks and flowers which before had been hidden, the change was dramatic. "Seeing what a few people working so hard can accomplish was so amazing. Just to see the transformation in that one little area was mindblowing", Gillette commented.

Resurrection Ranch was started by Coulter, widow of the former Cocoa Beach Mayor Lee Caron, in 1984 after she met a homeless woman who was sleeping under a boat. She took her into her home, and continued to do the same with other homeless people until neighbors started to object. She eventually converted a motel into what is now Resurrection Ranch.

This is the first time that Divine Mercy has participated in "Make a Difference Day", but according to Gillette, it won't be the last. On March 3rd, students and parents will be invited to participate in the Walk for Alzheimers, a major fundraiser for those suffering from Alzheimers. For more information on this event, please contact Sharon Gillette at gilletts@dmccs.org

Stewardship at Divine Mercy School ... more than a season ... a way of life!

The first half of the 06/07 school year has been in keeping with the stewardship efforts of what Divine Mercy students are accustomed to on an everyday basis. Thus far, Divine Mercy School students have contributed toward the following stewardship efforts:

- \$500 towards "Change for Nigeria".
- \$250 collected for Erin Cooper, a young girl needing a kidney transplant.
- Food is continually collected and shared with St. Vincent DePaul Society.
- Contributions were made to Mothers of Marines.
- Operation HOPE toy collection was made in December, where children brought unwrapped gifts to the altar as their offering during the student Mass. These gifts were donated to families in need in our own Divine Mercy community as well as to farm workers throughout the Diocese.

Many other students have extended these stewardship efforts beyond the school setting. Some of the students were found carrying a portable lemonade stand around their neighborhood, in an effort to raise money for Erin Cooper, the young girl needing a kidney transplant.

Beyond that, many, many students have birthday parties and forego receiving birthday presents for themselves, and instead give to a favorite cause or charity of their choice. Truly, the value of stewardship has been instilled in these children, and it has become a way of life!

HARTLEY HAPPINESS (by Lori Hicks)

Excitement filled the air as Mr. Gagnon was handed the winning ticket for this year's car giveaway, sponsored by Bob Steele Chevrolet! Mr. Gagnon said he knew the person was in the audience, which had everyone on the edge of their seats. Then he announced the winning name of Margie Hartley ... and the crowd went wild!

John and Margie Hartley have been long time parishioners of Divine Mercy Church, and have three beautiful daughters that have all attended Divine Mercy School. Marie, their oldest, graduated last year (Class of 2006) as the school's valedictorian and is now doing very well academically and athletically at Merritt Island High School. Ashley and Jamie are still attending DMCS and enrolled in Grades 6 and 1, respectively.

December 15th was Margie Hartley's lucky night. She came to the concert and decided to buy herself a car giveaway ticket, as the next day was her birthday. Never believing she would win anything, she ironically must have had a sneaky suspicion that night. Moments before Mr. Gagnon called the winning name, she jokingly handed her camera to a friend, and said "Here, take my picture when I go up, because I'm going to win!"



From the perspective of the entire audience that shared in the excitement, it couldn't have happened to a nicer family! Guess that's what you call a win-win outcome!

Teacher Touches Lives! (by Martha Medelius)

When Ms. Susan Phillips was asked how she came into teaching, she responded, "I teach because God wants me to teach." Ms. Phillips, 6th grade homeroom teacher and English teacher for grades 6-8, has been at Divine Mercy Catholic School for 17 years. She said she didn't always know she would be a teacher. Many years ago she was at a turning point in her life, waiting for a break, when she was asked to teach part-time. It ignited something in her she had never seen before, and prompted her to begin a career in teaching. Since then she has taught many different ages, from kindergarteners to adults.

Ms. Phillips says that her favorite aspect of teaching is "seeing that spark of interest in children's eyes and knowing that I've kindled a flame in them that may burn in them on into the future." Her biggest challenge is trying to reach every child and make sure no one is left behind or lost in the shuffle. She strives to find different approaches for those who do not yet understand. She hopes that every student will leave Divine Mercy with a "genuine love of learning—a desire for knowledge for it's own sake and not just for a grade." Many parents and former students comment that they will always be grateful to Phillips for giving them such a strong command of the English language.

When not teaching, it is no surprise that one of her favorite hobbies is reading. She reads all types of books, and when asked her favorite, she said it is usually the one she is currently reading. She reads whenever and wherever she can, including while waiting in line. One day while waiting in line at a bank, she was reading a particularly funny book, and was enjoying it so much that she started laughing aloud. She said that the woman who was standing in line behind her had to know the title of the book, as it must have been very amusing. Other hobbies which Ms. Phillips enjoys include stitchery and calligraphy. She is also the editor of Divine Inspirations, Divine Mercy's Literary Magazine, and is the sponsor of the DMCS Junior Honor Society Chapter.

Thank you for supporting the students of Divine Mercy Catholic



*Developing
Minds &
Catholic
Spirituality*

Divine Mercy Catholic School
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