

**Dates of Interest**

*November 26-December 18*  
Advent Giving Tree

*M-T-W, December 5-6-7*  
EFF Advent Prayer Services  
5:00 PM Monday and Wednesday  
6:30 PM Tuesday

*Thursday, December 8*  
Immaculate Conception  
Mass at 7:30 AM, 12:00 PM, 7:00 PM

*Saturday, December 17*  
Christmas Confessions  
9:00-11:00 AM

*Tuesday, December 20*  
Advent Penance Service with  
Individual Confessions, 7:00 PM

*Saturday, December 24*  
Christmas Eve  
Mass at 4:30 PM and 7:30 PM

*Sunday, December 25*  
Christmas Day  
Mass at 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

*December 31-January 1*  
Mary, Mother of God  
Mass on Saturday at 5:30 PM and  
Sunday at 8:00AM, 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM

*January 21-22*  
Blessing of Sacramental Candidates at  
Weekend Masses

**Outreach in Action: Bringing  
Communities Together**

A concerned camp director in southern Chester County placed a call to a mother of four children when they didn't show up on the first day of summer camp. "They won't be coming to camp," she replied sadly. "They don't have bathing suits and I cannot afford to buy them." The mother was instructed to bring her kids to camp the next day, and was assured that there would be a bag waiting for each child, complete with a new bathing suit, flip-flops, towel, and water bottle.

Thanks to Partners in Outreach, a non-profit organization led by Saint Elizabeth parishioner Maryanne Parsons, over 700 camp packs were provided to kids in local subsidized summer programs last summer. The bags were filled by volunteers during Saint Elizabeth Parish's Stewardship Day of Service.



Maryanne founded Partners in Outreach (PIO) twelve years ago with a very simple goal: to help less fortunate members of the community. But, instead of writing a check to a worthy cause, she decided to do something hands-on. Maryanne started by asking some friends to donate Easter outfits worn by their children the previous year so she could pass them on to families in need. The outfits were clean, worn once, and celebratory – the makings of a perfect gift! She gave them to families at Saint Agnes Day Room in West Chester, where they were received with gratitude.

After continuing to collect and distribute Easter outfits for several years, Maryanne approached some friends and asked them to help her start a non-profit organization. Six women, including three Saint Elizabeth parishioners, began to collaborate within the local community to orchestrate four yearly campaigns that would provide help to those in

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## School Spirits: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

Corinthians 11:1 is a bible verse that resonates profoundly with Dr. Diane Greco, Principal of Saint Elizabeth Parish School, especially when she thinks about the many ways our students live like Christ through their service to others. In fact, as every Saint Elizabeth student will tell you, her signature line is "Do as Jesus does."

And, for the most part, they do.

With the ongoing efforts of the Stars in Service program, students write letters to servicemen and women, decorate cards and placemats for residents of Saint Martha Manor, make blankets for shelters, string rosaries for first communicants, and sort clothing for Cradles to Crayons (an organization that provides clothing to children across the state). In addition, our parish school students have collected children's books and made bookmarks for literacy awareness that were used in Easter baskets for the children in our sister parish and they held a collection for Chester County Pet Food Pantry's Animal House Project to help families keep their pets.

This fall, the National Junior Honor Society sponsored a sock drive for Joy of Sox – a not-for-profit founded in the Philadelphia area that distributes new socks to the homeless.

As the students work on service projects for those outside the school, they also imitate Christ through the service they provide to fellow students in school. For

example, Student Council members help with Friday sports tournaments, school dances, and themed dress-down days. National Junior Honor Society members also provide tutoring to fellow students.

"The luxury of having students from kindergarten through 8th grade provides opportunities for students of all ages to help and guide each other," said Dr. Greco. "The upper classmen gain valuable leadership skills while also learning to be role models for the younger students."

In fact, attend a school Mass and you'll notice older students walking younger students into church, sometimes hand-in-hand. Each kindergartener is paired with an 8th grader who helps them follow the prayers and participate better in the liturgy. Each week during October and May, the upper classmen lead all of the students in praying the rosary. "It's wonderful to see the younger students looking up to the 'cool teenagers' and witnessing how they show and share their faith," praised Dr. Greco.

"The reverence that is emulated from the students is heartwarming. It's evident at Mass and especially every morning when the students meet in the gym to read the daily readings and pray before they begin their school day," gushed Dr. Greco. "Respectfully praying together really unifies the school."

During this Advent season, the students will continue to serve

each other and those in need by reading Christmas stories to the younger grades and encouraging their families to take an ornament from the parish Advent Giving Tree. At Saint Elizabeth Parish School, students learn that there are many different ways to give and imitate Christ, no matter how old they are.

~ Rhonda Jones

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#### *Editor's Note:*

Each quarter, *The Spirit* articles are organized according to a specific theme. The theme for fall is **Outreach. Enjoy!**

## World Travelers: Spreading the Good News One Teen at a Time

**B**y age 16, the furthest I had traveled away from home was the next state over to frolic in the waves at the Jersey shore. And, the last thing on my mind was evangelization.

Thankfully, today's teens are both braver and more focused on living their values. Over the past few months, four audacious (and bodacious!) parish teenagers furrowed their wings and left their familiar communities to share their faith thousands of miles away.

**Julia Szabla** (below, front row, far right), a senior at Bishop Shanahan High School, made a pil-



grimage to Kraków, Poland in July to attend World Youth Day (WYD). Described as a "worldwide encounter with the Pope," WYD is typically celebrated every three years in a different country. In 2013, it took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the next location for 2019 has not yet been announced. Julia was inspired to take the trip when she saw Pope Francis in Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families. "It was energizing to be

among so many excited Catholics coming together, and Pope Francis' words and spirit left such an impression on me that I wanted more," explained Julia, whose grandparents live in Kraków.

Julia spent more than a week in Poland, attending festivals and seeing the sights. She joined about 20 other teens from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and toured Auschwitz, Wadowice to see Saint Pope John Paul II's family home, and the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, the resting place of Saint Faustina Kowalska - who was canonized in 2000. Thousands of teens from all over the world prayed for world peace

during candlelight vigils, sang Christian rock music, and shared their faith experiences with fellow Catholics from different countries. Julia explained:

"We met so many people with fascinating stories...like this one group from the French region of Normandy who were in the same diocese where the radical Islamist attackers murdered Father Jacques Hamel this summer. It was crazy to think about what they are dealing with, yet they bravely showed their faces at WYD. They were an inspiration."

The city was crowded but, according to Julia, it was fun.

"Everyone was very friendly and knew a bit of English so we could communicate. Buzzing to do trades - everyone had small gifts from their nations that they could trade with other countries. In exchange for our American flag keychains, I received an Italian flag, a rosary from Brazil, a religious medal from Korea, and more. It was so cool, too, how everyone loved Americans. Others would see our group and start chanting 'USA, USA.'"

Nights were cold, but no one seemed to care. "We stayed up all night singing and dancing. You could see the joy in everyone's faces. People think that Catholics are so serious and strict, but it wasn't like that at all - everyone was inviting, loving, fun, happy. We took a lot of selfies," smiled Julia. "These events strengthen your faith naturally, and make you want to be better, treat others with kindness and remember that everyone is going through something but we are all children of God."

### *Boys Will Be Boys*

Julia wasn't the only Saint Elizabeth parishioner globetrotting this summer! Three faith-filled teen boys also took flight to partake in the German/American Partnership, a nonprofit student exchange program. **William McGowan** and **Tyler Reester**, both age 16 and in 11th grade at Downingtown STEM Academy, along with **Nicholas Hellgoth**, age 17 and a senior at STEM, spent three weeks in Germany

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## Family Spirits: Meet the Brady Family

Carol and Al Brady grew up in different states – New Jersey and New York. Their lives took very different life paths – Carol’s as a flight attendant for TWA and Al’s as an engineer. Eventually, their paths crossed ... in an apartment building in Queens, NY, where both had rented space.

Al was working as a field engineer and Carol was pursuing a career in the sky. Despite their seemingly opposite lives, it was love at first sight ... and, the rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Carol and Al married in 1961 and moved to Little Neck, Long Island in New York. Carol left her job to raise their family while Al attended Fordham Law School at night, eventually launching a new career as a corporate patent attorney. They moved to Chester Springs in 1977 and sent their five children to Saints Philip and James Parish School and Bishop Shannahan High School. Today, the Bradys enjoy 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Most of the children live locally. Despite the namesake, Carol laughed, “Nobody has ever referred to us as the Brady Bunch!”

The Brady family have been members of Saint Elizabeth since its founding. Shortly thereafter, the couple became active in their stewardship service by volunteering to set up chairs for Mass in Lionville Middle School gym. Their stewardship commitment has expanded over the years. For example, Al helped establish the service group, “Sharing our Bounty,” which collects food for the needy, particularly the patrons of The Lord’s Pan-

try, where he has served on the Board of Directors for 10 years.

“It’s not just about canned goods,” explained Al, who is now the Board’s president. “Our ‘Healthy Choice’ program enables clients to shop for fresh produce and dairy products.” The Lord’s Pantry celebrated 50 years of service in 2015 and is located in Downton.

In addition to “Sharing Our Bounty,” Al has helped with Saint Elizabeth’s capital campaigns, served on the Saint Elizabeth Stewardship Council for six years, and supports the Poor Box Committee. Carol serves on the Bereavement Committee and as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. Both have been lectors and presently work with the Home and Hospital ministry, bringing Holy Communion to the sick and infirm.

“I really enjoy the Home and Hospital ministry because it’s something Al and I can do together,” explained Carol. The couple visits patients in their homes and in several assisted living facilities. Carol said that these fellow Catholics seem to look forward to their visits, and

the consolation of the Holy Eucharist. The Brady’s grandson, Matt, has followed in their stewardship footsteps as assistant manager of a sustainable farm in Honeybrook, where he helps



*Carol and Al Brady, members of Saint Elizabeth since its founding, are faithful stewards supporting many parish ministries.*

raise farm animals and crops that use all the farm’s resources to increase the earth’s health.

From generation to generation, the Bradys are a shining example of faithfulness to a stewardship way of life – both at Saint Elizabeth Parish and throughout their communities, helping make the world a better place for all of us.

~ Lisa Sheronas

## Outreach in Action *(cont'd from cover)*

need. Today, the original six volunteers make up the board of directors and include Lynn Bevevino (former parishioner), Diane Ward, Kelly Mullen (parishioner), Maryanne Parsons (parishioner), Jeri Gore, and Mary Ann DiMarco (parishioner).

The mission of PIO is to connect community members by identifying those in need, and creating opportunities for others to give. "People love giving back, but they don't always know how," said Maryanne. "Our goal is to be a conduit between those who can give and those in need. The majority of our work helps individuals right here in Chester County, many of whom live at or below the poverty level, despite the fact that we are the most affluent county in the state."

Initially, it was a daunting task to try to make a big impact locally, but the board members all had an intense desire to help others. Their focus was to find opportunities to enrich the quality of other's lives, and to bring happiness and hope through action. Shockingly, one in 13 adults in Chester County cannot read, so helping to

educate local youth became a priority. PIO's first official event was a simple book swap amongst friends. The early PIO volunteers recruited about 100

people to donate books and gift cards. The result? PIO supplied books to an entire fourth-grade class, plus 1,500 more books to various schools in need. The now yearly collection yields over 20,000 books, which are distributed throughout Chester County and the surrounding area. PIO also runs a literacy program, providing one-on-one tutoring in schools where many kids are not getting state aid, yet not reading at grade level.

PIO continues to provide Easter outfits and has expanded to provide Easter baskets to over 800 children throughout Chester County and the surrounding area. "We couldn't do what we do



*Saint Elizabeth parishioners support Partners in Outreach during the annual Stewardship Day of Service.*

without volunteers, and Saint Elizabeth parish has been terrific," says Maryanne. "The parish partners with us during its annual Stewardship Day of Service, and so much more. This year, we had more than 100 volunteers, including many Saint Elizabeth school students, who helped assemble Easter baskets and coordinate outfits. It was a great service project because the kids got a real sense of where their efforts were being directed. We love getting people engaged and allowing them to have a hands-on experience. It brings communities together."

For more on PIO, including upcoming events, visit their website at [www.partnersinoutreach.org](http://www.partnersinoutreach.org).

*~ Julie Krumenacker*



*Partner in Outreach's founding Board of Directors (L to R): Lynn Bevevino, Diane Ward, Kelly Mullen, Maryanne Parsons (president), Jeri Gore (secretary), and MaryAnn DiMarco (treasurer).*

## World Travelers (cont'd from page 3)

with host families. Their German counterparts – Niklas Bienemann, David Horster and Maurice Oertel – attend Gymnasium Fabritianum in Krefeld, Germany, and they arrived in Chester County this past October.

“This was an amazing experience – both emotionally and spiritually. It is important to extend yourself to people in another country because you become more aware of other ways of life,” explained Nicholas. “It broadens your horizons and helps you to appreciate others for their differences.”

Tyler reflected: “It is extremely important to extend yourself to the people of another country to gain global perspective. I believe this is especially true with Germany, as it can be viewed with a negative light due to its past. However, these misconceptions were quickly dismissed when I became immersed in the daily life living in this country. Also being able to bring another view of the world to the U.S. is essential in viewing and solving world problems objectively.”

The boys attended school from 8:15 am to 2:00 pm, Monday thru Friday, and spent their free time touring the cities, teaching their new friends American football and playing soccer, water skiing, and attending various social events.

Tyler and Will both acknowledged a few differences between American and German culture – one of the biggest being the pace. They say that German soci-



From L to R: Maurice Oertel, Will McGowan, Niklas Bienemann, Tyler Reester, David Horster, Nicholas Hellgoth

ety moves a lot slower, methodical and often more relaxed compared to the East Coast. But some things are the same, acknowledged Tyler. “When traveling overseas, you worry that your suitcase will go missing. But, one thing that never goes missing wherever you go is your faith. I really felt that during this experience...being able to walk into a cathedral in Aachen or Cologne and talk to God or pray for someone at home can be done regardless of your location,” smiled Tyler. “And you don’t have to pray in German just because you are in Germany.”

Will added, “One thing that I learned from this incredible experience is to never be too quick to judge. I learned so much about the world outside of my own, especially the life of the German people. As Americans, sometimes we react without fully considering the global perspective, which is essential in the 21st Cen-

ture. From a faith perspective, too, I learned something. By interacting with a family of a different religion that was so kind as to generously open their home and hearts to me, I realized that God is everywhere – really...he just wears different faces.”

Amen to that. These amazing teenagers are inspiring, even motivating me to share my faith with others on an adventurous trip somewhere exotic....hmmm.... New York, anyone?

*To learn more about World Youth Day, visit [www.worldyouthday.com](http://www.worldyouthday.com); and to learn how you can get involved in the student exchange program, contact your German language teachers.*

~ Lisa Barbadora

# Meet Beth Riordan – New Director of Religious Education

Many of you have likely seen a new face in the education center office here at Saint Elizabeth. We warmly welcome Ms. Elizabeth (Beth) Riordan, who joined the parish staff this fall to serve as the Director of Religious Education (DRE).

Beth's involvement with the Church began early in her childhood. While growing up in Chester County, her parents were active members of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Coatesville. Her father was a member of the Holy Name Society and sang in the choir, while her mother served as a CCD catechist. "Growing up, we never missed Mass," she recalls. "Unless we were sick – really sick!"

In high school, Beth attended religious education classes all the way through 12th grade. "There was no negotiating my attendance," she laughs. "I was involved in many aspects of parish life as a young person. I participated in CYO sports and served as my mom's catechist aide in junior high. I honestly felt that my parish needed me to make it a better place."

After graduating from Immaculata University with a degree in English and French, Beth went on to pursue a Master's degree in Religious Studies and Systematic Theology at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary. "If someone had asked me when I was growing up if I ever thought I would be 'The CCD Lady' I would have fallen over laughing," she says. "I was going to have a career in



*Beth Riordan, Director of Religious Education, has been active in ministry with children, youth and families for over two decades.*

business, travel, or both. But in college, the Lord started pulling at my heart. I longed for a deeper relationship with Him. After college, I attended a 'Life in the Spirit' seminar at Saint Joseph Parish in Downingtown. I have never been the same since! That autumn I began teaching sixth grade EFF classes and became involved with youth ministry."

For the past 22 years, Beth has been active in ministry with children, youth and families. She has worked as an Admissions Counselor at Immaculata University, where she recruited and mentored students, and also as the Director of Religious Education at Holy Cross Parish in Springfield. Most recently, she was the Director of Secondary Religious Education and Youth and Young Adult Ministry at the Office of Catechetical Formation for the

Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Beth describes the vision of Father Mullin and the Saint Elizabeth Parish community, as well as the opportunity for growth, as the catalysts for accepting the position of DRE. "The administration, staff, volunteers and parishioners are very welcoming and open to new ways of engaging our Catholic faith," she notes. "I am pleased to see the ministries for which I am responsible so well-organized and fueled by enthusiastic catechists and volunteers."

We are thankful to have Beth serving on the parish staff and look forward to getting to know her better.

~ Julie Krumenacker

## More Dates of Interest

January 29-February 3  
Catholic Schools Week  
Open House: Sunday, 12:30-2:00 PM

Saturdays, February 25 and March 11  
Confirmation Retreats  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Ash Wednesday, March 1  
Mass at 7:30 AM and 7:00 PM  
Liturgy of the Word and Ashes  
11:00 AM and 4:30 PM

Lenten Fridays, 7:00 PM  
Stations of the Cross & Benediction  
March 3 - April 7

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE!**

## April 29, 2017 *Stewardship Day of Service!*

Saint Elizabeth Parish's next annual **Stewardship Day of Service** will be held on **Saturday, April 29, 2017**. Immediately following an 8:30 AM Mass, a light breakfast will be served in the social hall for all volunteers. Next, the group will head over to destination sites for three hours of generous service.

Sign up with your family or friends and enjoy the rewards of giving back to our community. Each year, more than 300 Saint Elizabeth parishioners join the cause! The whole family is welcome to join, so bring your kids and make it a family project. Paradise Farm Camp, for example, is one of the sites that welcomes kids of all ages to help. This group usually does a spring cleanup on the camp grounds, hiking trails, and cabins. Thorncroft Equestrian Center is another great site where our youth group teens and their leaders cleaned the barn and stalls.

Online registration opens in February and remains open through April...but don't wait! Spots are limited. For more information, call the Parish Services Office at 610-646-6550 or go online at [www.stelizabethparish.org](http://www.stelizabethparish.org).

~ *Kem Odike*

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