

## A warm welcome to my fellow Saints

Dear alumnus/a,

In March of 2020 the world was confronted by a pandemic that impacted nearly every aspect of our lives. The way we worked, shopped, socialized, worshipped, interacted with others and learned changed dramatically. As an alumnus and member of the St. Mary's High School Board, I'm proud to report that your alma mater not only got through it, but did so in extraordinary fashion and is continuing to do so today.

Because of the leadership of Principal Matt Collins ('92) and his administrative team, St. Mary's High School is in a strong position for the future.

The purpose of this newsletter is to update our alumni on recent developments at the high school that may be of interest to you. And, be assured, we have every intention to step up our communication with all alumni as we acknowledge your interest in the goings-on of the school



Peter Miller ('69)

— after all, *once a Saint, always a Saint.*

### Through the Pandemic

As public schools transitioned to virtual or hybrid learning during the pandemic, St. Mary's was able to provide in-person learning for the entire 2020-2021 school year.

Enhancements were made to all campus facilities, including socially distanced classroom seating, sanitizing stations and improved air filtration systems.

Students, faculty and staff were diligent in following state and CDC guidelines in their daily activities. All of

this resulted in the school being able to remain open to in-person learning throughout the pandemic with just a few days of virtual learning.

### Diocesan Support

During the past year, St. Mary's High School transitioned from being a parish school to a Diocesan high school. This change affects only the high school and not the elementary and middle school. The high school was fortunate to receive a \$3 million grant from the Diocese with the proceeds supporting the school's academic operations, extra-curricular activities, physical facilities and other school operations.

Diocesan Superintendent Dr. Dan Baillargeon works collaboratively with Principal Collins and the School Board in providing oversight of all school operations.

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## Welcome back!

Students are greeted by faculty on the first day of school.



## A Message from Principal Matt Collins ('92)

Hello fellow Saints!

I am thrilled to send out our first official St. Mary's High School Alumni Newsletter.

Since becoming principal in 2018, I have had the pleasure to meet many alumni and have found that the support our Saints family continues to give to St. Mary's High School has overwhelmed me. It really is true that *once a Saint, always a Saint.*

As principal, I am privileged to help educate our students – many of whom are your children and grandchildren. I see the bonds they have with one another and the relationships they form with

our caring staff and I see future alums who will continue to support the Saints.

This year we have 105 students, including 30 ninth graders. This is the first time we have had over 100 students enrolled since 2014, which shows the strength of our school and the education we offer. We have also expanded our community to include students from Agawam, Easthampton, Holyoke, Southwick, Enfield and more.

Great things are happening at St. Mary's High School and I welcome you back to see them. Please contact me to schedule a visit – you may be



surprised at what has changed and what has not!

Yours in Christ,  
Matthew Collins ('92)  
*Principal*

## Strategic Plan

Two years ago, a new School Board was formed to serve in an advisory role to school administration.

Among the Board's initial duties was to finalize a strategic plan that was begun by the previous board. The plan was to serve two purposes. First, and most important, would be to provide strategic direction for the future of the high school. It focused on defining the school's mission and vision as well as strategic objectives centered around such pillars as Catholic Identity; Academic Programming; Enrollment and Marketing; and Finances.

The second purpose of the strategic plan was creation of a document submitted to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. for continued accreditation. The plan was submitted to NEASC and we await approval.

## Enrollment

It was nearly four years ago when it was announced that St. Mary's High School would be closing its doors. That announcement served as a catalyst for many to organize in a united way to refuse to accept closure. Current students and their families, faculty and staff, alumni and interested members of the greater Westfield community stepped up, raised some money, but more importantly committed to doing all that was necessary to assure that enrollment goals would be met.

The strategic plan calls for a sustained total enrollment of 100 to 125 students. Despite significant challenges, enhanced marketing efforts and an ambitious recruitment effort led by former Admissions Director Kim Jaszek, along with Principal Collins and Dean of Student Life Rob LePage, have resulted in achieving enrollment goals for the 2021-2022 school year, well ahead of the timeline called for by the strategic plan. This year, there are 105 Saints, including 30 ninth grade students.

## Great Books and University Model Schedule

In an on-going effort to provide the highest quality education possible and to



Members of the St. Mary's High School 2020 girls basketball team.

uniquely prepare students for success in college, Principal Collins strongly advocated for the enhancement of the humanities, writing, literature and social studies curriculum to give students a deeper understanding of the world around them and strengthened communication and critical thinking skills. With the Great Books curriculum, students are expected to learn using primary, rather than secondary, sources.

The 2020-2021 academic year brought with it a new scheduling model that had students taking classes on a Monday-Wednesday-Friday, and Tuesday-Thursday, schedule. This allows faculty to have students for a longer period of time in each class, which allows for a much deeper dive into the subject matter. Both the Great Books curriculum and university model schedule are initiatives that will give students a strengthened preparation for success in college. This also gave students the opportunity to dual-enroll at Our Lady of the Elms College.

## Sports

Some of us remember the days when the only sports offered were baseball and basketball for the boys and maybe basketball for the girls. Well, times have certainly changed and interscholastic sports have taken a huge leap forward.

Today, the boys are competing in baseball, basketball, soccer, golf, tennis, skiing and lacrosse. Girls compete in basketball, softball, lacrosse, tennis and soccer. Not only are the students competing, many teams have had much success and many have played in league championships. The biggest highlight in recent years was in 2018 when the baseball team won the State Championship.

## 1899 Society

So much good is coming out of St. Mary's High School. As an alumnus/a, you should be proud -- after all, *once a Saint, always a Saint.*

For your alma mater to sustain all of this good, it is critical that those who benefited most from their years at St. Mary's show their appreciation by providing financial support to the extent that they are able. We're trying to make it easy to give with our new 1899 Society. Please consider making a pledge of \$18.99 per month or more in honor of the school's founding in 1899.

Enclosed with this newsletter is an envelope to send in a donation. Or, you could donate online at [stmsaints.org](http://stmsaints.org). Visit the 1899 page or click on Give Online. Select Recurring Giving to make a monthly donation and choose 1899 Society as your designated funding area. Whatever you can afford would be greatly appreciated by the students at St. Mary's!

## Forever a Saint

I choose to stay involved with St. Mary's because I am grateful to the school and all it did to prepare me for my life experiences. In the coming months, expect to hear more from us. After a lengthy period of time when there was little communication between St. Mary's High School and its alumni, we aim to change that. We want our alumni to be fully engaged and at least be kept aware of all that is going on.

If you don't already do so, please follow the school on Facebook and check in at [stmsaints.org](http://stmsaints.org).

*We wish you all the best!*

God Bless,  
Peter J. Miller,  
Class of 1969

**Show your SAINTS spirit!**

**Saints merchandise is available for purchase at St. Mary's High School during school hours. Saints T-shirts, hoodies, hats and more make great gifts for all your favorite Saints! Stop in Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.—3 p.m.**





Students use the new lab for a science lesson.

## New science lab evens Saints' academic playing field

St. Mary's High School is known for many things: an excellent catholic education, close-knit family atmosphere and a commitment to student success inside the classroom and out. One thing it's not known for – yet – is its STEM program.

Principal Matthew Collins hopes that is about to change now that the school, which is located in Westfield and serves the entire region, has a brand-new science lab.

“Our new lab helps level the playing field for our students,” said Collins. “We have always had great science teachers, but they were limited by our former lab. It's not quite state-of-the-art yet, but we hope to continue to upgrade our equipment.”

The new lab includes three large fixed work stations with space for six pairs of students to work as partners, and floating tables will allow for more pairings. The cost of the lab was supported, in part, by donors, and Collins said he is

hoping more supporters of St. Mary's High School will help cover the remaining costs.

“We have amazing and generous donors who understand the value of our school and know what a new science lab will do to help our students stand out in the STEM fields,” Collins said, noting that he would like to name the lab for a major sponsor.

“I want our students to see the names of their supporters as they go to class so they can see that people they don't even know believe in them,” Collins said.

For science teacher Lise Letellier, the new lab is a game-changer.

“The previous lab was really just a classroom with desks,” she said. “It was dark and just wasn't safe due to poor storage and an old exhaust system. Now, the science lab is beyond pleasant and students have access to the basic necessary equipment.”

Letellier said the exhaust system was improved and chemicals are now stored properly in locked cabinets, and she said the space is now much brighter and more welcoming.

While the new lab is light years ahead of the previous science room, Letellier said new equipment is still needed, particularly for physics.

St. Mary's High School, located at 27 Bartlett St. in Westfield, is the only Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield high school. Students from surrounding communities, including Agawam, Easthampton, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Southwick and more attend the school.

Anyone interested in supporting the lab should contact Director of Advancement Hope E. Tremblay at [htremblay@stmsaints.org](mailto:htremblay@stmsaints.org), Collins at [mcollins@stmsaints.org](mailto:mcollins@stmsaints.org), or call 413-568-5692 to discuss opportunities and to schedule a tour of the lab and school.

### Calling all SAINTS!

**Let's catch up!**  
Please join us for the All Saints, All Alumni Reunion at Sons of Erin, 22 William St. in Westfield, Nov. 26 at 6 p.m. Cover charge is \$5 and includes pizza. Cash bar. Bring a snack to share!

### ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

December 4 — 10 a.m.– 3 p.m. — 27 Bartlett St., Westfield



Local artists, authors, crafters and small businesses! Raffles, lunch & live performance by the STMHS Choir!

*Volunteers and sponsors sought!*

Contact [htremblay@stmsaints.org](mailto:htremblay@stmsaints.org) to register by Nov. 19

**Send us your news – whether you have a job you want us to know about, an update on your family or just want to wish your fellow Saints well, send an email to:**

**Director of Institutional Advancement**

**Hope E. Tremblay ('90)**

**[htremblay@stmsaints.org](mailto:htremblay@stmsaints.org)**

**Know someone who should join our Saints family?**

**Contact Admissions Director Cara Waterman at**

**[cwaterman@stmsaints.org](mailto:cwaterman@stmsaints.org)**