



The Spirit

Special 15th Anniversary Edition

"Fifteen Years as a Family of Faith"

Volume 14, Number 2
Spring 2015

A Word From the Pastor: Where Have the Past 15 Years Gone?

It was Labor Day weekend in September of 2000, and the spanking-new parish community of Saint Elizabeth Church gathered for the first time for Sunday Mass in the Lionville Middle School gymnasium. In the *General Intercessions* that day, we prayed "that God would guide and strengthen our efforts to form the new parish community of Saint Elizabeth on Fellowship Road." As always from that first weekend Mass through January of 2007, we concluded the intercessory prayers with words adapted from Psalm 127:

God our Father, unless you build the house of our new parish community, we labor in vain. May your Holy Spirit continue to lead us in building and nourishing a holy and faithful parish community at Saint Elizabeth.

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Dates of interest can be found on the parish website: www.stelizabethparish.org

Happy 15th Anniversary, Saint Elizabeth!



An aerial view of our parish in 2008.

The dawning of the new millennium posed many challenges. For some, it was how to avoid the potential Y2K crisis; but for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, it was determining how to respond to the ongoing population boom in northeastern Chester County. At the time, the existing churches and parish schools were being flooded with hundreds of new families moving into the area. Recognizing the need, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Planning Committee recommended to Cardinal Bevilacqua that a new parish be established. To this end, a 16-person planning team was formed, including

the Regional Vicar together with the pastors and two parishioners from each of the five northeastern Chester County parishes – Saint Joseph, Saint Basil, Saints Philip and James, Saint Peter and Saint Thomas More. This planning team worked for a year to research and develop the geographical boundaries of a new parish. While the Y2K crisis never materialized, the planning team's recommendations did and the Archdiocese purchased 36 acres of land for the new parish early in 2000.

In May of 2000, the Cardinal appointed Monsignor Thomas Mullin as the pastor of the new parish.

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A Word From Our Pastor

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Father Thomas M. Mullin

The following weekend, I met one of our young parishioners who had brought his non-Catholic first grade classmate from Pickering Valley Elementary School to church with him. The boy's friend simply did not believe it when the boy told him that he went to church in a gym, complete with backboards all around! Can you believe that those two boys are now seniors in college? And the sixth graders who served Mass that first weekend are now twenty-seven years old! "Oh my, oh my: Where have the past fifteen years gone?"

When our parish community was first established, I reflected that its location on *Fellowship Road* invited all of us to become more aware of the baptismal call we share as disciples of Jesus Christ to build our new parish upon the solid foundation of deep faith in God and a genuine spirit of fellowship and concern for one another. In the intervening fifteen years, I still believe that faith, fellowship and stewardship remain the hallmarks of the parish community here at Saint Elizabeth.

On the occasion of the parish's tenth anniversary back in 2010, I noted that unless the years of fund raising, construction projects, personnel recruit-

ment & staff development, and ever-increasing parish ministry demands do not send me to my grave prematurely, I do not retire until 2024 – so I look forward to nine more years of pastoral ministry together with the wonderful people of Saint Elizabeth!

It was on the weekend of January 27-28, 2007 that we began reciting the *Parish Stewardship Prayer* together at the end of the *General Intercessions*. Our shared commitment to a stewardship way of life challenges us to keep focused on the real purpose of parish community and, in fact, the purpose of our lives as Christian disciples: to live out our baptismal mission in Jesus' name, to preach the Good News by our daily example and to serve one another's needs, with particular concern for those who find life burdensome. In the great generosity of God, many of our parishioners have been blessed with abundant material possessions, and all of our parishioners have been even more richly blessed with an extensive variety of spiritual gifts. For this, let us give thanks to the Lord!

The occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of Saint Elizabeth provides me yet another opportunity to offer my personal gratitude and appreciation to all the individuals, couples and families of our parish community and to the many friends of Saint Elizabeth who have so generously given of their time, talent and treasure to the life and growth of our parish community these past fifteen years. Your deep faith commitment to Jesus Christ and your genuine care for one another remain the foundation of the faith community we have become over the past fifteen years.

At the same time, this anniversary celebration is also an equally fitting time to remind one another that we have no reason to boast, except in the Lord (2 Cor 10/17). As Saint Paul reminds us:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth. Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God's co-workers... (1 Cor 3/6-9)

Now I once again encourage each of you to continue following the example of Jesus Himself, who came "not to be served, but to serve," and to re-commit yourself to share your time, talent and treasure for the good of others within our parish community and especially for the good of the poor and needy among our brothers and sisters in the human family.

For fifteen years now it has been, and it will always be, by the grace of God, that all of us – founding veterans and newly-arriving families – have come together to bring our parish community to life here on Fellowship Road. May the Lord who began this great work in us back in July of 2000 continue to bring it to fulfillment in Christ Jesus. And may the Holy Spirit continue to lead us in nourishing and sustaining a holy, vibrant, faith-filled parish community at Saint Elizabeth, for *unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.*

-Father Tom Mullin

Happy 15th Anniversary, Saint Elizabeth

(Continued from cover)

Father Mullin brought a combined 25 years of pastoral experience, seminary teaching and administrative experience to his new assignment. Although Father Mullin had submitted a letter requesting appointment as a pastor at that time, he was surprised at being named pastor of a newly-forming parish. Yet he was undaunted at the challenge of creating a new parish community and the structures that would support that community, on top of the ordinary everyday responsibilities of a pastor.

That June, the Regional Vicar and the planning team held an information night at Bishop Shanahan High School for parishioners of the area parishes who were being re-registered as members of the new parish. After the formal introductions, Father Mullin addressed the many wide-ranging questions raised by participants. At the end of the meeting, those in attendance voted on a name for the new parish being formed. The consensus recommended that the parish be named after Saint Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist and cousin of the Virgin Mary. This was formally approved by the Cardinal Archbishop on June 30, 2000. And so, the all-new Saint Elizabeth Church was canonically established on July 1, 2000.

Building a Community

One priority for the new pastor was building a common identity among parishioners coming from five distinct parishes. The lack of buildings fostered a 'can do,' pioneering spirit of cooperation, with whole families helping to set up and take down some 700 folding chairs for weekend Masses in the Lion-



The Good Works Team, pictured in 2012.

ville Middle School gymnasium for five and one-half years. Father Mullin reported that "the undefined environment created new opportunities for people to try new ways to be involved in parish life. We started with developing the liturgical ministries, to define the parish first and foremost as a community that comes together to celebrate the sacraments: then we inaugurated three advisory councils (pastoral, finance and stewardship) to guide the development of parish life and introduced a variety of other pastoral ministries, including the groundwork for a parish elementary school program." As the Elementary Faith Formation program began its fifth year of home-based, weekly religious education sessions for more than 750 young parishioners, a parish elementary school opened in September of 2006.

By July of 2010, as Saint Elizabeth celebrated its tenth anniversary, the parish had matured into a vibrant and engaging faith community, with hundreds of

parishioners offering their stewardship service in a variety of ministries and faith enrichment programs for adults and children of all ages. Pastoral outreach opportunities were also expanded over the years, including care for the hospitalized and homebound, repairing homes through *Good Works*, and providing food, school supplies and Christmas gifts for the poor.

From there, the parish community began to spread the seeds of faith outward, building an ongoing sister-parish relationship with the parish community at Visitation BVM in Philadelphia and promoting interfaith events with our neighbors at Beth Israel Synagogue and with fellow Christians in the congregations of the Exton-Lionville Ministerium. More recently, a Family Life Ministry Team has been established to coordinate a variety of family-oriented programs and the parish Committee for the New Evangelization has introduced two spiritual

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Happy 15th Anniversary, Saint Elizabeth

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awakening programs offered several times each year: overnight renewals for men and for women called *Christ Renews His Parish*, and a welcoming discussion series for inactive Catholics entitled *No Greater Love-Catholics Coming Home*.

Building the Buildings

Another primary responsibility for Father Mullin and the parish staff was the design, funding and construction of a full set of parish facilities, including a church and an education center, a parish ministry center and a gymnasium. The total cost to complete these buildings between 2002 and 2010 was \$23.5 million! Parishioners responded with inspiring generosity to two parish-wide capital campaigns: *A Time to Build* (2001-2006) and *Stepping Forward Together* (2008-2010), ultimately contributing close to \$15 million to the two-phased building project. Until the church was completed, parishioners attended weekend Mass in the Lion-

ville Middle School gym. Between 2000 and 2010, everyday parish business was conducted first in rented office space near Ludwig's Corner and then in a double-wide trailer on the parish grounds.

Ground breaking for the church and education center took place early in 2004. In November of 2005, Cardinal Rigali came to Saint Elizabeth to celebrate Mass for the formal dedication of the church. The months and years of weekend Masses in the LMS gym were finally over! Cardinal Rigali then returned in September, 2006, to celebrate the Order of Blessing for the new education center. That September, Saint Elizabeth Parish School opened its doors to parish children in grades K-6, while weekly EFF classes were moved out of parishioners' homes and into the parish education center.

With the continued generosity of parishioners (old and new!) and some "Friends of Saint Elizabeth," sufficient

funds were raised in the *Stepping Forward Together* capital campaign to enable the parish to design and construct a gymnasium at the southern end of the education center, together with a parish ministry center providing office space for parish staff and meeting rooms for parish ministry groups. Both new facilities were completed in May of 2010, without incurring any additional debt to the parish.

Over the past 15 years, Saint Elizabeth Church has been blessed with a wonderful community of faithful and resourceful parishioners, a beautiful set of parish facilities, a capable and dedicated parish staff, and an ever-expanding range of parish ministries, all made possible through parishioners' active commitment to Catholic Stewardship. And while so much has indeed been accomplished by the grace of God over the years 2000-2015, there's still plenty of room for growth in the next fifteen years, too...

-Kathy Link

Saint Elizabeth by the Numbers

"**O**ur mission, together with the Lord, is to build and nourish a holy, faithful community at Saint Elizabeth Parish," begins our parish mission statement. Over the past 15 years, Saint Elizabeth Parish has not only continued to grow in number of parishioners, but also in ministries available to help strengthen faith and foster stewardship service.

Nearly doubling in size since our initial days together beginning in July of 2000, Saint Elizabeth Parish has grown to 2,852 households and 10,269 total

parishioners (as of March 31, 2015). Of the families who first formed the parish community back in 2000, 774 are still parishioners today. New ministries are continually being added and expanded to keep up with the growing needs of the parish and the community at large.

Parish Population Growth: 2000-2015

"Our house rests upon the Word and the Sacraments, and its doors will always be open, warmly welcoming all who seek to know and love Jesus Christ in the fullness of our Catholic Faith."

These words ring so true at Saint Elizabeth Parish. Those of you who remember attending Mass in the Lionville Middle School gymnasium were undoubtedly overjoyed when the church construction was complete in November of 2005 and you were able to celebrate Mass and participate in the other Sacraments in an actual church building. Yet we know that our spiritual home is much greater than the bricks and mortar. The Word and the Sacraments, along with the faith filled, loving parishioners are what make Saint Elizabeth Church a welcoming home for all who join us.

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Saint Elizabeth: By the Numbers

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Sacramental Celebrations Over the Years

“As stewards of the abundant gifts God gives us, we freely share them with our brothers and sisters everywhere. We will educate all our generations, and help our youth in their quest for fulfillment as disciples and citizens in today’s world.”

As you can see from the chart, our age range spans several generations. We are blessed to have parishioners from babies to 100 years old! However, our largest demographic are those who are 29 years or younger. And, with 33% of our parishioners under 20 years of age, several of our ministries are targeted to educating the youth of our parish. Of course, Saint Elizabeth has something for all ages so everyone can continue on their journey in faith, including ministries geared toward families and seniors, single adults and children.

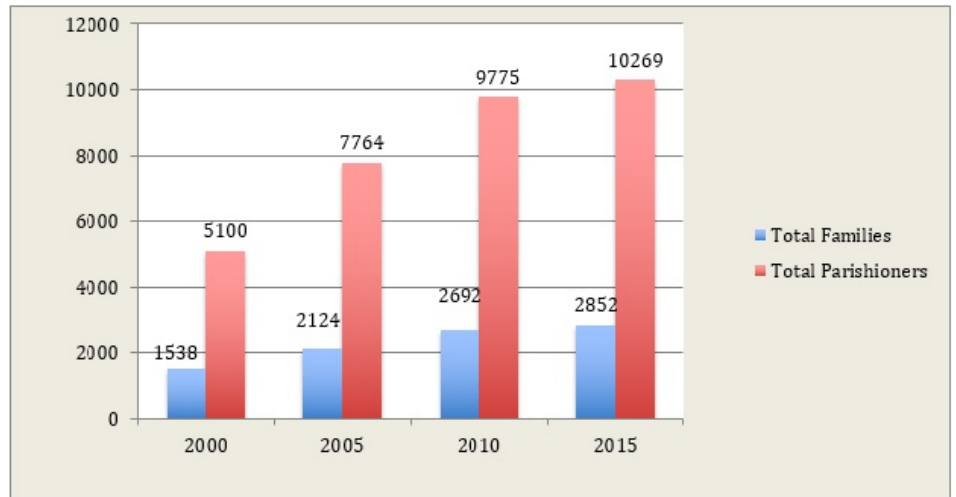
In 2015, 33% of Saint Elizabeth Parishioners are Under 20 Years Old

“By the conviction of our words, the goodness of our deeds, and the witness of our lives, we will reflect the presence of Jesus living within us. With the grace of the Holy Spirit we will extend His kingdom everyday, one person at a time.”

As we continue on toward our next 15 years, may all Saint Elizabeth parishioners continue to grow and flourish in their faith and be an example for others.

-Rhonda Jones

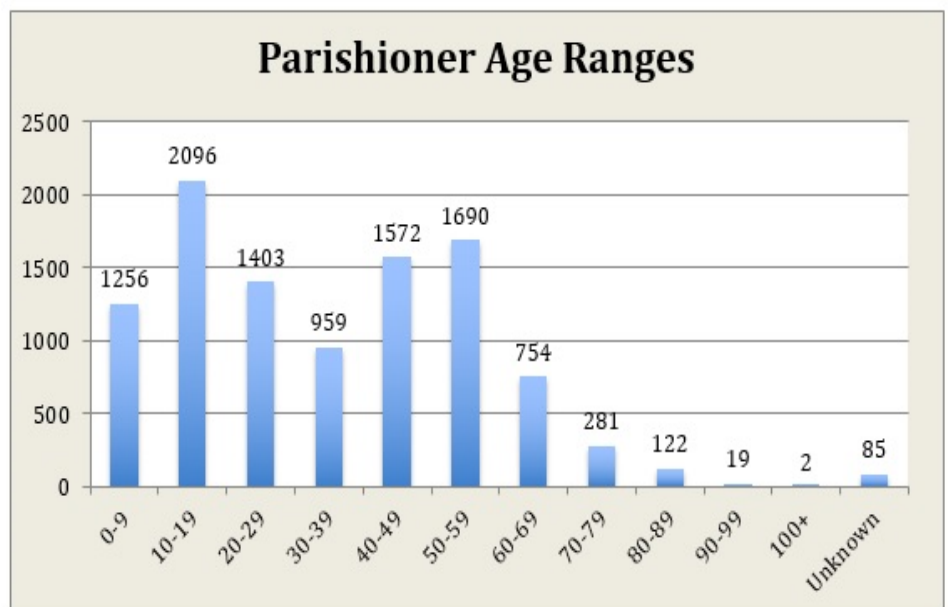
Parish Population Growth: 2000-2015



Sacramental Celebrations over the Years

Year	Baptism	First Communion	Confirmation	Marriage	Anointing of Sick	Funerals
2001	152	158	161	9	15	17
2010	109	199	181	26	18	27
2014	96	174	177	24	32	23
Total	1778	2597	2553	302	301	243

Parishioner Age Ranges



Celebrating 15 Fabulous Years



ars as a Family of Faith



Photo Contributors: Mary Damian, Kim Greenhut, and Mike Richardson

School Spirits

The Spirit of Saint Elizabeth Shines Bright in the Parish School and Into the Wider Community

There are many ways in which Saint Elizabeth Parish School evokes a strong sense of unity and friendship among its students and their families. School principal Dr. Diane Greco explains: "Throughout the school year, we continue to develop many different student-led activities, such as pep rallies, fun days and in-school tournaments that have kick-started tremendous unity and spirit – particularly inspiring for such a young school."

One example of spirit-building activities is the recent Chester County Reading Olympics competition, in which four teams spanning the fourth through the eighth grades represented the parish school. The teams worked together to answer questions about books they've been assigned to read throughout the year, and they brought home two ribbons. As Dr. Greco affirmed: "Devoted Saint Elizabeth classmates, teachers and family members watched the competition in support of their school and their loved ones."

Our students all look out for one another, from the youngest to the oldest. We see a clear example at every liturgy for the parish school community, when eighth grade buddies pair up with kindergarteners to help them to understand the meaning behind the rituals of the Mass."

One way in which the students of Saint Elizabeth Parish School share their spirit of faith with the larger parish community is through the eighth graders' presentation of the *Living Stations of the Cross* each Lent. "The eighth grade students inspire us all with their presentation of the *Living Stations*, evoking the moving emotions of Jesus' death," added Dr. Greco. "The students work so hard and are responsible to keep a log of their experience, so that their sincere reflections on God and their own personal faith journeys are truly on display during the presentations. The other students look up to them and look forward to this special event every year. Despite the snowy conditions this past March, most of the students joined together with the parish community to attend this Lenten presentation."

The unique *Stars in Service* program, which began five years ago, has blossomed into a regular community outreach program that provides endless comfort, smiles, clothing, toys, and food to those in need throughout the community. Each month, students spend a class period making cards for the elderly, sorting clothing donations, writing to our troops, or making breakfast bags for the Nutritional Development Services team which coordinates support for a number of food pantries across the Archdiocese.

"When our students gather together to do something for others, they form a special bond. It's this generous heart that the larger public community feels... traditional pep rallies and sports games are often spirit-filled activities, but it's these recurring events throughout the entire school year that evoke the genuine school spirit that is evident to anyone our students touch," said Dr. Greco.

As Saint Elizabeth celebrates our 15th Anniversary as a parish community and Saint Elizabeth Parish School completes almost 10 years together in elementary Catholic education, we can rightly celebrate our special spirit – not built with bricks and mortar, but with love. May the spirit so alive in the hearts of our students continue to permeate the parish school, the parish at large, and the entire community in which we live!

-Lisa Barbadora



Our Parish School students have the spirit!

The students of Saint Elizabeth Parish School extend their warm-hearted spirit into the wider public community through a number of significant outreach programs.

Family Spirits

Strangers No More

Some of us come to Saint Elizabeth Parish as strangers, either relocating from other nearby parishes or upon moving into the area from around the country. The strong sense of family that exudes from our parish, however, makes it hard to remain that way. Whether you've been a member for 15 years or for just one year, parishioners experience a community united by its Catholic faith and convictions and a desire to bring its members closer to Christ.

We asked three parish families with varying amounts of time at Saint Elizabeth, to reflect on our anniversary theme – *"Fifteen Years as a Family of Faith"* – and offer witness to its meaning. Here's what they had to say.

Mary Damian, registered member since 2000

"Just as a family enjoys common experiences, I have found our parish has grown spiritually under the leadership of Father Mullin. His ability to shepherd a flock formed from five parishes is truly a gift from which I have personally benefited. I've befriended parishioners who have an infectious enthusiasm for the Lord, which helped my own faith journey. And I continually observe the generosity and growth of our family of faith in those who answer the call to stewardship. From the Good Works Ministry to the Elementary Faith Formation program, they put their faith in action by freely and willingly giving their time, talent and treasure."



Parishioners Mary Damian (right) and Sue Laager at the Easter Vigil.

Angie and John Fiore, registered members since 2005

"When we joined Saint Elizabeth Parish as newlyweds, we had no idea this community would become an extension of our family. Through church ministries, we've experienced firsthand the Saint Elizabeth family in action. How generous and loving our parish is in providing monthly meals to the needy for the Casserole Program benefiting Saint John's Hospice! We see real dedication to our Catholic faith, and a focus on service in the Saint Elizabeth Council, Knights of Columbus. Our school-aged children are growing in their faith with the help of the parish's many faith-filled teachers and catechists."

Through Angie's participation in the Christ Renews His Parish overnight renewal, she says she was "brought closer to Christ than I ever have been, and found a new, amazing group of women who are truly like family to me."

John and Sue Laager, registered members since 2011

"Although we've only been parishioners for a few years, we've found the parish community at Saint Elizabeth Church to be a true family of believers with many individual talents. This family is enriched by the incredible spiritual gifts of its parishioners, who are motivated by God's grace to serve the parish and the larger community. We are amazed by the individuals who ceaselessly give of themselves to support of the parish programs, many of which we take for granted."

Sue, who became a Catholic in 2013, says that one of her initial concerns in joining the parish was that she "would not be able to find my place in such a large, established church. The members of the RCIA team and my fellow candidates provided my first look into the kind, caring family that is Saint Elizabeth."

-Amy Giampietro

Staff Reflections: My, How Things Have Changed...

There's a small group of people here at Saint Elizabeth Parish who can really appreciate change. In fact, inside the parish ministry center today are a few dedicated individuals who can look back on the past 15 years with some very unique memories.

After answering an ad for a job at a new parish in the area, Kathy Keating, Secretary for the Ministry Center, remembers driving to the interview from her home in Downingtown and getting lost while trying to find the rectory...where? Fox Ridge Road? Never heard of it. To work at a parish called...what? No name. No church. No parish facilities. Yet...

Kathy and George Mink, along with Father Mullin, pushed three desks together in the loft of the Glenmoore rectory and forged ahead. "It was definitely overwhelming at times," she recalled. "I never knew from day to day what was going to turn up. I could tell Father was a dynamic individual, so something told me it was worth it to stick around."

Every Monday morning, volunteers would gather around the dining room table at the rectory to count the weekend collection as the new church community was formed and plans for the physical facilities began to take shape. The growing staff was eventually able to move into compact offices near Ludwig's Corner, where they diligently worked on a large capital campaign and found parishioners willing to open up their homes to host religious education classes for several hundred children. Quite a few of the parishioners' new babies were even baptized in the

small office chapel where daily Mass was held!

After six busy and very productive years, the parish staff relocated to a trailer located in the back of the parish property, not long after the church and education center were completed. Working in an overly-cramped, boxy structure imposed some challenges: with only limited bathroom and kitchenette facilities, the trailer served as the office and parish center, meeting area and lunch room, with several staff members working side by side in small cubicles. Financial Secretary Kathleen Guertin also remembers making trips back and forth to Beth Israel Synagogue and to the Lionville Firehouse, as the team scrambled to find places to conduct holy day Masses and special sacramental events. "We always hit the ground running," said Director of Parish Services Gen Miceli. "Just as we finished one project, we quickly moved on to the next. It was never boring around here."

Finally, in 2010, the parish ministry center was completed and the parish staff was able to move into "normal" offices, where they continue working today to ensure the smooth daily operation of our busy parish. "We're always busy and things have been constantly changing," added Kathleen. "It's thrilling and rewarding to see how far we have come, and the amazing things we have accomplished in 15 years."

"Since I began working here at Saint Elizabeth back in 2007 our staff has doubled and our parish community has grown even more, in different

ways," noted Sam Venuti, the Parish Business Manager. "Father had a vision of what Saint Elizabeth Parish would become, and he has always stood by that vision. We're not there yet, but we're working toward that end, and to see things play out with such great leadership and dedicated stewardship is extremely rewarding." Kathy Keating continued, "Seeing the growth of this parish and the support of the parishioners under Father Mullin's leadership has been amazing."

A sincere thank you to all members of our devoted parish staff for everything they have helped accomplish over the past 15 years!

-Julie Krumenacker

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SEAM/CYO Sports Over the Years: Saint Elizabeth Stars Shine Bright

If there had been TV crews and Nike sponsors, you might have thought you just walked into the championship game of the Final Four NCAA basketball tournament in Indiana.

Red-faced parents, grandparents, siblings and friends pounded the bleachers. Cheer-leaders flipped and chanted, “S, T, E!” Boys and girls, five deep, packed into every cranny of the gym – it was a ‘white out,’ borrowing a term from Penn State football stadium’s famously crowded student section. February’s ice thawed from the heat generated by the white-knuckle, down-to-the-buzzer competition inside the parish gym.

This was the Stars’ Spirit at its best! On February 23, the Varsity CYO Region 17 parish basketball championship pitted Saint Elizabeth (blue) against Saint Elizabeth (white) in a battle that literally went to the final seconds, ending 39-37 with white coming out on top. When the buzzer sounded, fans charged the court – hugging, high-fiving, fist-bumping. Any way you looked at it...Saint Elizabeth won!

“I’m so proud of these boys who are a hard-working, respectful group of athletes, and I am equally overwhelmed by the sportsmanship and energy com-



The Stars cheer each other on during the Blue vs. White game on Feb. 23.

ing from the stands,” said winning coach Rob Duncheskie, who was assisted by Bob McGonagle and Brian McGonagle. “The spirit was simply a motivational force for anyone who played at our house.”

One of the winning team players, eighth grader Kevin Gatti, reflected, “CYO sports have helped bring us young parishioners together at Saint Elizabeth by providing fun activities for everyone to rally around. The

‘white out,’ and ‘pink out’ for the girls games made playing so much more exciting, plus the support of our families and friends not only makes you a better player, but also makes you proud to be on a Saint Elizabeth sports team.”

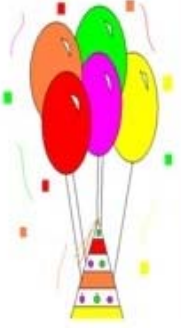
The Saint Elizabeth Athletic Ministry (SEAM) has been sponsoring CYO sports for our parish youth since 2002, beginning with junior varsity (grades 5-6) and varsity (grades 7-8) boys and girls basketball teams for the 2002-2003 season. Beginning that first season and throughout the intervening years, countless parishioners have freely offered their stewardship service as coaches, parent aides, commissioners and Board members.

This generous commitment of time and talent has enabled SEAM to steadily expand the sports activities offered at the parish. This year, SEAM sponsored volleyball, basketball, track & field, cross country, cheerleading, baseball, Crusader football (together with area parishes) and several adult sports. As we approach the fifteenth anniversary of the parish, the spirit of the *Saint Elizabeth Stars* does indeed shine bright!

-Lisa Barbadora



The Knights of Columbus held their annual basketball free throw competition at Saint Elizabeth Parish gym in January. Six winners from our parish went on to compete in the Knights of Columbus Free Throw East Region contest and three of these competitors won in the PA East District. Congratulations to the following super stars: Erin Finley- age 14 with a score of 21 baskets made out of 25. Lizzie Grant- age 9 with a score of 17 baskets made out of 25. Maggie Grant- age 11 with a score of 23 baskets made out of 25.



Join Us to Celebrate
“Fifteen Years as a Family of Faith”
Saturday - May 30, 2015

Saint Elizabeth Parish 15th Anniversary

Mass at 5:30 PM

Followed by a family celebration

Live Entertainment, Children’s Games and Activities,
 Food to purchase from local restaurants

Free cake, ice cream and soda

To help us estimate attendance, please return the bottom portion of this form to
 the Ministry Center or place it in the collection basket by Friday, May 12.
 Mail to: St. Elizabeth Parish Ministry Center, P.O. Box 695, Uwchlan, PA 19480

Family Name: _____ # Attending: _____


E-mail: _____ (for event updates)

Check here if you can volunteer on the day of the event: _____

Walk-ins are most welcome!

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