

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

# Divine Connection



Volume 2, Issue 1

May 2008

## Did you know?

- DMCS is a Nationally Recognized "BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL"
- Divine Mercy Catholic School has been open since 1964
- Through stewardship collection and fundraising efforts, the students of DMCS have contributed \$2,500 to Heifer International.

## Inside this issue:

Check out the House System	2
Alumni Accomplishments	3
DeNote in the 21 Century	5
Stewardship	6
Schedule of Events	6
Letter from Ron	7
PACE	7

## Teacher Spotlight—Julie Harris

With 22 years teaching experience at Divine Mercy, you might expect Julie Harris to be a dainty dowager. However, she is a vibrant young woman filled with exuberance, tempered by grace and gentleness; a delightful person!

Julie provides numerous services for the students, one of which is Pepe', her little guidance dog. Pepe' is new this year and one of her tasks is reading with the kids because, "Research shows that reading skills will improve if kids read to a non-judgmental source."

Julie also utilizes Interactive Metronome. This technology helps kids by cultivating their focus, attention, rhythm, timing, coordination, impulse control and much more. Julie gave me a short demonstration. I found the process to be intensive as well as very enjoyable.

Julie's love of God continues to mold her as the Religion Teacher of



**Julie Harris, Divine Mercy Catholic School  
Director of Student Services with Pepe'**

(continued on page 5)

## Alumni Spotlight

Imagine a home with six girls. That was a reality for Margaret (Peg) Chocolaad and her six daughters when she moved to Merritt Island from south Florida in 1973 and became part of the Divine Mercy community. Peg enrolled in Brevard Community College's WENDI Program, and was soon employed as a nurse, eventually working the night shift at Wuesthoff Hospital for 22 years.

Her oldest daughter Anne enrolled at Melbourne Central Catholic, while her three middle daughters, Yvette, Margaret, and Jackie enrolled

(continued on page 4)



Face-painting at the Santa Breakfast

**... the House System has really “helped the kids bond across grade levels without losing any of their own identity”**



Enjoying Grandparents Day

## Checkout the House System

What do *Harry Potter*, St. Raphael School in Kentucky, and Divine Mercy Catholic School in Merritt Island have in common? They have all implemented “The House System” approach to help boost moral and achieve goals. Just as in the *Harry Potter* series, there are many positive outcomes to this type of approach.

According to Ron Gagnon, Principal at Divine Mercy Catholic School, this type of approach is just beginning to show the benefits to this private school in Merritt Island. “We had been talking for years about doing something different for our middle school students. We have seen great strides in student enthusiasm and attitudes along with school spirit and excitement. These changes also benefit positive discipline.” This exciting new idea would made its debut when school started in August.

Most of the students have been receptive to the idea. “I think the 6<sup>th</sup> graders have an easier transition and higher school spirit then in the past with this system” said 8<sup>th</sup> grader Caroline Skahn, the student leader for St. Elizabeth Ann Seton House. St. Joan of Arc House 8<sup>th</sup> grade leader, Emily Beardall, also thinks that people are “being nicer to each other” and it is bringing the grades closer together. Mrs. Sharon Gillette, one of the middle school teachers at Divine Mercy, shares a similar thought when she states that the House System has really “helped the kids bond across grade levels without losing any of their own identity. They are still together as a class 90% of the day.” Eighth grader Victoria Chitko from St. Francis House says that there is an element of “fun” during the school day with the House System.

Once a month, a “friendly” competition is held between each House, consisting of anything from brainwork to physical activities. This helps to build team support and involvement. The students have even come up with their own theme songs that they chant on the way into the monthly pep rally. With every hand clapping and all the students singing, it is truly a sight to see.

The House System idea does not detract in any way from the uniqueness of each grade level but enhances it. The students learn to understand the benefit of many often outweighs the benefit of a few. So the next time your middle school child says, “Hey dude, I’m just too cool for school” consider a school like Divine Mercy that provides the “House System” as a new approach to learning. The sense of pride and confidence is overwhelming when students feel that they can make a difference everyday.



Fourth Graders enjoying some social time.

*They have excelled at their respective high schools, and have carried the traditions of Divine Mercy along with them.*



Liturgical Dance team during Christmas Mass

## Alumni Accomplishments

We are all proud of our Divine Mercy graduates! They have excelled at their respective high schools, and have carried the traditions of Divine Mercy along with them. The following are some recent accomplishments of Divine Mercy graduates. This list is not all-inclusive, please inform the school if we missed anything and we will include it in the next newsletter.

**Alberto Bursian** (MIHS) is the valedictorian for the 2008 graduating class. His cumulative G.P.A. is 4.5.

**Jimmy Bayless, Anna Tournade, Garrick Harding, and Danny Johnson** (MIHS) are all 2008 Honor Graduates, an award given to graduates who have a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.5 or higher. Anna, Garrick and Danny all graduated with a 4.0 G.P.A. Anna Tournade also received the Good Citizen Award for the Daughters of the American Revolution.

**Zachary Robertson**, (CBHS) earned five A's and 2 B's in the International Baccalaureate Program. He is also a pitcher on the varsity baseball team.

**Anna Tournade** (MCC) was accepted at the University of Florida.

**Kevin Sells and Mathew Page** (MIHS) are the only two players on the freshmen football team to earn straight A's for the last semester.

**Wesley Madyda** (MIHS) earned a perfect score on the reading portion of the FCAT.

**Michael Pentrack** made the varsity golf team at MIHS and has earned straight A's.

**Kyle Dougherty** (MIHS) earned a full athletic scholarship to Southern Illinois University and is their starting kicker. He made his debut on ESPN last fall.

**Chris Ngo** (MIHS) was named Florida Today's Athlete of the Week for his accomplishments on the tennis court.

**Alexander Guertin** (MIHS) earned six A's and one B. She is on the junior varsity soccer and softball teams.

**Carly Hunt** (MCC) is going East Tennessee State University

**Drew Urbanek** (MCC) will attend Florida Institute of Technology

**Rebecca Crawford** (MCC) will attend Boston College

**Jared Kolb** (MCC) was accepted at the University of Central Florida



**Peg Chocolaad and her six daughters at Amy's Wedding in May 2007**

***“I don't know how I did it. I did have help from a neighbor and parish friends . . . and relied on my strong faith in God.”***



**DMCS students and Parents participating in Beach Clean-up Day**

## **Alumni Spotlight**

**(continue from page 1)**

at Divine Mercy. Immediately the girls were at home in their classes, and they were outstanding students, achieving top level performance in all academic areas.

In 1974, a seventh sister Amy was born, and soon the trio of young Chocolaad sisters enrolled at Divine Mercy, again excelling in all subject areas. In addition to scholastic achievement, the girls participated in athletics at Divine Mercy and in junior and senior high schools. Anne was in the original Stingers Dance Team, and was a majorette at Melbourne Central Catholic. The remaining sisters concentrated on basketball, volleyball, and soccer.

Margaret and Jackie went on to BCC, where Margaret earned a Mechanical Engineering Degree and Jackie specialized in Computer Science. Anne earned a scholarship to Florida State University where she continued to be an outstanding student and majorette. Yvette attended Duke University and finished at Harvard, earning an International Law Degree. Corrine completed her degree at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Veronica earned her degree in Criminal Justice at the University of Florida, while Amy graduated from the University of Central Florida. Three of the sisters, Yvette, Margaret, and Corinne earned master's degrees.

It is with hard work, motivation, and determination that each of the seven sisters enjoy their own diverse success stories. Anne is Vice President of Boeing Division in Chicago. Yvette worked in Washington D.C. in the Department of Ways and Means and is now at home as a full-time mom. Margaret lives in Brevard County and is a consultant for the U.S. Navy, while Jackie lives in Wyoming and works for the U.S. Air Force. Corrine lives in Chicago and works in marketing for a construction company. Veronica worked for the Department of Justice in Orlando, and is now at home as a full-time mom. Amy is a Talent Coordinator for Harris Corporation in Atlanta. Together the Chocolaad sisters have a total of twelve children, ranging in age from nine months to college graduates.

When Peg was asked how she managed, she only shook her head and said, “I don't know how I did it. I did have help from a neighbor and parish friends. I worked hard, drove many miles, and relied on my strong faith in God.” In 1979 Peg met fellow parishioner Sal Ramono while enjoying coffee and doughnuts after Mass. A friendship developed, and they were married in 1986. Interestingly, Sal has three grown daughters, Katheryn, Jenny and Lisa. What a blessing for them, and fortunate for us that they have been part of the Divine Mercy Community.



**1st Graders working hard on their school work**

***We are lucky to have such a committed Director of Technology, and a principal and pastor who recognize the importance of technology for the future of our children.***



**A proud Daddy showing his Love on the First Day of School**

## **Teacher Spotlight—Julie Harris (cont. from page 1)**

Julie's love of God continues to mold her as the Religion Teacher of choice for young and old. Her background in physical education, teaching, and school administration give her the wisdom needed for her many tasks as the School Guidance Counselor.

Julie told me her favorite thing is “the students.” “I love what I do! We’re a top notch school and I’m proud to be a part of it.” We, the parishioners, thank you, Julie, for your service.

Story by Amy Chilton

## **DeNote Brings DM into the 21st Century**

When Mr. DeNote started his career at Divine Mercy 14 years ago, the school had one lab of donated Apple IIe computers and eight PCs. Our campus now has over 100 computers, all buildings are networked together, and everyone has access to cutting-edge technology.

One of the most important uses of this new technology is to enhance student learning. Classrooms have new projectors, speaker systems, and interactive boards. Teachers show educational videos through an on-demand service. Students can make movies, weekly school broadcasts, and educational podcasts. Students have access to educational software in every classroom (e.g., Inspiration, Accelerated Math, and Scholastic Reading Counts!).

Mr. DeNote has updated the administration and grading software and implemented Edline, all in an effort to improve teacher-parent communication. Edline is an online tool parents can use from home to stay connected to the school (check lunch menus, grades, calendar of events, . . . , etc.) at any time of the day. Advances in technology have also made Divine Mercy safer. Firewalls and software protect the computers. Security cameras are located at all entrances of the school and are monitored in the office. Many of these advances in technology are provided by generous grants and donations.

At the end of the day, Mr. DeNote goes home to his wife of 12 years, two cats, fish, and a turtle and ponders the next great advance he can bring to Divine Mercy: blogging, flicker, online tools, wireless access. We are lucky to have such a committed Director of Technology, and a principal and pastor who recognize the importance of technology for the future of our children.



**Brownie Troop  
188 learning  
about Stroke  
Awareness**

***Children  
who play  
together  
can better  
learn  
about each  
other and  
how to live  
together.***



**Mrs. Grenon with  
PreK-3 Indians  
during Thanks-  
giving**

## Schedule of Events

First Day of 2008-2009 School Year	August 18th, 2008
Divine Mercy Catholic School 5K Run/Walk	August 23rd, 2008
Grandparents Day Mass & Breakfast	September 12th, 2008
Casino Night/Dinner Dance/Silent Auction	October 18th, 2008
BBQ and Harvest Festival	November 8th, 2008
Santa's Workshop and Pancake Breakfast	December 7th, 2008
Christmas Program	December 12th, 2008

## Stewardship

Most kids love playing sports. What if kids could play sports while helping to bring about world peace? Now that would be a win-win situation.

On Friday February 1, many Catholic schools around Brevard participated in Peace Players International. Part of the Coastal Catholic League, these schools are trying to help world peace while playing various sports. The event started nationwide in 2001 and has reached more than 45,000 children in global conflict zones.

Local Catholic school students, families and teachers volunteered their time and funding to sponsor this one day event. This international organization helps raise money for places like South Africa, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East. It has been called an "innovative global organization that uses sports to unite and educate young people in divided communities."

Hosting schools will provide their facilities to students from Kindergarten through

8<sup>th</sup> grade to play basketball, volleyball, four square, soccer, dancing, and other activities. Whatever sports students choose, it is all for peace all over the world. Each participant made a \$10 donation which will be used towards basketball courts, playgrounds and other sport facilities overseas. This event culminated at the end of Catholic Schools Week, showing unity for a worthy cause among area schools.

Children who play together can better learn about each other and how to live together. This worldwide event bridges social divides, develops future leaders, and builds community involvement. The final outcome is to contribute towards long-term sustainability among nations in turmoil. Divine Mercy Principal Ron Gagnon agrees, stating, "We can only create peace in our world by starting in our own backyard."



**Hanging with the Big Guys**

***Visit our web page at***

***www.dmccs.org***

***and see the:***

***Divine Mercy Catholic School Wish List***



**Pre-K boys chilling out and enjoying school**

## **PACE**

PACE (Parishioners Assisting Catholic Education) is a program which allows parishioners an opportunity to become an active participant in the education of the children of Divine Mercy. A donation of \$100 to a specific grade level (the donor chooses) or to an extracurricular subject area allows the teacher to purchase supplementary materials for their classrooms.

Last year a computer program, United Streaming, was purchased and is currently being used in all classrooms. Donors are also welcome to visit the classroom and attend mass and holiday programs with the children. Divine Mercy is very grateful to all those who have given to this rewarding program! A PACE brochure is available in the Narthex, or questions can be answered by calling the school office.

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## **Letter from Ron**

Dear Friends of Divine Mercy School,

Greetings and peace to all of you! It's hard to believe that we are rapidly approaching the end of another school year! As I sat down to review the entries for this newsletter, I could not help but to reflect upon the growth and development which have taken place at Divine Mercy over the years and how truly blessed we have been due to the generosity of many wonderful people like you.

Many changes have taken place since the turn of the century. We haven't grown older, we've grown better. We indeed have a state of the art facility that we can all be very proud of. If you have not had occasion to visit our school recently, please do so when you get a chance. We welcome our friends and sponsors and alumni with gratitude. May God bless you.

Sincerely,

Ronald G. Gagnon, Principal



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We are on the Web :

[www.dmccs.org](http://www.dmccs.org)

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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## *Developing Minds and Catholic Spirituality*

### **Why Parents Choose Divine Mercy School**

- *Catholic Teachings and Spiritual Environment*
- *Uniforms*
- *Pre-K (3 and 4) through Grade 8*
- *Positive Discipline Program*
- *Small, Safe and Secure Environment*
- *High-Standards and High-Expectations*
- *Strong Parent-Teacher Association*
- *Excellent Academic Reputation in the Community*
- *Fully Accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference*
- *Religious Education and Formation of Values and Morals*
- *Compassionate, Loving Community of Faculty, Students, Parents and Volunteers*
- *Exceptional standardized test scores*

**Best  
Friends  
Forever**

