



# Ss. Peter & Paul

## CATHOLIC SCHOOL

alumni newsletter | spring 2023

210 N. Morrison Ave. Collinsville, IL 62234

# A Message from the Pastor



Dear Alumni,

Before Jesus ascended, he commissioned his disciples to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always until the end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20) We are fulfilling our commission through the school.

We have one student from our school who was baptized at the Easter Vigil. We have taught our students to observe all that Jesus has commanded us whether about the gift of God’s mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation in 2nd grade, First Eucharist and Confirmation in 3rd grade, or preparing our 8th graders for graduation and themselves being sent into the world to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In addition to daily Catholic instruction in each grade, the formation our children receive comes through Masses for the entire school on Friday and Mass for grades 5-8 on Tuesday and time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament throughout the week.

This spiritual formation, in addition to our academic and personal formation, ensures that every student in the school is being formed as a disciple, and will be prepared to be a witness to the faith upon graduation. I am proud of the disciples our students are becoming.

Our school has been forming disciples for over 150 years and we expect to continue in that mission for many more. You might remember your own experience at Ss. Peter & Paul school and the effect it has had on your life and your faith. You, along with all our other alumni, are the best witnesses to the blessing the school has been to our parish and our community and I pray that you will continue to be that witness for years to come.

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. Michael B Haag*

**Fr. Michael B. Haag**  
Pastor



## On the cover:

Kindergarten defeats 8th grade in the annual K vs. 8 tug of war match during the Catholic Schools Week Class Olympics



# Why we love Ss. Peter & Paul School

By Ben and Kristel Baffa Current School Parents

When we were asked to write you a letter about our school, we jumped at the opportunity. Our son, who will be graduating 8th grade this spring, only joined SSPP starting in 7th grade, after attending public school for K-6. So our perspective is a bit unique in that we have experienced both public and private schooling.

We knew when Mrs. Buehler gave us the tour in May 2021 that SSPP was special, and our son's attendance over the past two years has only confirmed and furthered our initial feeling. Here are a few of the ways SSPP has been so special to us:



**The teachers care.** That sounds simple enough and perhaps something we should all expect, but in our experience, that is not necessarily the case everywhere. SSPP teachers have been appropriately tough but fair. Not every SSPP teacher goes about it exactly the same, but their styles are complementary to one another. What they do not differ on is wanting the absolute best for students' futures. They take the students' success personally, demonstrating how passionate and caring they are. While they are willing to take a tailored approach according to what is best for an individual student, they do not compromise standards and hold all students to account.

**Christ-centered culture.** Everyone cares; from the principal, to the office staff, to the youth minister, to the cafeteria manager, to the athletics department. They do things according to what is best for the students and do so in a caring and compassionate manner. Because the teachers and staff put in the effort to care and to be fair, it sets them up to be able to expect the same from the students. But the teachers and staff go first, which sets the standard. They teach the Truth about Christ and what that means to us on this earth and eternally.

**The little things.** Simple things like the official report card with comments. The opportunity to participate in athletics that may not be available for all levels at a larger public school. The fact that the kids can celebrate Christmas and Easter in their original, intended forms, rather than a couple "happy holiday" songs and some pastels/bunny decorations.

We've loved the school, and feel so thankful and blessed to have found our way here. Even if we just knew it for two years, it will always hold a special place in our hearts. Please join us in supporting the school in whatever way you can, so the next generation can benefit the same way we and you have.

**Connect with us online!** Stay up to date by following Ss. Peter & Paul on Facebook and Instagram!

 [facebook.com/sspphorns](https://facebook.com/sspphorns) |  [instagram.com/sspphorns](https://instagram.com/sspphorns) | **#BeGrowMakeDisciples**

# School enrollment leads family deeper in faith

Third grade student, Quinn Conger, celebrated the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist at the Easter Vigil on April 8, 2023



## Four generations *and counting...*

By Dawn (Schuck) Blum '88, Alum and Current School Parent



Though four generations of my family have attended Ss. Peter & Paul School, five generations have been members of the church. My family history at Ss. Peter & Paul goes back to the mid-1930s with my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, Vito and Philipina Viviano. When they moved their family to Collinsville, they opened Viviano's Grocery Store across the street from the church, became parishioners, and, subsequently, sent their children to the school. Rosalia Viviano, my grandmother, and her siblings, Tony, Gus, Joe, Nino, Theresa (Wendler), Catherine (Benvenuto), and Angie (Anderson),



attended the school and the church. Generations to come would continue that trend. My mom, Mary (Dee) Viviano, myself, my siblings, Darla and Allen Schuck, and my daughters, Hailey and Imogen, included.

I spent nine formative years inside the walls of Ss. Peter & Paul School, though my 12-year-old self attempted to derail that. I convinced my mom to send me to North Junior High the summer before my eighth-grade year. It took less than a week to realize I had made a mistake. The importance of my friends and the close-knit

classroom I had left behind became glaring, so I returned. While I walked away with an excellent education, I also learned about respect, integrity, accountability, friendship, and faith.

At 18, I had my first daughter, Hailey. When it came time to enroll her in school, I felt unsure about my place in the church. However, in a time of uncertainty, Father John and the community of faculty, staff, and parishioners embraced us. Hailey experienced an outstanding education, acquired strong values, and made three lifelong best friends at Ss. Peter & Paul.

Fast forward 25 years, yes, 25 years. In our early 40s, my husband, Rob, and I welcomed our daughter Imogen into our lives. So when we began searching for a preschool, enrolling her at Ss. Peter & Paul only made sense. The same warm feeling greeted us all those years later.

Father John, Mrs. Buehler, who was once Hailey's fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Sax, Mrs.

Delfina, Mrs. Gaither, Mrs. Jayne, and the rest of the community made our decision easy. Imogen loves school, including library time with Mrs. Laswell, who was my third-grade teacher, and music with Ms. Popovchak-Erickson, who was also Hailey's music teacher. Amid this wealth of generational traditions, we count ourselves lucky.

Ss. Peter & Paul has been enriching our family for five generations. We are so grateful for the lasting commitment to faith-based quality education. In the coming years, I look forward to getting to know Father Mike, Imogen's future teachers, and others who may join us along our path. Here's to generation number six!

Thanks especially to my family and the Ossola, Kress, and Bass families for their unwavering support as I navigated through some precarious times and to Mark Vojas for contacting me to share my story.

# Sponsor YOUR School!

**Ss. Peter & Paul Catholic School is calling on our alumni community to help ensure that our school continues to advance our mission of forming disciples in the Collinsville area for generations to come!**

Corporate and family sponsors will be recognized throughout the year at school and parish events, in print and digital media, and more! If your family or business is interested in sponsoring our school for the 2023-24 school year, contact the finance office for more information.

**Jeffrey Gurlen, Finance Director**  
**[jgurlen@saintspeter-paul.org](mailto:jgurlen@saintspeter-paul.org)**

## A message from the Principal

Dear Ss. Peter & Paul Alumni,

Greetings! I hope this letter finds you in good health. One of the reasons that you are receiving this letter is so that we can build on the friendship that started with you many years ago when you attended Ss. Peter & Paul School. It's easy to keep in touch with some of you as we still see you at Mass or at functions around town. Some of you are even teachers here! For those of you who have moved away or simply lost touch, you are not forgotten. We would love for you to write to us and let us know how you're doing and your accomplishments.

As I reflect back over this school year and years past, one thing that stands out is that our traditions keep us connected. Some things are very much the same. You may remember your eighth-grade graduation party where you celebrated all the years that you attended school here and the friendships that you made. One of my favorite parts about the celebration is the class video. It's heartwarming to see how much each child changes throughout the years. Many of you still stay in touch with your friends from SSPP. I remember several years ago a former student passed away. The support that her classmates gave to one another was inspiring. They even sat together just like they did when they attended school here. Hearing them reminisce about their time as classmates was truly comforting. I bet you have stories about your time here.

While some things remain the same, other things have changed. We no longer have separate recesses for boys and girls. My first year of teaching at SSPP was in 2000. Not only did the students have separate recesses (on the parking lot), but they also stood in separate lines. We didn't have air conditioning, so the beginning of the school year had shortened days or we taught in places like the cafeteria. I'm happy to report that we have air conditioning and a large, grass

playground. (We are in the process of updating the playground equipment.)

The students still participate in activities like the Young Authors Writing Competition, the 4th Grade Jamboree, and the Catholic Schools Week Class Olympics. We also participate in and host the regional Catholic Schools Speech Meet. This year, we reintroduced clubs that you may remember like Chess Club and Book Club and also started a new Lego Robotics Club. The students are having a lot of fun with all of these activities. Some clubs that our students would like to add next year are baking and drawing.

One activity that we are reminded about frequently is the Ss. Peter & Paul picnic. Everyone seems to have fond stories to tell and many have expressed an interest in having it again. Unfortunately, we don't have the manpower to have a picnic as large as the one that we used to have, but we are going to have a scaled-down version of it. We are excited and hopeful that it will be an event that people will love. The Grill & Chill Block Party is Friday, May 19th and Saturday, May 20th. Old Herald Brewery & Distillery, the Knights of Columbus, and the Ladies Auxiliary are teaming up with us to host it. Old Herald is creating a special beer and spirit just for us! There will be live music, delicious food, games, a bags tournament, and more. We hope that you will be able to join us for the fun!

You will be in our prayers, and we hope that you will continue to pray and support us as we continue to spread the message of Hope and Love that only Jesus can provide.

God's Blessings to you,



**Mrs. Julie Buehler**

Principal  
jbuehler@sspeter-paulschool.org



**Help us update our records!** Visit the online Alumni Hub to update your contact information to keep our alumni records current and invite your classmates to do the same!  
[sspeter-paulschool.org/alumni](http://sspeter-paulschool.org/alumni) | [alumni@sspeter-paulschool.org](mailto:alumni@sspeter-paulschool.org)





First graders, Graysen Mitchell and Wesley Anderson, celebrate after winning a challenge in the Class Olympics



Eighth graders, Allyson Roedl and Hayden Payne, at the Speech Meet with coach, Kimberly Zagorski, and principal, Julie Buehler



Third grader, Emma Moll, practicing for the weekend chess tournaments held at local Catholic schools



One team of the new Lego Robotics Club works to assemble and animate their Lego robot with an online program



## Faculty & Staff

**Rev. Michael B. Haag**, Pastor

**Rev. John P. Beveridge**, Pastor Emeritus

**Julie Buehler**, Principal

**Mark Vojas '11**, Pastoral Associate

**Jayne Knoebel**, Administrative Assistant

**Don Cherry**, 8th Grade

**Melissa Martin '85**, 7th Grade

**Grace Shortall**, 6th Grade

**Kim Cruz**, 5th Grade

**Kimberly Zagorski**, 4th Grade

**Denise Gurlen**, 3rd Grade

**Sara Kiefner**, 2nd Grade

**Suzanne Wilde**, 1st Grade

**Christine Scott '05**, Kindergarten

**Megan Sax**, Preschool, 4-year-olds

**Kelley Gaither**, Preschool, 3-year-olds

**Amy Biermann**, Preschool Aide

**Delfina Kircher**, Preschool Aide & Spanish

**Jennifer Knebel**, Preschool Aide

**Mary Campbell**, Art

**Kathy Cook**, Reading Specialist

**Sharon Laswell '64**, Library

**Debbie Popovchak-Erickson**, Music

**Nick Pyles**, Band

**Rainy Reinhardt '92**, PE & Technology

**Eileen Yobby**, Library

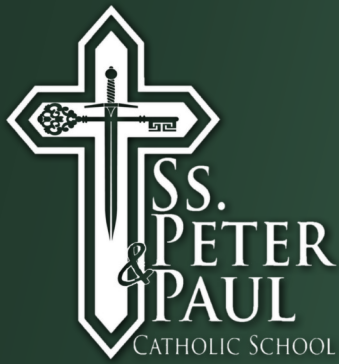
**Jeffrey Gurlen**, Finance Director

**Sara Dupaix**, Outreach & Fundraising Coordinator

**Dave Launhardt**, Facility Supervisor

**Chelsea Youngblood**, Cafeteria Manager

**Mary Benson-Goodisky**, Cafeteria Assistant



## Ss. Peter & Paul CATHOLIC SCHOOL

210 N. Morrison Ave.  
Collinsville, IL 62234

### Donate online!

Help ensure that another generation of Hornets receives a quality, faith-filled education by donating to your school today!

[sspeter-paulschool.org/donate](https://sspeter-paulschool.org/donate)



### Contact us!

618.344.5450

For enrollment information or to schedule a school tour, email Principal Julie Buehler.

[jbuehler@sspeter-paulschool.org](mailto:jbuehler@sspeter-paulschool.org)

### Pray for us!

God, our Father,  
Bless and protect our school.  
Guide us on the path that leads us to You. Help our students to become faithful disciples, grow in their love for you, and make disciples of others.

St. Peter and St. Paul, pray for us.  
Amen.



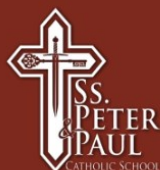
## SAVE THE DATE

# GRILL & CHILL BLOCK PARTY

*A time for food, friends, and fun*

**May 19 - 20, 2023**

4 - 11 pm



**Old Herald**  
Brewery & Distillery  
Collinsville, IL