

SJNRA family is a circle that only gets larger

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Catholic Schools Week is observed nationally this year from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2. This year's theme is "Catholic Schools Light the Way.")

By Jim Creeley, 11th grade

Last year was a year of great growth and change for St. John Neumann Regional Academy.

A new façade, along with a new name, added to the idea of change.

However, our school still maintained its tradition of academic and athletic excellence, as well as its unique approach emphasizing service learning.

This year we continued to grow as a family, and three specific occasions have touched me deeply and illustrate our growth as a united family.

This past fall, the academy was deeply moved by the death of one of its own.

Mrs. Kathryn Overdorf, our music and drama teacher, was flown by helicopter to a Philadelphia area hospital for a medical emergency.

I can remember the morning announcements and the academy family praying together for her cause.

Soon after, the tragic news was conveyed that our teacher, friend and great supporter of the academy would not pull through.

We were deeply saddened. It was minutes, not hours, that our academy family responded.

Pastors throughout our county converged on our school.

Our school chaplain, our director of religious formation, our school guidance counselor and our academy parents created the largest infrastructure of healing that you could imagine to help each student through the process of grieving.

Our family grieved and finally came to the point of understanding the Resurrection and celebrate the life of Mrs. Overdorf.

It was not an easy task, but it was much easier with the support of family. Her memorial celebration was attended academy-wide and was very inspirational.

Most recently, an assistant coach, academy volunteer, parent and friend passed away.

Mr. Richard Lockridge was one of those academy supporters that would do anything for our school. His daughter, Angela, is a junior at the academy.

The news of his illness and final passing occurred during our high school winter formal. The news brought out the bond that exists in good and bad times with the SJNRA family.

The morning after his passing, several members of Angela's class went to her house with flowers in hand. They consoled her and told her that her Neumann family was there to support her.

The funeral Mass for Mr. Lockridge was well attended with the majority of our St. John Neumann family in attendance, including our 40 chorus members.

This Mass was concelebrated by our Chaplain, Fr. Brian Van Fossen, and Monsignor Castellano. Both our chaplain and Monsignor discussed how family unity is the reason that we are celebrating the life of Mr. Lockridge.

Finally, after a Governor's School experience this past summer at Lehigh University, I was prompted by a desire for more service learning opportunities.

I requested permission from our principal to start a Leo Club, which is an affiliate of the world's largest service organization, the International Lions Club.

The Williamsport Lions Club agreed to sponsor us, and our club now boasts more than 30 members.

We are extremely proud of the service projects accomplished in our first three months. We collected funds by ringing the bell for the Salvation Army at Christmas.

We also had winter clothing and coat drives. We have an active Helping Hands program for the elderly. We have assisted our fellow Lions with a pancake breakfast, and are planning a Valentine's Day red rose sale.

Every dollar from the SJNRA Leo family collected within the academy goes to help someone in need.

The recognition from our SJNRA Leo family to help others in need is truly amazing.

This feeling of unity within the St. John Neumann Regional Academy family is very evident.

The consolidation of our Catholic schools throughout the county has created an even larger family, under one name, operating at five campus settings.

We are more than 700 students and 395 families strong. Our families, our parents and our students never leave us.

Yes, they may graduate, but they are always part of the SJNRA family. Our family includes St. Mary's, St. Joe's and Bishop Neumann graduates.

It includes Mrs. Overdorf and Mr. Lockridge, and it includes all who support Catholic education.

The thread of our commonality, which truthfully is at the core of our faith, is the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — and it is this thread that maintains and strengthens Catholic education.

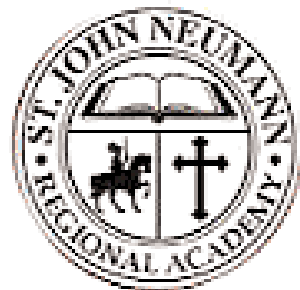
It is why St. John Neumann traveled by horseback from Philadelphia to Williamsport, establishing Catholic schools along the way.

It is the thread that unites us as an academy and distinguishes us as a Catholic school.



A closer look inside our schools from the students' perspective

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE
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This page was created by students at St. John Neumann Regional Academy

'Wizard of Oz'

Story comes to life on school stage

By Chelsea Martin
Sophomore

This year, the St. John Neumann Regional Academy Fine Arts Department is following Dorothy Gale and her friends down the yellow brick road in this year's musical, "The Wizard of Oz."

This timeless classic opens with Dorothy Gale being chased by her nasty neighbor, which in turn creates trouble at home.

Dorothy believes her family does not care about her, so she decides to run away and never return.

While out on her own, she finds herself up against a terrible twister coming across the Kansas countryside.

After deciding to turn back, Dorothy finally makes it home only to find that her house had been dropped right in the middle of Munchkin Land.

She is bewildered and cannot believe her eyes as to where her house had been sent. Realizing that she is definitely "not in Kansas anymore," she seeks the help of the Good Witch of the North, Glinda.

Glinda sends Dorothy on her way down the yellow brick road to find the great and powerful Wizard of Oz to help her return home to Kansas.

She soon finds company with the Scarecrow, the Tinman and the Lion, who escort their new friend to The Emerald City, hoping to find guidance of their own.

The characters are played by the following students in order of appearance: Dorothy Gale, Chelsea Martin; Auntie Em and Glinda by Desirae Mausteller in a double-role; the Scarecrow, Andrew Ward; the Tinman, Ryan Workman; the Lion, Aaron Kowalchuk; the Wicked Witch of the West, Kayla Henderson; and



PHOTO PROVIDED
The St. John Neumann Regional Academy's cast of "Wizard of Oz" is shown above. The school will have performances April 4 to 6 at the high school, 901 Penn St.

the Wizard, John Gerritzen. In addition, members of the high school chorus and students from the Intermediate Campus, grades 4 to 6, are in the musical.

The musical is under the direction of Karen Strong, a new addition to the SJNRA staff.

Assisting her is Jane Dent, art director, and Elizabeth Gerritzen, assistant director.

Rehearsals are under way and will continue up until the opening night on April 4.

Tickets may be bought at the academy's high school office, 901 Penn St.

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If you go

WHAT: "Wizard of Oz."

WHEN: 7 p.m. April 4 and 5; 2 p.m. April 6.

WHERE: St. John Neumann Regional Academy high school, 901 Penn St.

INFO: 323-9953.

Cheerleading team takes first place at competition

By Melissa Trenholm
8th grade



PHOTO PROVIDED
St. John Neumann Regional Academy cheerleaders are, front row, from left, Taren Peoples, Brianna McLaughlin, Abby Caviston and Coach Heather Walker; back row, Brittany McLaughlin, Melissa Trenholm, Hannah Snyder, Amanda Bertin and Katherine Mertes.

The cheerleading squad of St. John Neumann Regional Academy has had a very busy season.

Besides proudly supporting all of our basketball teams — junior high boys, junior varsity boys, varsity boys, junior varsity girls and varsity girls, we also

competed at the Bucknell Cheerleading Competition on Jan. 13 in Lewisburg.

At the competition, the Bucknell cheerleaders taught us routines, which we then practiced and performed for them.

We are proud to announce that we won first place in the junior high division! Our reward was to cheer at a Bucknell Girls basketball game, which we did on Sun-

day, Jan. 20. Our performance was televised live on ESPNU.

As guest cheerleaders, we received Bucknell T-shirts to represent the Bucknell Bisons. We also were awarded an honorary bullhorn with our school name on it.

We are so pleased to have a new coach this year, Heather Walker. Heather is a former Williamsport Area High School cheerleader.

She has done so much for us over the months we have been with her. She has taught us cheers, dances, chants, jumps, stunts and sportsmanship.

Members of our squad are sophomore Amanda Bertin (captain), eighth graders Hannah Snyder (co-captain) and Melissa Trenholm, and seventh graders Taren Peoples, Katherine Mertes, Brittany McLaughlin, Brianna McLaughlin and Abby Caviston.

It is an honor to be a member of this cheerleading squad because it shows friendship, sportsmanship, fun and that very special Neumann school spirit.

St. John Neumann girls' varsity basketball team has best season in school's history

By Lauren Hiller, Senior

No one thought that we would be able to make it this far.

Even our coach said that if someone had told him that we would go 11-0 before losing a game, he wouldn't have believed him. Sure, we have a good amount of talent on our team, but it did not seem like anything extraordinary, that is, until we wrapped all of our talents together to create a noteworthy team.



HILLER

It feels great walking out onto the basketball court with the rest of St. John Neumann girls' basketball team because I know that we have the ability to work together to achieve something great.

No matter how far we're behind in a game, we continue to battle through the storm, and most of the time, we end up winning the game.

I believe that the major reason that we have done so well this year is because we have learned to work together.

Instead of each person trying to be the "star" of the team, each person tries to contribute for the benefit of the whole team.

Now that we're playing so well,

more people come and watch our games. Seeing so many people there in the stands supporting us really does help us to play better. We want to give them a game worthy of watching because they are there to help us.

The younger children are some of our biggest fans, and it is fun to watch them from across the gym as they sit there and cheer for us and scream for the other team to miss their foul shots.

We must thank our coaching staff for our success this year. Without them — Dan McNamara, Joe Beiter, Mary Kay Orso, Dave Lechniak and Steve Sholder — we could not be the team that we have become.

They truly bring out the best

in each one of us, and support us no matter how we play. They instill inspiration and bring words of encouragement in both the good times and the bad, and we would be lost without them.

Playing on this team brings out the best in all of its players and coaches.

Without the support of the other people on the team, no one person could pull us through to win because more strategy is required than what one person can give in order to beat other teams.

Our team is like a bundle of sticks — if one person tries to do it herself, she will break. But, if we all come together as one, we are strong and can weather the storm.