

St. Raphael School blossoms in faith, science, and creativity

By Gabriela Herrera Gugiu

Spring was in full bloom this year as St. Raphael celebrated second grade First Communion, eighth-grade Confirmation, science fairs, and art exhibits.

In the weeks and days leading to our celebration of the sacraments, the halls and classrooms were filled with buzz and excitement as our second grade and eighth grade classes planned for and held their First Communion and Confirmation on May 1. At St. Raphael, we believe that education and faith formation are precious



Volunteers help Michael Shwedick of Reptile World, left, display an impressive 15-foot, 238-pound Indian rock python – the star of the show at SpringFest. Photo by MJ Zafis-Garcia

lifelong gifts that parents offer their children at home and through our school and parish. A special thanks to our faith formation teacher Mary Beaudoin for another fantastic year for our children.

Because everything thing else about this school year has been wild, our annual fundraiser, SpringFest, was no exception. Food, drinks, and a live animal show impressed our socially distanced guests. The online auction delivered impressive results thanks to the generosity of our community. We extend a special thanks to Michael Shwedick of Reptile World for his engaging and educational presentations, and

a special note of gratitude to our team of volunteers for pulling off the impossible!

The Third Grade Artists Tea is a favorite SRS tradition. Under the tutelage of art teacher Yolanda Prinsloo, our students recreated pieces by La Belle Époque masters. The class then worked with homeroom teacher Alicia Madlala to write poems describing the creations. At St. Raphael School, we are proud that the arts are an essential part of our curriculum.

Each year, science teacher Melissa Kelly guides students in

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St. Raphael School second-grade students celebrate First Communion during a historic year. Photo by Catherine Byrne

Special Recognitions

After more than 25 years of teaching, Mary Ellen Vassallo is retiring. Vassallo taught music and religion to our preschool Angels and also taught music to grades K-2. From the Chicken Dance to the Snow Dance to Shaking Hands with a Friend, Mary Ellen made music fun and allowed our students to dance, sing, and give big shouts because that's what St.



St. Raphael School bids a fond farewell to retiring longtime staff members Mary Ellen Vassallo, left, and MJ Zafis-Garcia, right, shown with Principal Teri Dwyer. Photo by Nan Waffin

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St. Raphael Parish St. Raphael School

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Congratulations, Class of 2021!



ST. RAPHAEL SCHOOL

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Lexie Beane

Stone Ridge School
of the Sacred Heart

Mia Bertolini

Quince Orchard H.S.

Isaias Blandino

DeMatha Catholic H.S.

Charlie Browning

St. John's College H.S.

Blythe Cook

Winston Churchill H.S.

Gracie Drummond

St. John's College H.S.

Cata Dulcey

Richard Montgomery H.S.
IB Program

Kiley Flaherty

St. John's College H.S.

Zach Foulkes

Gonzaga College H.S.

Lauren Johns

Stone Ridge School
of the Sacred Heart

Ryan Kaufman

Thomas S. Wootton H.S.

Meredith Kearns

Richard Montgomery H.S.

Peyton Kimmel

St. John's College H.S.

Jak Krivka

Gonzaga College H.S.

Leila Larrea

Winston Churchill H.S.

Anna Mattick

Walt Whitman H.S.

Nina Navabi

Stone Ridge School
of the Sacred Heart

Patrick O'Connor

Georgetown Preparatory
School

Anjola Somefun

Brookewood School

Nathalie Ventura

St. John's College H.S.

Caitlin Woodward

Poolesville H.S.
Global Ecology Program

Francesca Zara

St. John's College H.S.



A 2019 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

St. Raphael

SCHOOL

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sixth through eighth grade in conducting experiments for the St. Raphael School Science Fair. The long-term projects begin with a research paper in the fall and culminate into a final presentation before judges in the spring. We are incredibly proud of the hard work put in by our middle-school students, who came through with stellar projects this year.

On May 26, we will round out this historic year with our eighth-grade graduation. The Class of 2021 and their families have already been busy with end-of-the-year traditions and celebrations. See our ad honoring our graduates in this issue of *Our Parish Times*.

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St. Raphael

RECOGNITION

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Raphael is all about!

Our marketing and communications director and spirit captain, MJ Zafis-Garcia, is relocating to California after 17 years at St. Raphael. She has been a trendsetter in sharing the good news of SRS. Her videos, bulletin center pages, and social media posts helped us to celebrate milestones and promote the great things happening at the school. MJ's attention to detail challenged us to be our best. Her commitment to St. Raphael had her popping in to photograph at all times of the day, and climbing into a cherry picker was not outside the realm of possible in her quest for the perfect picture!

Join us in thanking Mary Ellen and MJ for their service and dedication to St. Raphael School and Nursery School.

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