

For Immediate Release

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Local School Ready to Meet Challenges of New School Year

St. Michael Parish School Prepared for the Academic and Economic Challenges the 2010-2011 School Year Brings

August 17, 2010– Wheaton, Illinois – On August 24, St. Michael School will officially open its doors to students, marking the beginning of a new school year.

While the Catholic School is not immune to the challenges presented by the current economy, the administration is pleased that heading into the 2010-2011 school year there have been not only no program cuts and that all staff positions have been retained, but also that the school is not offering an all-day Kindergarten option.

“We’ve always run a fiscally tight ship,” said school principal, Marcia Opal. “St. Michael has a strong tradition of dedicated teachers and staff, as well as a dynamic volunteer base. We also receive support from our Parish family. It really does take an army to keep such a large school operating at a high-level.”

St. Michael Parish School competes promisingly in both academics and athletics. This year will be no exception. Football and cross country teams begin practices in August. Girls’ volleyball try-outs will take place at the start of the school year. On the academic field, students look forward to competing locally, regionally and even perhaps nationally in this year’s Spelling Bee, Science Fair and National Geographic Bee.

The beginning of the school year, also marks the beginning of new Spanish Teacher, Mrs. Christine Carrillo’s career at St. Michael. She is a native speaker who is fluent in both Spanish and English. Mrs. Carrillo graduated from the College of the Holy Cross and holds both an undergraduate degree and Masters Degree. She has taught in both Catholic and public schools and holds several endorsement certificates. She has also planned and carried out international service-learning trips to El Salvador.

With outstanding academic programs, top-notch athletic teams, a vibrant cultural curriculum and a deeply spiritual community, St. Michael Parish School continues to set and raise the bar for elementary education.

About St. Michael Parish School

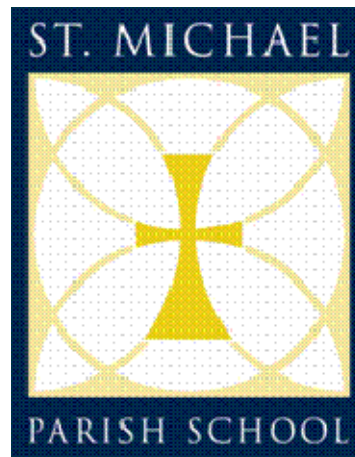
Centrally located in downtown Wheaton, St. Michael Parish School is the town’s only Catholic Elementary School. St. Michael offers Grades 1-8, a Kindergarten, and a three-year-old and four-year-old Preschool. The school is operated under the Diocese of Joliet. St. Michael School families reside in Wheaton, Winfield, Carol Stream, Lisle, Glen Ellyn, West Chicago and Warrenville. In addition to the core curriculum, the school offers a wide variety of extracurricular opportunities, including scouting, band, athletics, and various other clubs and activities. All students also participate in service projects throughout the school year that allow them to actively put their Catholic faith in action. St. Michael Parish School is fully recognized by the State of Illinois.

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FACTS SHEET

School Name: St. Michael Parish School

Logo:



Business Function: Pre-K–8 Education

Year Founded: 1882

Leadership: Marcia Opal, Principal
Fr. Don E. McLaughlin, Pastor
Colleen Brodhead, Assistant Principal
MaryAnn Sweeney, Office Administrator

Employees: 60

Location: 314 W. Willow Ave.
Wheaton, IL 60187

Ownership: St. Michael Parish School is a ministry of St. Michael Catholic Church.

Total Number of Students: 598

Enrollment Opportunities: Some openings in 3-year-old preschool and kindergarten

Diocesan Information: St. Michael Parish School lies within the boundaries of the Joliet Diocese

BACKGROUNDER

Opening Doors for Children Since 1882

Construction on the first Wheaton Catholic Church was finalized on May 29, 1882. Immediately classrooms were established in the basement for the purpose of instruction the children of the parish. The School Sisters of St. Francis taught the classes to these children. The Pastor lived in the basement of the church.



Unfortunately in 1911 the church was severely burned. However, faithful parishioners salvaged wood from the old mission church and used it to build a frame school building. By the early 1920's, the parishioners were convinced that a more sturdy school building was needed for their children. In October of 1923, the oldest section of the present building was completed.



In the early to mid forties every available space of the building was put to use. A section of the third floor was used as a gym, and movies were shown in the projection room which is the present attic of this portion of the building.

By the late fifties and early sixties, the Catholic population of Wheaton had grown significantly. Once again, the parishioners added another addition to the school. This is presently the middle section of the building, which contains first and second grade on the first floor, and Junior High on the second. During these years, the School Sisters of St. Francis staffed St. Michael School. In the late sixties, it became necessary for them to leave this ministry at St. Michael. For a few years, the school administrator was a lay person. In the fall of 1974, under the influence of Bishop Blanchette of Joliet Diocese, the Sisters of Notre Dame from Toledo Ohio, came to be part of the educational system of St. Michael School. Over the years, a number of Sisters had been a part of St. Michael School's educational staff.

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Continuous progress has been made over the years. In the seventies, once again, St. Michael Parish School was experiencing an increase in enrollment. At that time, the physical education classes were held in the old church building and in the basement. Before long, plans were made for adding another section onto the already existing building. This section, which is the present office area, gym, and parish center, was complete by the Fall of 1985.

As ever new and improved educational trends evolved over the years, St. Michael Parish School added a curriculum for Kindergartners in 1975. A program for four-year olds was added in 1997 and three-year olds in 1998.

At each turning point in the history of St. Michael Parish School, faithful, generous parishioners have supported the expansions and progress of our School. As we continue to move through the next millennium, we are proud to carry on the Catholic tradition of spreading the Good News of Jesus that was initiated by our fore bearers more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago. Now, as then, we continue to provide our students with an academic curriculum that equips them to enter the future with pride in their Catholic heritage and skills to meet the needs of the times.



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BIOGRAPHY

Marcia Opal

Principal, St. Michael Parish School



Principal, Mrs. Marcia Opal, has proudly run St. Michael Parish School since 2006. Leading the school of approximately 600 students and 60 staff members, encompassing grades preschool through eight, she has demonstrated her commitment to learning, leadership and excellence.

With a passion for child development and an insightful understanding of best practices, Mrs. Opal expanded the fine arts programming, enriched and accelerated the mathematics curriculum, developed the Foreign Language Program, mentored teachers pursuing a master's degree in Education, and established on-site after-school care. Under her leadership, the school has continued to operate at full capacity, defying the trend of declining enrollment in Catholic Schools. Principal Opal has also promoted continued learning for her staff and created leadership opportunities.

During her time at St. Michael, Opal has also worked with administrative committees to enhance the physical environment of St. Michael Parish School; generating funds for the completion of a conveyance system, an outdoor play space and classroom, a library learning center and updated technology.

A curriculum expert, Mrs. Opal is an Adjunct Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Lewis University. She currently serves on several diocesan committees focused on Catholic education. Additionally, Mrs. Opal has been instrumental in the development of the diocesan teacher evaluation system. St. Michael Parish also enjoys her service as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharistic.

Before coming to St. Michael Parish School, Mrs. Opal was the Assistant Principal of Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Glen Ellyn for 5 years. She also brings to the table 20 years of classroom experience, having taught preschool and kindergarten, in addition to first, second and fifth grades. Mrs. Opal holds an M.A in Curriculum and Administration from National Lewis University, as well as an M.A. in School Administration from the Northern Illinois University. She is certified to teach at all grade levels.

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BIOGRAPHY

Reverend Don E. McLaughlin

Pastor, St. Michael Catholic Church



In 2002, Fr. Don McLaughlin, a self-professed 'simple parish priest,' found himself in the midst of upheaval, as just nine months after assuming his role as pastor of St. Michael Parish the church building burned to the ground.

Fielding media inquiries, counseling parishioners, and working with the Joliet Diocese and other faith communities, he eventually led the church "out of the ashes," dedicating a new church in March 2006. Throughout the 4-year building project, Fr. McLaughlin successfully balanced the demands of overseeing a \$13 million capital campaign with his equally important pastoral duties.

Fr. Don E. McLaughlin began his theological studies in 1977 and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph Imesch in Joliet, Illinois on October 10, 1981. Prior to his priestly ordination, he served as a deacon at St. Margaret Mary Church in Naperville from 1981-1982. He was also assigned as an Associate Pastor at St. Alexander, Villa Park (1982-1985), St. Philip, Addison (1985-1989), St. Walter, Roselle (1989-1990), and St. Charles Borromeo (1990-1993).

In 1993, he was named parochial administrator of St. Charles Borromeo, and later that year was named pastor, where he served until June 2001.

In October 2006, Fr. McLaughlin celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood at St. Michael Church. Members of many of the parishes in which he had served came to the Wheaton church to celebrate this milestone.

The mission to "build Church" has been driven by Fr. McLaughlin. During 2010, Fr. McLaughlin made a promise to bring people back to church and build community among parishioners and with St. Michael Church through special initiatives such as the neighborhood masses in parishioner homes. These services deepened the personal connection with parishioners and interested members of the local community.

In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, Fr. McLaughlin will work to move St. Michael to the next level in connecting with parishioners and building a culture of true stewardship.

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TESTIMONIALS

Why do current families love St. Michael Parish School? Why did they make the choice to send their children here in the first place?

NAME ONE THING YOU LOVE ABOUT ST. MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL.

1. Every child is important. St. Michael is such a well-run school. – The Pesavento Family
2. The community feel of teachers and parents is so nice. – The Scheib Family
3. Being new to the school, we have continuously encountered friendly faces who are always willing to help and make us feel welcomed. – The Farinha Family
4. St. Mike's is always growing, improving and moving forward. – The Johnston Family
5. We have a "secure," "safe" feeling every time we leave our children in the care of its faculty and administration. We truly feel our children are getting one of the best educations around! Thank you!! – The Hanrahan Family
6. Education starts with a preschool program and continues through 8th grade (can attend same school for 10-11 years!). – The Pinski Family
7. The dedication shown to make sure each child has the opportunity to grow and learn to his or her fullest! – The Errera Family
8. I love that my kids can pray and celebrate the religious holidays at St. Mikes! – The Peck Family
9. I love the variety of activities that are available to the children. – The Petrando Family
10. One thing?! There are many things we love: the strong Catholic identity, the dedicated and faith-filled staff, the tight-knit community of families and students, the ties to the parish. – The Smith Family
11. My children LOVE to come to St. Michael. The teachers are very enthusiastic and dedicated to their jobs, which makes it a wonderful place to be. – The Doerries Family
12. The healthy Jr. High atmosphere – good teachers, good families, good kids. – The Duguay Family
13. We love prayer daily, Mass weekly, sacrament preparation, Faith in Action and all of the ways that their faith is part of their DAY. – The Weithers Family
14. I love that we go to Mass as a school each Wednesday. – The Sitley Family
15. I love its smallness, warmth and community!! – The Valadka Family
16. The teachers, of course! – The Cycenas Family
17. The closeness of a warm and loving, smaller Catholic school! – The Buchholz Family
18. Uniforms – one less distraction. – The Rhee Family
19. The teachers are absolutely amazing! They truly want the best for my child. – The Richard Family
20. We love the family feel we have at this school. – The Armbrust Family
21. The excellent teachers! – The O'Hare Family
22. Discipline. – The Sibi Family

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23. My children are in a protective cocoon here at St. Michael's. They stay innocent longer and are not exposed to many of life's seedier things. – The Hart Family
24. The community! It is phenomenal! – The Fahey Family
25. Friendly atmosphere and welcoming staff. – The Joniak Family
26. Great sense of community you don't get at a public school. – The Gallagher/Milasius Family
27. The confidence that the staff and other students have instilled in my children. – The McGrath Family
28. The teachers are awesome. My children have learned and excelled in all areas of education. – The Field Family
29. The overall community of individuals who understand the importance of faith in education. There is more to school than math and science... – The Smith Family
30. Our children get to attend Mass during their school week, they get to be with classmates with the same religious beliefs that are valued, and get to prepare for their sacraments as part of their every day. – The Heise Family
31. The loving atmosphere. – The Gallagher Family
32. The STAFF! – The Mohan Family
33. How the staff genuinely cares for each child. – The Dugan Family
34. Focus on and dedication to each and every child. You make them feel special and loved! – The Ingold Family
35. The teachers are wonderful and loving. – The Rice Family
36. One thing I love about St. Michael School is that all the staff, office staff, everybody seem to be so helpful and approachable and very friendly. Also, very organized. – The Trapani Family
37. The community - the parents, teachers and staff have common goals and are so involved in all aspects of the school. – The Jensen Family
38. The community feeling – it feels like a big family! – The Beck Family
39. I love the passion our parents have for bettering our children for the good of our world. – The Ryson Family
40. That everyone really cares about helping the children. – The Murray Family
41. Small grade size, family atmosphere, and the kids grow up together (retention). – The England Family
42. Everyone I have encountered is so friendly, welcoming and helpful. – The Shackelford Family
43. We love the teachers and their dedication to not only educating our children academically but also religiously. – The McDonald Family
44. The loving Catholic community. – The Lowe Family
45. The Faith in Action program. – The O'Mara Family
46. Teachers! Mrs. White and Mrs. Purcell. They are heroes to me for all that they do. – The Smith Family
47. The dedication of the teachers to give each child a feeling of security along with an education. – The Madden Family

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48. Parents are involved in the school. – The Harrington Family
49. The teachers' love for the students. – The Elkins Family
50. Mrs. Kos & Mrs. Klockars! – The Brennan Family
51. Sense of community throughout the entire school. – The Clark Family
52. It is very personal. The school gives my child a sense of community. – The Keough Family
53. It is a great school. Excellent education with focus on traditional Roman Catholic teaching. – The D'Anca Family
54. A lot of great families and wonderful teachers. – The Haley Family
55. The teachers! – The Gottlieb Family
56. More complete and varied learning curriculum. – The Madigan Family
57. Sense of community. (Thanks for all you do.) – The Hosteny Family
58. The commitment to providing students with a Catholic education and identity. – The Hickey Family
59. It's warm, welcoming. Hospitably - there is always someone to assist you; makes you feel a part of a family. It's contagious! – The Gryniewicz Family
60. The feeling of family, sense of community, wonderful teachers and staff. – The Armbrust Family
61. I love the community atmosphere at SMS. It is common to see open staff positions filled by parents of current or former students of SMS. That speaks volumes that people who know St. Mike's seek to be a part of the team that works to make St. Mike's what it is. – The Moran Family
62. The integration of academics and religion. – The Shanahan Family
63. The "family" feeling the teachers, principal and administrative staff give to the families. Also I LOVE the fact that religion is part of their daily lessons. – The Menna Family
64. Organized!!! Love it! – The Hart Family
65. We have just moved to Wheaton and the people of St. Mike's and the administration have been extremely friendly and accommodating. – The Fortener Family
66. It is a "generational" school... meaning many families who went here send their children here! I love that! – The Savage Family
67. The opportunities to be a part of our children's education by volunteering. – The Vitale Family
68. I love the school Masses that the children plan. – The Whelton Family
69. We appreciate the sense of community and the Catholic identity that is fostered daily. – The Eckroth Family
70. The wonderful teachers! – The Vires Family
71. The teaching and administrative staff are welcoming and have a vision for what the school should accomplish. – The Eckert Family
72. The sense of community that is visible through all of the activities planned for families. – The Sheahin Family
73. We love the St. Michael School community. – The Green Family
74. People wanting the same values for their children. – The King Family

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75. The amazing education; the true passion of the staff is evident just by walking into the school. – The Carroll Family
76. When I came in to pick up a sick child, the office staff was so friendly. They made a stressful situation much better. And, the quality education! – The De Feo Family
77. The people! Especially the teachers! – The Donlevy Family
78. The staff and the energy they radiate every day. – The Via-Reque Family
79. I love the focus on service to others and that each grade does service projects. – The Rhee Family
80. Welcoming feeling of friends. – The Corrigan Family
81. I love the sense of community about St. Michael's and the warm welcome I've felt being a new family. – The Lindeman Family
82. The wonderful families we've met and the great teachers we've had thus far. – The Swiatek Family
83. I love the feeling of family that embodies the school, the strong sense that St. Mike's families are a community. – The Gaul Family
84. Open communication, small community. – The Baker Family
85. The teachers, Catholic education, going to Church, the curriculum, staying at one school for nine years. – The Schmitt Family
86. Strong presence of Jesus in the classroom. – The Welgat Family
87. Great with food allergies, safe pick-up and drop-off. – The Siebert Family
88. The teachers. – The O'Keefe Family
89. I love the teachers. – The Fang Family
90. Families and teachers are very friendly. – The Monma Family
91. It is so close to our house that we can walk to school. – The Giles Family
92. Teachers! And Mrs. Brodhead!!! – The Feely Family
93. Close community for kids and parents. – The Ennis Family
94. Community! – The Weinewuth Family
95. The staff! – The Oei Family
96. St. Mike's is run like a well-oiled machine. We love it. (My brother-in-law is coming in town to celebrate his St. Mike's 50-year reunion.) – The Pesavento Family
97. The family atmosphere. Everyone cares for each other. – The Ignatius Family
98. How everyone cares. Everyone welcomes us into the community. – The Penrod Family
99. Caring, loving staff! My children get to live their faith every day! – The McHugh Family
100. I love the family-oriented environment. – The Flynn Family

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NAME ONE REASON YOU CHOSE ST. MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

1. We wanted our children to obtain a first-rate education while nurturing their faith. We believe it will make them more complete individuals who value service. – The Fortener Family
2. Because St. Michael School is a Catholic pre-K through 8th grade school with an excellent reputation for academics. – The Hickey Family
3. A faith-based education to reinforce our values at home. – The Murray Family
4. We were very torn between our local school and St. Mike's. We toured both the same day, back to back. The presence of religion at St. Mike's completely won us over and we knew we belonged here. – The McNicholas Family
5. 1.) Catholic education, and 2.) Our parents did it for us. – The De Feo Family
6. SMS has a tradition of excellence in faith-based education. Not only is the school recognizably Catholic, it also provides a great education. – The Moran Family
7. Its reputation for academics, the kindness I was shown when I inquired, and I wanted a faithbased education for my children. – The Errera Family
8. There's one reason we chose St. Michael School: to provide our children with the best environment to grow in their faith. The unexpected and wonderful bonus is that my husband and I also grew in our faith. – The Smith Family
9. The commitment to teaching the "whole" child rather than just a focus on academics. – The Giles Family
10. We evaluated all the schools in the area (public and parochial) and found St. Mike's to be the best quality education for the value. – The Grynowicz Family
11. Mrs. Flynn! I went to St. Michael and I was very well prepared for high school and it was because of the teachers. – The Smith Family
12. We chose St. Michael School because of its strong ability to incorporate Christ's teachings with the daily curriculum and its proven track record of graduate successes (like high school success at Benet, St. Francis, etc.). – The Hanrahan Family
13. Religion and prayer are part of daily education. – The Pinski Family
14. The unique combination of faith and excellent education. The teachers are dedicated to the complete success of the kids. – The Smith Family
15. Well-rounded education. – The Johnston Family
16. We have chosen Catholic school education for all (7) of our children through high school. – The Buchholz Family
17. I had heard a lot of good things about St. Michael School. – The Trapani Family
18. We chose St. Michael because we wanted to provide our children with a Catholic education that was incorporated in to all of their day. – The McDonald Family
19. Great education. Sports. – The O'Shea Family

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20. To help guide my children to always try their best, never give up, and to always be kind to others. – The McGrath Family
21. We wanted a Catholic education, and we were very impressed overall with the school. – The Farinha Family
22. Will's dad went to SMS, graduated in 1985, and has the best memories ever of that experience. We wanted the same for our son! – The Gilroy Family
23. We wanted our children to be in a school where their faith was practiced as a part of every day. – The Heise Family
24. We believe that incorporating faith teachings into the every day classroom curriculum helps build respectful, strong children. St. Mike's reinforces the values our children are taught at home. It's a great team effort! – The Telzrow Family
25. I wanted Catholic values to be immersed with academics. – The Richard Family
26. We chose it for the Catholic values. – The Doerries Family
27. To have faith integrated into the daily academic environment. – The Duguay Family
28. We chose St. Michael because we think the opportunity to grow and learn in our Catholic community is invaluable. – The Weithers Family
29. Nourishing their souls with the faith! – The Rice Family
30. I went to St. Michael School and enjoyed the atmosphere, teachers, and focus on faith. – The Black Family
31. We are strong believers in Catholic education. We were very impressed with St. Mike's when we toured the school. – The Jensen Family
32. Faith-based education and the wonderful families. – The Petrandio Family
33. We feel strongly about sending our children to school with a faith-based community. – The Beck Family
34. Loving but stern educational environment, with Catholic teachings throughout the learning! – The Ryson Family
35. I came to an open house tour of the school even though I didn't really consider it the best option for my daughter. When we stopped in the Kindergarten classroom, Mrs. Kos spoke with us while the children were out for recess. She was interrupted when a student came in and needed her assistance with a "booboo." She pleasantly excused herself from the parents to assist the child. I thought, "Any teacher who values one child more than a room full of prospective parents is the one I want teaching my kids." – The Gallagher Family
36. Offered preschool through 8th grade. – The Bogdanski Family
37. We feel St. Mike's offers our children a quality education while enhancing their spiritual growth. – The Peck Family
38. Catholic values and greater discipline. – The Mohan Family
39. The opportunity to have my children taught in an environment that shows them we need to take care of others besides ourselves. – The Dugan Family
40. Group of parents who share similar priorities, interests, and focus. – The Rhee Family
41. Catholic, Christian-based education. – The Ingold Family

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42. Academics; two classrooms of each grade; community / bond with the people who presently go to SMS. – The O'Mara Family
43. To provide a good education for my child along with a Catholic environment. – The Madden Family
44. I want my child to learn to include God in all aspects of his life. – The Keough Family
45. I was a student there and loved it! – The D'Anca Family
46. Strong academics. – The Gottlieb Family
47. Solid combination of both academics and religious-based learning. – The Madigan Family
48. A chance to make your faith a part of each day. – The Yanan Family
49. Genuine faith instruction. – The Hosteny Family
50. Christian influence on a daily basis. Good education. – The Povalish Family
51. To strengthen and grow their faith every day. – The Armbrust Family
52. The kindergarten brochure noted that primary goals were to continue to enhance a child's self-esteem and to continue to enhance a child's capacity to love and be loved. Enthused about a loving, nurturing school environment. – The Rhee Family
53. Curriculum and environment. – The Menna Family
54. So they could practice their faith daily at school with other children with the same beliefs. – The Vitale Family
55. Because it's a Catholic school, and I want my children to learn more about God. Because of the discipline and curriculum. – The Pereda Family
56. I chose to send my children to a faith-based school and love that Catholic values are instilled at both home and school. – The Whelton Family
57. We choose Catholic education because we consider our faith to be the most important aspect of our children's development. – The Eckroth Family
58. Love the faith in class and at the school. – The Vires Family
59. Catholic education and the Wheaton location. – The Eckert Family
60. Through talking to others, we felt that St. Mike's would provide a nurturing environment for our children to learn. – The Sheahin Family
61. We chose St. Michael School to give our daughters the gift of a Catholic education; to prepare them academically and spiritually – a foundational building block. – The Green Family
62. Faith-based education. – The Lifka Family
63. Catholic Christian environment to have our children in. – The King Family
64. We wanted our son to have the best education and to know how important his faith is. His dad also attended. – The Carroll Family
65. We wanted our Catholic faith incorporated into our children's daily academic life. – The Salinas Family
66. It's a faith-based, nurturing environment to learn. – The Donlevy Family
67. To learn about God and learn how to treat one another. – The Tuma Family

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68. To help in the building of their faith and character. – The Via-Reque Family
69. We chose St. Michael's because we want the best education for our child with a religious and moral education as well. St. Michael's has a good reputation. – The Lindeman Family
70. We love the education, religious aspect and discipline. – The Melka Family
71. The school provides a caring and nurturing environment with academic excellence. – The Scheib Family
72. Building a faith foundation for life. – The Zinski Family
73. Because I want my children to learn about and practice their faith every day. – The Hart Family
74. To have our children feel rooted in their Catholic faith. – The Sitley Family
75. I wanted to have our Catholic beliefs be a part of their entire day at school, incorporated into academics, social and physical growth. – The Valadka Family
76. Catholic education and high expectations. – The Cycenas Family
77. Keeping our faith strong in our minds and hearts. – The Armbrust Family
78. Ability to practice religious faith every day. – The O'Hare Family
79. The religious education, the values, the community. – The Fahey Family
80. We believe in the value of a Catholic education. – The Freund Family
81. Getting the benefit of both religious ed and a great academic education. – The Swiatek Family
82. I chose St. Michael School for my daughter because I liked the belief of nurturing both the mind and spirit. I believe school is more than just reading, writing and arithmetic. – The Gaul Family
83. Faith. – The Baker Family
84. It is a great school. I went there. My four other children went there. – The Schmitt Family
85. My husband graduated from St. Mike's in 1988. He had a wonderful experience and still has many friends from his few years at St. Mike's. – The Covone Family
86. We felt a real need to choose a Catholic school: we want faith at the center of all aspects of life for our children. – The Gnorski Family
87. Catholic education. – The Brennan Family
88. To provide a good education through academics and religion. – The Elkins Family
89. To learn about God on a daily basis. – The Davis Family
90. We wanted a faith-based education that is also challenging. – The Linden Family
91. We wanted to send our children to a place that would reinforce the values we are teaching them at home. – The Flynn Family
92. A Catholic atmosphere and an education with a great reputation. – The Ignatius Family
93. Wanted my daughter to be educated in a loving, caring community and learn how to be a loving, caring person. – The Penrod Family
94. Excellent education in a Catholic environment. – The Heiberger Family
95. We are firm believers in the value of Catholic education. – The Trainor Family

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96. Reputation of quality, particularly as it applies to entrance to Catholic prep high school. – The Monma Family

97. Religion / character-based education! – The Kearney Family

98. Discipline, Catholic values, academically good school, safer environment, close-knit community with parents willing to help each other. – The Thomas Family

99. Catholic education through 8th grade. – The Cheney Family

100. I want my children to have an education based on their Catholic faith and with high academic standards. – The Harper Family

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THE ST. MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL LEGACY

One of the distinctive traits of St. Michael is the school's generational families. Here, SMS alumni talk about why St. Michael was their choice when it came time to chose a school for their children.

"Being able to recognize God as our true leader and including Him in our everyday lives is so important. Our children need to learn this while very young, which is accomplished with a Catholic education, and of course, the initial teaching by their parents. My husband Art is an alumnus of St. Michael School as well as his father – so we go way back! Our seven children are graduates of St. Michael School and we now have grandchildren who are attending St. Michael School. We have been very happy with St. Michael School over all these years."

- **Vada Armbrust**

*Art Armbrust '41, husband
Clarence Armbrust '20,
Father-in Law*



"Thirty-seven years ago I began third grade after an accident that took much of my left leg. In fifth grade, a soft spoken man gave me inspiration and wisdom that helped change my life. My wife Janet and I are blessed to have that same person teach all seven of our children. Thanks Mr. Cashin."

-**Steve Armbrust '74**

*Daniel '02 Matthew '10
Jake '03 Luke '14
Jessica '04 Nick '15
Genna '06*

"A successful elementary school is the foundation for higher learning. St. Michael provided me with that foundation, both academically and spiritually. Over the years St. Michael has continued to grow and succeed in both of these areas. This is why we have committed to providing our children with that same foundation."

- **Michael Armbrust '84**

Jack '14 Emma '15

"As my parents instilled in me, learning lasts forever. What better foundation for my children to begin than with St. Michael School where education is bound together with one common thread...God."

- **Richard Armbrust '78**

*Kellie '05 Claire '08
Casey '07*

"As with most people, I can remember each of my grade school teachers and the unique impression they made on me. As a St. Michael School graduate, these teachers have a special place not only for their role in my academic development, but also for providing faith and character development opportunities. As our children work their way through St. Michael School, it's wonderful to know that they have the same faith and character development opportunities – often in the same rooms and even sometimes with the same teachers."

- **John Moran '78**

*Joe '08 Mark '13
Molly '10*



"I chose St. Michael School because I wanted my children to grow up in a positive environment in which they would be both challenged and encouraged. There is a sense of community at St. Michael that you don't find in other schools."

- **Ed Marciniak '80**

Fred '06

"I think St. Michael is a warm, friendly, safe community and a wonderful place to learn and grow in a Catholic environment."

- **Tom Schreiber '73**

*Nathan '05 Anna '08
Kayla '06 Melinda '11*

"I had such a great experience at St. Michael School that when it came time to send my children to school, there was no question in my mind that St. Michael was the best place for them to be."

- **Colleen Schmitt (Lynch) '74**

Mark '06 Amanda '09

ALUMNA TESTIMONIAL

Hello, my name is Elena Zinski and I am a freshman at Benet Academy after nine years at St. Mike's.

I really don't know how to begin to explain how much my Catholic education has meant to me. I could tell you about the life-long friends I have made, or how easy my English class is this year, but in the grand scheme of things, those seem almost insignificant.

Instead, I would like to share with you how my *Catholic* education has changed me forever.

Our teachers at St. Michael were absolutely amazing. As I look back, it is astonishing how much time our teachers put into our education.

Our teachers stayed long-hours after school in countless days for tutoring and extra help. These amazing people always knew when a student was having trouble, and not always in school work. These dedicated individuals were like second parents: we spent one-third of the day with them, they fed us when we forgot our lunches and they comforted us when we needed it most.

These coaches of character are the perfect example of love: they are willing to give something of themselves for the good of another. They care more about the good of their students than of themselves. They are heroes.

I recently went on a religious retreat with my non-Catholic Christian friends. Between skiing and basketball, we got into a discussion about faith, particularly my Catholic faith. My friends asked me about everything: the Virgin Mary, the Eucharist, Reconciliation, the Pope, mortal sin, infant Baptism, Purgatory, Original Sin.

Throughout this hour-long conversation, I never once seemed to fall out of step. I somehow found answers to all their many questions. In the middle of our discussion, one girl turned to me and said, "Wow, you really know your stuff." I immediately responded, "Well, yeah, I've gone to a Catholic School for ten year."

My point is that although academics and friendships seemed like such an important aspect of my St. Michael School experience, and they were, I realize looking back that the greatest gift I have received is the gift of my faith.

Now after ten years of Catholic schooling when one boy at the retreat asked me, "Do you really believe all that?" I could honestly answer, "With all my heart."

As we headed off to high school, some of us went to Benet, some to St. Francis, some to North and some to South, but we were all rooted in our faith. We have been able to grow because our roots took to the soil and were nurtured and cared for by St. Michael School and our teachers. We have been strengthened in our faith so that we can tackle any obstacle. Not only that, but through our faith, we can overcome anything.

Truly, we have been changed.

*As delivered by Elena Zinski, Class of 2007, to the St. Michael Church Community,
Catholic Schools Week, 2008*

ST. MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL NOTABLE ALUMNI

1941- Arthur Armbrust – *Father, Friend, Fan, and Philanthropist* – Mr. Armbrust began working with his father, Clarence, in the Wheaton-based plumbing business. Art Armbrust started in 1918 and eventually took over Armbrust Plumbing. Among his contributions to the city of Wheaton was his service on the Wheaton Park District Board of Commissioners and the Wheaton Public Library Board. In 1984, The St. Michael School sports program gave him an award for his selfless dedication from 1956 – 1984, during which he helped organize and establish the DuPage Parochial League. In 1988, St. Francis High School saluted Mr. Armbrust for “22 years of caring services to the SFHS Community.”

1959 – Margaret Patterson- *Daughter of the First St. Michael School Lay Teacher* - Ms. Patterson, returns to the school yearly to share with students stories and artifacts from their school’s history. Ms. Patterson also recently planned her class’ fiftieth class reunion, which was very well-attended.

1961- Bill Cashin – *Thirty-Eight-Year Veteran Teacher at St. Michael School* – In his time at St. Michael, Mr. Cashin has answered calls to teach religion as well as coach various sports. He has also given his time and talent to the St. Michael community as a teacher in the St. Michael Religious Education program, a Lector and Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist. In 2002, the gymnasium at St. Michael School was named the ‘Cashin Gym’ to honor Mr. Cashin for giving St. Michael 30 years of his devoted service.

1962 – Anne Cahill – *Researcher* - As an associate professor at the University of Chicago, Ms. Cahill does researcher in the field of neurology.

1966 and 1994 - Dr. Dennis Beck, DDS and Dr. Nicole Beck Rodgers, DDS – *Father / Daughter Dental Team* - Dr. Beck has been a part of the Wheaton community his entire life. He’s a graduate of Loyola University Chicago, and he followed in his father’s footsteps to obtain his DDS degree from Loyola University in 1982. Since then he has served the residents of Wheaton as well as patients from many surrounding communities. Dr. Beck is an active member of the Chicago, Illinois & American Dental Societies. Dr. Beck is known for his excellent skill, second only to his caring manner. He deeply values the patients who have chosen to be a part of his practice. Dr. Rodgers graduated from Northwestern University undergraduate followed by the University of Illinois at Chicago with her DDS degree in 2007. She has since been practicing with her father and she loves it. Additionally, Dr. Rodgers spends her Tuesday’s teaching at UIC’s College of Dentistry. Dr. Nicole is a member of the Chicago, Illinois & American Dental Associations

1972 – Clarice Loiancono – *Small Business Owner and Industry Leader* – Ms. Loiancono has owned her own day spa for over 18 years. Clarice has won first place in numerous national makeup competitions. Her work has also been published in the industry’s leading publications. Clarice is an educator and trainer for YG Laboratories and has recently started the Butterfly Education Group – “Bringing the Esthetician from Out of the Cocoon to the Passion of the Beauty of the Industry.”

1972- Maureen (Cahill) Pratscher – *Politician* – Ms. Pratscher has held elected office as a councilwoman in the village of Deer Park, Illinois.

-More-

1974 – Dr. Steve Armbrust – *Renowned Physician* - A family practice doctor recognized by Chicago Consumer Checkbook magazine as one of Chicago's top doctors, Dr. Armbrust focuses on building caring, lasting relationships with his clients. He enjoys finding the difficult answers to complex problems and allowing patients to resume a normal, healthy life. In his practice he utilizes his experience with family and faith. In 2004, he was selected by the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians as the Family Physician of the Year. He attended Chicago Medical School. There, he was awarded the Outstanding Medical Student Dean's award.

1978 – John Moran – *Advocate for Catholic Education* – Mr. Moran works as the Director of The Patron's Program with The Big Shoulders Fund, which provides support in a variety of areas working to leverage the greatest positive impact on the nearly 25,000 inner-city students served in Chicago. The Patron's Program, which complements the other Big Shoulders programs by providing not only funding, but also the time and talent of committed Chicagoans who become directly involved in providing strategic planning and other advisory services to help the schools operate as thriving organizations. Patrons work to achieve two key goals: enhancing the academic success of today's students, while also improving the long-term prospects for the school to continue providing great education to needy children. Mr. Moran has also served on the St. Michael School Board, the Diocesan School Board and the St. Michael Parish Development Committee.

1982 – Bob Beck – *Attorney, Small Business Owner and Community Leader* - Robert C. Beck is the founding attorney of RCB Law Offices of Robert C. Beck, Ltd. (RCB). Utilizing an effective team approach, Bob serves individuals, families and corporate clients in the areas of Business and Corporate Law, Real Estate, Estate Planning, Elder Law, Trust Administration & Probate Litigation, Special Needs Planning and Legacy Planning & Wealth Preservation. Having a strong, personal commitment to community, Bob demonstrates his dedication and support by volunteering his time on local committees and serving on many community affiliated boards and professional organizations, including the DuPage County Estate Planning Council, DuPage Community Foundation, Next Generation Steering Committee, DuPage Children's Museum Board of Trustees. He is also the Chapter President of the Business Networking International and a past Chair of St. Michael Church Pastoral Council. All three of Mr. Beck's children attend St. Michael School.

1984 – John Messitt - *Hollywood Jack of Trades* – Mr. Messitt works as a Director of Photography/ Camera Operator. Some of his Notable Projects include Campus Ladies, Bones and American Idol. Mr. Messitt also serves as the 1st Vice President of The Society of Camera Operators. Jack will be directing his first movie this summer – Midnight Movie - a horror film. He co-wrote the screenplay and named a character after his favorite teacher at St. Michael, Mr. Cashin.

1984- Ron Severino - *Physician and Charity Director* – Dr. Severino is a family physician at Cornerstone Medical Group in Wheaton. Ron also works at Central DuPage Hospital serving presently as chairman of the Family Medicine department. Ron and his wife, Liz, have created a charity, Frankie's Fund, to help meet the needs of children with special needs.

1984 – James Sugrue - *Business Leader* – Mr. Sugrue works as Senior Corporate Counsel Sega's head office. He is Senior Corporate Counsel for the Sega Corporation, Tokyo, Japan.

-More-

1986 - Dan Proft – *Conservative Thought Leader and Small Business Owner* - A gubernatorial candidate in Illinois' 2010 Republican Primary, Dan is currently the Principal member of Urquhardt Media, a public relations firm in Chicago, a respected political commentator and host for WLS-AM 890 radio in Chicago, as well as a contributor to Human Events, School Reform News, and other conservative publications. Mr. Proft is a regular guest on local and national public affairs shows where he has tackled a wide range of local, national and international public policy issues. Among his civic pursuits, Dan serves as President of the Illinois chapter of Operation Homefront, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide assistance to military families, particularly those with a spouse serving overseas. He is also the volunteer spokesman for the Choose Life License Plate initiative, designed to fund adoption-service providers through the sale of specialty license plates in Illinois.

1987- David Scalzo – *Finance Expert and Company Leader* - Former Chief of Staff for the Proft for Governor Campaign, Mr. Scalzo is currently the COO, Sales and Client Management – Securities Division for Credit Suisse, New York. Additionally, Dave serves on the Board of Directors at Cognitive Assessment Services, Inc., which provides testing and diagnostic services to children with learning disabilities, brain injury, attention deficits and autism spectrum disorders.

1990- Julienne D. Shin – *Military* – Ms. Shin served our country as a First Lieutenant in the Marine Division, First Battalion Command She was stationed in Fallujah, Iraq.

1990, 1993, and 1997 - Dan Traver, David Traver and Tim Traver – *Brothers and Philanthropists* – The Traver family founded a charity in the name of their late mother, Dorothy. The organization is called Dorothy's Family. All proceeds benefit the medical treatment and support services of pediatric cancer patients and their families at Central DuPage Hospital. More information about Dorothy's Family, please visit: www.dorothysfamily.org

1991- Michael Serio and the Serio Family – *Inspiration and 'One Love' Advocate* – Michael Serio passed away at age 32 on January 24, 2009. At the time of his passing, Michael worked as a Vice President at Santa Barbara Bank & Trust. In their grief, the Serio family made the decision to gift memorial contributions to St. Michael School's tuition assistance fund, which helps families who have children currently attending the school and have financial difficulties that might jeopardize their children's enrollment in the school. Michael's mother, Regina Carlson, said of the decision, "There is no place that established a more solid foundation in the education and faith of my six children than St. Michael. It was with the help of the Parish and such funds that they were all able to finish at St. Michael, so it was fitting that this is where donations would go." The Serio Family has vowed to continue fundraising for the school in Michael's name.

1992 – Todd Scalzo – *Community Leader and Lawyer* – Mr. Scalzo was elected to the Wheaton City Council in April, 2009. He has been practicing law at Scalzo Law offices in Wheaton since 2004. Todd is also a member of Wheaton Chamber of Commerce, DuPage County Bar Association (Vice-Chair, Local Governance Committee), DuPage Justinian Society of Italian-American Lawyers (Seated Vice-President), Rotary Club of Central DuPage, Drake Terrace Condo Association (President), St. Michael Church and the Wheaton Sports Center.

1993 - Maggie Messitt – *Journalist and Humanitarian* – Ms. Messitt lives in South Africa. She is a narrative journalist and the Founding Director of Amazwi, a literary publication that supports impoverished African women. Additionally, Ms. Messitt is one of the founding directors for the Amazwi (a Zulu word meaning "voices") School of Media Arts, in South Africa. The school produces a literary publication "The Voice".

-More-

1993 - Anjali Raja – *Scholar and Researcher*- Ms. Raja is a Fulbright Scholar. She earned her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and is currently a researcher in the area of Neuropsychology at the University of Chicago.

1998 - Robbie Miller – *American Hero* – Mr. Miller died on January 25, 2008, in service to his country during a firefight near a border town in northeast Afghanistan. Miller joined the military shortly after high school and became a Green Beret in 2005. The following year, Miller's Special Forces detail was deployed to Afghanistan along the Pakistani border. Following his death, St. Michael Parish dedicated the Robert M. Miller Memorial Plaza, located at the northeast corner of the property, in honor of all those who are serving or have served in the Armed Forces. At the dedication ceremony, U.S. Rep. Peter Roskam stated, "He was someone who stood in the gap for us so we could have the freedom to worship here together. And friends, that is a great gift."

2000 – Colleen Murphy – *Event Organizer and Student Leader* – Ms. Murphy was serving as president of the Northern Illinois University Campus Activities Board on February 14, 2008, when a gunman opened fire in a lecture hall, killing 5 students and injuring many more. She began working immediately to help her fellow students heal by organizing a Candlelight vigil on Greek Row the same night. Over 400 students attended the vigil. On April 16, 2008, Virginia Tech held an anniversary ceremony to remember the students whose lives were lost when a gunman went on a rampage through their campus. Colleen was selected, along with students who had been in the NIU lecture hall, to represent Northern Illinois University at that anniversary ceremony. Ms. Murphy is currently employed by MB Financial Bank.

2001- Amy Nemeth – *Humanitarian and Activist* - While a senior at Loyola University, Ms. Nemeth was involved with the student organization, Invisible Conflicts, which educates the community about conflicts in the world that are ignored by Western media and governments by screening documentaries on campus and bringing speakers to the University. In 2006, Amy helped the organization start an education program in N. Uganda, East Africa. The Dwon Madiki Partnership sponsors the educations of 20 war and AIDS orphans. Amy worked with Invisible Conflicts to partner with an organization that sponsors 80 children affected by war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the summer of 2007, Nemeth traveled to Uganda, where she learned firsthand of the un-served or under-served needs of children in this part of the world.

2003- Alex Schumacher – *Published Author* – Mr. Schumacher has written a realistic fiction novel entitled "Reflections on Humanity", as well as a collection of poetry and several dramatic plays performed at St. Michael School.

2004 - Daniel Sufanski – *Top Student* – Mr. Sufanski was named the top student in the Class of 2008 at St. Francis High School. He also received the school's departmental awards in Science, Social Studies, Religion, Physical Education and Band. Among his numerous other honors, he received both the DAR and American Legion Good Citizenship Awards. He currently attends Washington University.

2004- Tony Carter – *Good Citizen* - recipient of The City of Wheaton's 2008 Good Citizen Award for outstanding service in the local community.

-More-

St. Michael School Alumni have a long history of success as they go on to high school. The following are lists of some of the awards St. Michael School alumni have recently received:

Illinois State Scholars

Stanley Bobowski (Class of 2005)
Melanie Brintnall (Class of 2005)
Elizabeth Bukala (Class of 2005)
Alyssa Calzaretta (Class of 2003)
Maria Diamond (Class of 2005)
Ryan Ferguson (Class of 2005)
Steve Garvin (Class of 2005)
Kathryn Gillhouse (Class of 2005)
Jack Healy (Class of 2005)
Peter Hensler (Class of 2005)
Meg Hickey (Class of 2005)
Tyler Hicks (Class of 2005)
Kathleen Kilrea (Class of 2003)
Elizabeth Kinsella (Class of 2005)
John Kraft (Class of 2005)
Lauren Knaggs (Class of 2003)
Samantha Laycock (Class of 2005)
Megan Lynch (Class of 2003)
Victor Sadauskas (Class of 2005)
Nathan Olver (Class of 2005)
Kyle Reynertson (Class of 2003)
Pat Sowa (Class of 2005)
Genevieve Spittler (Class of 2005)
David Sufranski (Class of 2005)
Erica Vitale (Class of 2005)
Elizabeth Vonderhaar (Class of 2005)

National Merit Scholars

Melanie Brintnall (Class of 2005), *Semifinalist*
Kathryn Gillhouse (Class of 2005), *Semifinalist*
Christine Kania (Class of 2003), *Finalist*
Beth Kinsella (Class of 2005), *Semifinalist*
Danny Sufranski (Class of 2004), *Finalist*
Dan Terrell (Class of 2005), *Semifinalist*

AP Scholar Award Winners

Nicole Bobowski (Class of 2003)
Elizabeth Cunningham (Class of 2002), *Received the Advanced Placement Scholar with Recognition Award*
Michael Gillhouse (Class of 2002)
Colleen Huml (Class of 2002)
Elizabeth Rylko (Class of 2002)
Mary Ellen Toth (Class of 2002), *earned the Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction Award*

-More-

Academic All-Conference, Football

Jake Armbrust (Class of 2003)

Brian Beck (Class of 2003)

Stan Bobowski (Class of 2005)

Ryan Ferguson (Class of 2005)

Kyle Kachmer (Class of 2003)

Mark Kachmer (Class of 2005)

DJ Lynch (Class of 2004)

John Poitras (Class of 2003)

Kyle Reynertson (Class of 2003)

Danny Sufanski (Class of 2004)

Bob Vondehaar (Class of 2004)

Academic All-Conference, Volleyball

Molly O'Toole (Class of 2003)

Megan Boken (Class of 2003)

St. Francis High School Top Ten Students

Nicole Bobowski (Class of 2003)

Kathleen Kilrea (Class of 2003)

Lauren Knaggs (Class of 2003)

-More-

Athletic Awards & Achievements

Megan Boken (Class of 2003), *member of St. Francis High School's 2006-2007 State Champion Volleyball team*

Named an 'All-Area' athlete by the Chicago Tribune

Named 'Player of the Year' by the Chicago Sun-Times, Daily Herald and Kane County Chronicle

Voted an 'All-State Athlete' by the Champaign New-Gazette

'Co-player of the Year' for the Suburban Catholic Conference,

'Most Valuable Player' at the Effingham Cross Roads Classic tournament, and 'Academic All Conference' athlete

Mike Buoniconti (Class of 2003) *Wheaton Warrenville South High School Soccer*

Given an 'All-Conference Honorable Mention' at the 2006 DVC Soccer Championship

Received Wheaton Warrenville South High School's '2007 Eye of the Tiger Award,' which is given to the player who best demonstrates the spirit and will to succeed and is an example both on and off the field

Regan O'Toole (Class of 2003), *St. Francis High School Football*

Named '2006 Offensive MVP' on the Spartan's Varsity Football team.

Named an 'All Conference' athlete a

Received St. Francis High School's *Athlete of the Year Award*.

Kyle Reynertson (Class of 2003), *St. Francis High School Football*

Named an 'All Area' athlete in football by The Daily Herald.

Named an 'All Conference' Athlete

Named his team's '2006 Defensive MVP'

Steve Dolatowski (Class of 2004), *Wheaton Warrenville South Football*

Started on the JV Football team, but moved up to the 2007 State Champion Varsity team to play on various special teams.

Will Matte (Class of 2004), *Wheaton Warrenville South High School Football*

Co-Captain and three-year starter for the Tiger Varsity Football team

Two-time All-State honoree

Twice named offensive lineman of the year in the DuPage Valley Conference

Named an 'All Conference First Team' athlete by the DuPage Valley Conference

Named an 'All-Area First Team' athlete by the Daily Herald

Named an 'All-State Second Team' athlete by the Chicago Tribune

Named an 'All-State' athlete by the Illinois Coaches Association

At Indiana University, Will started all 12 games at center during the 2009 season and allowed just one sack on the season

Named Freshman All-Big Ten by Sporting News

Selected as a CollegeFootballNews.com Freshman All-American honorable mention

Danny Sufanski (Class of 2004) *St. Francis High School Football*

Named the Spartan Varsity Football Team's '2006 Outstanding Defensive Lineman'.

Mark Kachmer (Class of 2005) *St. Francis High School Football*

Voted St. Francis Varsity Football team's '2006 Most Valuable Player.'

Julian Banelos (Class of 2006) *Wheaton Warrenville South Football*

Named a Key Performer by the Chicago Tribune following the Tiger's 2009 Championship win, for rushing 42 yards and scoring 2 touchdowns.

Matt Ives (Class of 2006), *Wheaton Warrenville South Football*

Starting Defensive Lineman for the 2009 Wheaton Warrenville South State Champion Team

Made 34 tackles, in addition to a team high 10 sacks

Named to the All-DuPage County All-Area Team by the Daily Herald

Reilly O'Toole (Class of 2007), *Wheaton Warrenville South Football*

Starting Quarterback as a Junior

Named to the DuPage County All-Area Football Team by the Daily Herald



*On January 25 2008, Robbie Miller, SMS Class of 1998 was killed in a fire-fight in Afghanistan. On **Friday, May 23, 2008**, St. Michael Church and School held a special Memorial Day dedication ceremony to honor Sgt. Miller and all St. Michael parishioners and alumni who have or are serving in the military.*

Plaza Outside Wheaton School Renamed to Honor Fallen Soldier

As reported in the Daily Herald by Jack Komperda

They came to remember Rob Miller's sacrifice and his courage, to reminisce about the life of the fallen Army sergeant and honor those who will inevitably follow his path into military service.

Dozens of family, friends and well-wishers gathered Friday at St. Michael Catholic Church in Wheaton to participate in a memorial Mass and dedicate a plaza in his name outside the church-run elementary school.

Miller, a 2003 Wheaton North High School graduate, died Jan. 25 during a firefight near a border town in northeast Afghanistan.

He joined the military shortly after high school and became a Green Beret in 2005. The following year, Miller's special forces detail was deployed to Afghanistan along the Pakistani border.

"He was someone who stood in the gap for us so we could have the freedom to worship here together," U.S. Rep. Peter Roskam told the audience. "And friends, that is a great gift."

Miller's friends recalled a man who strove to constantly challenge himself to become better at what he did.

Among the bevy of awards and citations Miller received during his brief Army career was the Army Commendation Medal for Valor.

Steven Kinsley, a Navy petty officer and one of Miller's elementary school classmates, read the narrative that accompanied Miller's reception of the Bronze Star.

"One of the first things I saw in him was his lofty ideals," said Chad Downie, Miller's high school gymnastics coach. "Rob did live life to the fullest and seized the day."

Many in attendance joined the congregation at the corner of Wheaton Avenue and Willow Street to dedicate a small plaza outside St. Michael Elementary School. A plaque will be mounted in the plaza to honor Miller and St. Michael parishioners serving military tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As schoolchildren looked out of their second-floor classroom windows and speakers paused occasionally for a passing Metra train, Miller's father thanked the audience for remembering his son's service.

"We've suffered a terrible loss," Philip Miller said. "But it seems we've been given more than our fair share. It's important to remember this (plaque) is on behalf of all the military who sacrificed for our country."





I WAS THERE

Bringing the Headlines Home



At St. Michael Parish School, students are taught to be a light in a, sometimes, very dark world.

On February 14, 2008, the entire nation was shocked and saddened by an unspeakable act of terror. A gunman dressed in black walked into a lecture hall on the Northern Illinois University Campus and open-fired on students sitting in the class. In the end, five students had been killed and many more were injured.

Colleen Murphy, SMS Class of 2000, was on the NIU campus that day. She is the current president of the NIU Campus Activities Board.

"I was in my office in the Campus Life building, the same building that the campus newspaper is in. All of the sudden I heard police sirens and a stampede of reporters coming down the hall from the campus newspaper office. Within seconds, we were put on lock-down."

"We didn't know right away who had been hurt or killed. We were shocked ... we were devastated."

That night, Colleen and her roommates decided they would not just stand by and watch as waves of pain coursed through the student population at Northern Illinois University. "I said, 'I can't just sit here and not do anything.' My roommates and I are sisters in the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority. We began to make phone calls to all the houses, telling people to meet at midnight on Greek Row and to bring candles for a vigil.

I didn't know what to expect. I just knew that being together to grieve, to pray, to maybe begin to heal, was a thousand times better than sitting in my room, scared and alone."

Over 400 students attended the Midnight Vigil on Greek Row.

On April 16, 2008, Virginia Tech held an anniversary ceremony to remember the students whose lives were lost in when a gunman went on a rampage through their campus. Colleen was selected, along with students who had been in the NIU lecture hall, to represent Northern Illinois University at that anniversary ceremony. "It was a hard to be there, but it a lot of healing took place. All of us who had the opportunity to be at Virginia Tech and to offer our support to them, went back to DeKalb in a different place.

At NIU, Colleen served as the Associate Vice President of Public Affairs, Vice President of Administration, and President of Northern Illinois University's Campus Activities Board.

She has also held the positions of Student Association Senator, and Activities Chair, Social Chair and Rituals Chair for her sorority, Alpha Sigma Alpha, and the Vice President of Huskies United, a group created to united the NIU community in response to the shootings

She has also received Northern Illinois University Junior Leadership Award, Emerging Leader Award, Senior Leadership Award and the NIU Institutional Scholarship.

Ms. Murphy is currently employed by MS Financial Bank.



Art Armbrust (Class of 1941)



St. Michael School Alumnus, **Arthur A. Armbrust**, father of seven and friend to hundreds, died on Thursday, June 25, 2009 after decades of service to the many communities to which he was connected. A funeral Mass celebrating his life will be held on Monday, June 29th at noon at St. Michael's Church in Wheaton, where he was baptized 81 years ago.

Born in Wheaton in 1927, he attended St. Michael's grammar school, Wheaton High School, Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa and Arizona State University in Tempe. After marrying Vada Doyle of Glen Ellyn in 1951, he began working with his father Clarence in the Wheaton-based plumbing business the elder Armbrust started in 1918. Despite living a life of significant accomplishment, the roles he cherished most were as father, friend, fan and philanthropist.

His life was full of achievement, centered on giving to others. Some of his many civic contributions were publicly recognized. In March of 1971 the Wheaton Park District Board of Commissioners passed a resolution that said, in part, "When the life and times of Arthur Armbrust are recorded surely the past six years of service to the Wheaton Park District will be listed as one of his most rewarding contributions."

One of the awards he most appreciated was becoming Rotary International's first "Mr. Four-Way Test" award recipient in 1973 for service to the school and business community.

He thought Rotary's four-way test was the credo to a life lived well, demanding one to ask of one's actions and activities:

- Is it the truth?
- Is it fair to all concerned?
- Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
- Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

He served on the Wheaton Public Library Board from 1974 – 1977. The St. Michael's school sports program gave him an award for his selfless dedication from 1956 – 1984, during which he helped organize and establish the DuPage Parochial League. In 1988 St. Francis High School saluted him for "22 years of caring services to the SFHS Community."

Next to the ever-present support of his family, he was a relentless supporter of the underprivileged and underappreciated, reaching out to the disabled and those discriminated against. As an upperclassman at Morningside College in the late '40's, he organized the back-to-school dance to welcome George Allen as the school's new head football coach. When he learned that the dance hall he had rented would not allow the African Americans from the football team and school to attend, Mr. Armbrust changed venues and found a hall that was open to all.

He died at the age of 81 in the family room of his home in the company of his wife Vada and his seven children. Art Armbrust, lifelong resident of Wheaton, adopted son of Cedar City, Utah, a man for all seasons and people.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Vada (Doyle) Armbrust, 7 children and 30 grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister Betty Sonnek and numerous brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

He was preceded in death by his parents Clarence and Clara Armbrust.



Dan Proft (Class of 1986) Dave Scalzo (Class of 1987)



On June 23, 2009, St. Michael School alumnus **Dan Proft** (Class of 1986) announced his candidacy for Governor of the State of Illinois.

Proft and campaign Chief of Staff and SMS alumnus, **Dave Scalzo** (Class of 1987) recently visited the school. Dan spoke with gratitude of his educational experience at St. Michael. An experience which Proft said, "provided foundation as well as direction. Your spirituality plays a large part in forming your worldview. Faith, as well as opportunities to both serve and lead, were integrated into a rigorous curriculum."

"I remember how tough the teachers were. Failure was a concept, but not really an option ... I think the measure of the quality of an education is summed up in the William Butler Yeats quote, 'Education is not the filling of a pail. It is the lighting of a fire.' And that's what happened at St. Michael, we were engaged at a young age ... it was instilled that our success was bigger than us.' "

To which Scalzo added, "Dan and I were taught that every person is given unique gifts and talents and that we have a responsibility to use those gifts and talents to better our world and the situations of others."

Upon learning of her former student's candidacy, Gloria Martin sent Dan a note saying, she was "very surprised and proud of you. I can still picture you in my third grade class at St. Michael and somehow knew that that boy would be somebody. You were always a perfectionist and I am sure that that piece of talent helped you achieve the goals you've set for yourself. May God bless you and help you on the road to the Governorship. I will be keeping you in my prayers."

Peggy Flynn, who taught Proft and Scalzo in junior high, remembers both as being very bright. "They both won awards for the Science Fair in 1986. Dan was very friendly and outspoken. Dave was outgoing and very well-liked."

From his beginnings at St. Michael, Proft graduated from Benet Academy, Northwestern University and Loyola University School of Law. For the past 15 years, he has slugged it out in the political arena, working for Lee Daniels and other state and local government offices.

He is a small business owner, running his own public affairs company, but he is most widely-known as the political commentator for Chicago's morning radio show, The Don Wade and Roma Show on 890 WLS.

Among his civic pursuits, Dan serves as a Board member for the Illinois Chapter of Operation Homefront, a non-profit whose mission is to provide assistance to active duty military families, particularly those with a spouse serving overseas.

Adoption and life issues are close to Dan's heart. As many of his classmates may know, Dan was adopted at birth by Larry and Carol Proft nine months before the Roe v. Wade decision. Dan has served on the Associate Board of The Cradle an Evanston-based adoption agency. He is also a volunteer for the Choose Life License Plate initiative, designed to fund adoption-services.

"St. Michael School has a long-held tradition of cultivating responsible servant-leaders through academic, spiritual, and social development," said Principal Marcia Opal "We see our alumni contributing in many different arenas. St. Michael School alumni carry their light forward into a dark world. Politics aside, Dan is going forth in that way: to be a voice for what he believes is right. Dan's mission is a credit to the legacy of St. Michael School."



Michael Serio (Class of 1991)



Michael Serio with his mother, Regina Carlson.

"ONE LOVE." With these words, **Michael Serio** (Class of 1991) often ended conversations with his younger brother.

As **Kevin Serio** (Class of 1994) speaks about his brother Michael, who passed away at age 32 on January 24, 2009, his voice is low, steady and determined, never cracking, but drenched in layers of raw sorrow and nostalgia.

"The main thing I want people to remember about Michael was his philosophy that you can't live angry," said Kevin. "I think St. Michael's instilled that ... He never thought negatively about anybody ... He had a lot of struggles and bad things happen, but he always saw the good in life. He never did anything half way. Michael worked hard, played hard, loved his family and was always grateful for where he was."

In his eulogy, Michael's siblings recounted many stories of their brother. He is remembered by friends and family as someone who lived with passion, worked with intention and loved with his whole heart. By age 32, Michael had worked his way up to the position of Vice President at Santa Barbara Bank & Trust.

In their grief, the Serio family made the decision to gift memorial contributions to St. Michael School's tuition assistance fund, which helps families who have children currently attending the school and have financial difficulties that might jeopardize their children's enrollment in the school.

Michael's mother, Regina Carlson, said of the decision, "There is no place that established a more solid foundation in the education and faith of my six children than St. Michael. It was with the help of the Parish and such funds that they were all able to finish at St. Michael, so it was fitting that this is where donations would go. We received condolences from many past and present families and staff members from St. Michael along with many generous donations to this fund."

On May 31, 2009, the family held a Chicago Cubs game fundraiser held at the Lakeview Baseball Club to benefit the Michael Serio Foundation for tuition assistance at St. Michael School. The fundraiser, organized by Kevin Serio, successfully raised over \$3,000.00 for the students of St. Michael School.

"Michael is and will continue to be a hero to many of our students," said St. Michael School principal Marcia Opal. "The need [for tuition assistance] is great and growing – despite impressions to the contrary. The Serio family's gift to our school in Michael's name not only makes a St. Michael School education possible for individual families, but also ensures that a Catholic Education is available to all, not just the very wealthy. In this way, Michael's light will live on. We are tremendously grateful and humbled by the generosity of the Serio family."

"One Love," says Kevin. "Michael and I knew exactly what that meant. There is too much good in the world to let things like money, jealousy or relationships cause anger in any of us. Love everything the same ... share that ONE LOVE with everyone. Live like Michael did ... fully and at peace, with an abundance of love...enjoying every second because we don't know what God's plan is and we never know when it is time for us to go to Him. For someone that live a very short 32 years, Michael did more than most people do in 100 years."

"St. Michael School is deeply saddened by the untimely loss of one of our own," says Opal. "Personally, as a mother of two adult children, my heart aches for his family. They are all in our prayers."

The school is proud of the fact that through life's challenges and adversities Michael held onto key values instilled in him as a child. "We hope all of our alumni go forward from our school with the values that were instilled in them at St. Michael School, as Michael Serio seemed to – each in their own unique way," said Opal.