



Morning Star School

VOLUME II ISSUE I

SUMMER 2015

SAVE THE DATE:

- Sept. 10 – Open House for Families
- Oct. 9 - Charity Golf Tournament
- Nov. 14 - Auction Fundraiser

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Principal's Perspective



Susan Conza, Principal

Dear Friends,

It certainly is an exciting time at Morning Star School. The 2014-2015 school year began with the fulfillment of a long held dream of our loyal supporters: the installation of two high school portables. We were honored to have Monsignor Morris join us to commemorate the opening with a prayer service and the blessing of each classroom. The enrollment of our primary and intermediate classes continues to grow, with families traveling far and wide from many cities to get to Morning Star School.

The dedication of our families to find an academic program that addresses their child's specific needs continues to amaze me. I believe one reason is that Morning Star is blessed to have a remarkable faculty and staff whose calling it is to help each student meet his or her maximum potential. In addition to our adaptive curriculum, this year we offered the students after school enrichment programs including hockey, chess and dance along with Spring Dances and field trips.

The students showcased their talents in many different ways including our annual Christmas performance at Sacred Heart Church, dance performances and a talent show. They gave witness of their faith during our prayer services through song and prayer. The students also gave back to the community by collecting canned goods for St. Vincent DePaul and supplies for a local animal shelter.

Throughout the years, Morning Star School has received tremendous support from the community. This year we were blessed with many visits from groups who believe in our mission including the Catholic Daughters from St. John Vianney and many Knights of Columbus councils. Morning Star was chosen by chapters of Best Buddies from Clearwater Central Catholic High School and St. John Vianney. We are excited to continue to build new friendships for our students with their peers from each school. I can't believe how quickly the year flew by and am looking forward to what the next year brings.

Many Blessings,
Susan Conza

Morning Star School, a mission of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, recognizes the unique educational needs of students. The administration, faculty, staff and parents work together to provide an ungraded academic curriculum in which students can achieve their potential academically, socially and spiritually.

MSS Welcomes New Teacher

MSS welcomed a new teacher, Ms. Ella Peters, in January 2015. Ms. Peters graduated from the University of South Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. She also has certifications in elementary education K-6, Exceptional Student Education K-12 and endorsements in Reading and ESOL. Ms. Peters was hired as our interim PE and Resource teacher but will have her own elementary classroom beginning in Fall 2015. She is a member of Transfiguration Catholic Church. “I have been welcomed with open arms into the Morning Star family. This has been a huge blessing for me as I had a great desire to work in a Catholic school. I love working with all of the students at Morning Star and helping them grow in their faith and education,” said Ms. Peters. We are blessed to have Ms. Peters as a member of our faculty!



Ms. Ella Peters

Students Receive Sacraments

At Morning Star, we are proud to celebrate our students' journey drawing them closer to God. Congratulations to those students who received one of the Sacraments in Spring 2015. Maci received First Holy Communion at St. Patrick's in Largo. Alice and Kaitlyn were baptized at St. Jude's in St. Petersburg. We are overjoyed that you, the faithful, have had the opportunity to receive the gift of God's grace.



Mrs. Conza, Maci, Mrs. Hill



Family & Friends Celebrate Alice & Kaitlyn's Baptism.

We love because He first loved us. 1 *John* 4:19

In The News

Principal Sue Conza was featured by Walter Scott of Fox 13 Tampa Bay as an “Extraordinary Ordinary” in February. [Here is a re-print of that story.](#)

PINELLAS PARK (FOX 13) - There is a school that is tucked away in a pocket of a Pinellas Park neighborhood. It's been around for more than 40 years, but not many have heard of it.

"Because we are in the middle of the neighborhood, nobody knows where we are," Sue Conza tells FOX 13 News. Morning Star is a school for students with special needs. Mrs. Conza's staff is made up of a number of different specialties including an occupational therapist, speech therapist and those specifically trained in teaching students on the autism spectrum. It's all to offer the best place to students that otherwise would either have no place to go, or nowhere they fit in."Some parents have horrible stories on how they got here- how nobody liked them; no one would play with them on the playground," Mrs. Conza explained. "These kids that were probably in other places were written off. They can do it; we just have to find a way to make it- to get it to happen," Mrs. Conza said.

All the services they provide, mean high tuition. As part of her duties as Mrs. Conza also finds ways to subsidize that cost for the kids who need it most. Mrs. Conza says that some of the tuition is picked up by government grants, but the rest, along with other costs, is reliant on fundraising.

While the hours, work and lessons are tough the staff says it's certainly worth it when they know who it's for. "Once you get to know the kids, it's like you would do anything for them because every kid's story- you want to make a happy ending," said Mrs. Conza. "They get under your skin; they wiggle their ways in and you find that you just are looking for ways to make things good for them. You lose yourself in it, which is good!"



MSS Student Throws Out First Pitch For Rays

Morning Star high school student, Colt, threw out the first pitch at the Tampa Bay Rays vs Oakland A's game on Thursday, May 12th. An article about Colt written by Chris King ran in Baseball Prospectus and captured the Rays' attention. After hearing his inspirational story, they invited him to batting practice and to hang out with the team. In November, Colt, who has DiGeorge Syndrome, was diagnosed with a "gigantic" brain aneurysm. Miraculously, the aneurysm was shown on the MRI to have disappeared shortly before his scheduled surgery in January. To quote Colt's father from the original story, "Colt isn't a disabled kid. He's a baseball player." And, we might add, totally awesome! Please visit www.baseballprospectus.com to read Mr. King's full article on Colt.



Colt, pictured here at Rays Stadium, attends MSS and also pitches on the JV baseball team of St. Pete Catholic.

Photo: Courtesy of MLB.com



Alice



Rachel



Tyler



William

Congratulations Alice, Rachel, Tyler & William

On June 4th, faculty, staff, families and friends gathered for the 8th grade graduation of Alice, Rachel, Tyler, and William. It was a chance to celebrate our students and their accomplishments through speeches, songs and prayer. Each student was presented with a ribbon, personalized shadow box and gifts. At the end of the evening, we were reminded that we're not losing 8th graders but gaining brand new high school students. See you all in the Fall!

A Graduate's Prayer

Father, we have knowledge,
So will You show us now
How to use it wisely
And find a way somehow
To make the world we live in
A little better place,
And make life with its problems
A bit easier to face.
Grant us faith and courage
And put purpose in our days,
And show us how to serve You
In the most effective ways
So all our education,
Our knowledge and our skill,
May find their true fulfillment
As we learn to do Your Will.
And may we ever be aware
In everything we do
That knowledge comes from learning
And wisdom comes from You.

Modern Woodmen Speech Contest Winners

Congratulations to our Modern Woodman Speech Contest Winners!

1st Place- Savannah: The Pyramids of Giza

2nd Place - Sara: The Ryman Auditorium

3rd Place- Alina: The Eiffel Tower

Honorable Mention - Kaitlyn:

The Lincoln Memorial



FUNdraising for Morning Star

The 2014 Auction Fundraiser marks our most successful auction to-date. The sold-out event was held on November 8, 2014, at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center. We raised over \$35,000 for our students in this one evening. We more than doubled the number of sponsorship tables. Guests dined on an Italian feast catered by *Da Sesto Italiano Ristorante e Vino* and bid on hundreds of auction items from airline tickets to student artwork to huge gift baskets for every occasion. Thank you to all who volunteered, donated and purchased to make this evening a success for the students. We are blessed to have the outpouring of support. If you ever want to experience what is good in our community, come to our auction!

On Tuesday, April 28th, Morning Star hosted a Heart of Gold Happy Hour Fundraiser in our activities hall. Guests enjoyed sangria and appetizers and mingled with other MSS families, teachers and supporters in a relaxed setting. During the evening, guests purchased handmade artisan jewelry from A Bead of Roses. People also donated their unwanted gold and silver jewelry to the certified jeweler at the event. Those donating received a tax deduction while MSS received the cash value for the donation. We raised over \$4,000 that will help fund a new elementary school playground. Thank you to everyone who helped make the evening a success.

3rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament to Benefit Morning Star

The Knights of Columbus Council 14456 is hosting their 3rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament and has selected Morning Star School of Pinellas Park as one of the beneficiaries. The tournament will be held at Bardmoor Golf & Tennis Club in Seminole on Friday, October 9, 2015. The single entry fee begins at \$100 and there are sponsorship opportunities available. Please contact Kent Trompeter at (970) 222-5502 or Bob Marriner at (727) 638-5086 for more information. The registration deadline is October 2, 2015. Thank you Council 14456 for supporting the students of Morning Star!

Support MSS by Shopping

Support our school every time you shop.

When you shop Amazon Smile & make MSS your charity, Amazon makes a donation to Morning Star! Sign up for a Target Debit or Credit Red Card as part of their Take Charge of Education Program. When you name MSS as your school, you get discounts and our school gets \$\$\$. It's a win-win! We also participate in the Labels for Education and My Coke Rewards programs. Don't forget to clip and send in the General Mills Box Tops for Education. For the 2014-2015 school year, these programs brought in \$1,000 in cash and products. It's so easy!

You may send labels, caps and box tops to Morning Star School, Attn: Mrs. Alida King.



Morning Star Wish List

New Playground for Elementary School - We need to update our 15 year old playground to make it most beneficial to our students. So far, we have raised \$5,500 toward the project! **Cost - \$25,000**

Sponsor - a - classroom - Help out any of our 9 teachers with important purchases like learning apps for the iPads and school supplies. **\$100 per class**

iPads - Students in our newest elementary classroom need iPads. **10 iPads @ \$500 each**

Do you have an idea of how you'd like to help? Please call us at (727) 544-6036.

Save-the-Date For Morning Star's Auction

DATE: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2015
TIME: 6:30P—10:30P
LOCATION: ST. JUDE PARISH CENTER
5815 5TH AVENUE NORTH
ST. PETERSBURG



Please join us in supporting Morning Star School at our Annual Auction Fundraiser! It is an exciting evening that includes a delicious dinner catered by **Da Sesto Italiano Ristorante e Vino**, a silent auction, a lucky number auction & a live auction. All proceeds from this evening directly benefit the students of Morning Star School. Funds generated help to defray the costs of providing an individualized education for students with learning related challenges. Purchase a table at the event and attend with your clients, family and friends!

\$2,500 Super Star Sponsorship

Reserved seating and dinner for up to 8 guests
Recognition at the event in the program and via a visual display, and on the school website
(3) Announcements acknowledging contribution during the event
(1) Boosted Facebook post on Morning Star's page acknowledging contribution reaching 1,000+ recipients
24 tickets for the "Lucky Number" Auction & 8 tickets for the 50/50 Drawing
Small keepsake gift featuring student artwork

\$1,000 Diamond Star Sponsorship

Reserved seating and dinner for up to 8 guests
Recognition at the event in the program and via a visual display and on the school website
16 tickets for the "Lucky Number" Auction, 8 tickets for the 50/50 Drawing

\$500 Gold Star Sponsorship

Reserved seating and dinner for up to 8 guests
Recognition at the event in the program and via a visual display

\$275 Silver Star Sponsorship

Reserved seating and dinner for up to 6 guests
Recognition in the event program

\$125 Bronze Star Sponsorship

Reserved seating and dinner for 2 guests and recognition in the event program

\$40 Individual Ticket

Entrance to the auction and dinner

SPONSOR: _____

Please print your name as you wish for it to appear in the program if purchasing a sponsorship.

_____ I am able to attend and wish to enclose my tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

_____ I am unable to attend and wish to enclose my tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

OR

Please charge my gift on my: VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS

Name as it appears on card: _____

Address (associated with the card): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Account #: _____ Expiration: _____ 3/4 Digit Security Code: _____

You will receive a letter acknowledging receipt of your donation for tax purposes.

For more information, please contact Sue Conza @ (727) 544-6036 or sue.conza@morningstarschool.org.

Morning Star School is a 501c3 non-profit. All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Tax ID# 59-1274421

2nd Annual Family Fun & Resource Fair



On March 21st, Morning Star hosted its 2nd Annual Family Fun and Resource Fair. It is a free event that is open to any individuals with special needs and their families. The Disney “Frozen” themed fair drew over 150 attendees to our activities hall. While kids (and some adults!) took photos with a life-sized Olaf and munched on refreshments provided by Chick-fil-A and Dunkin Donut Pinellas Park, families gathered information and materials from the many participants. Thank you to the fabulous product and service providers!

A Bead of Roses
 Autism Speaks
 Bricks 4 Kidz
 City of St. Pete, Therapeutic Recreation
 Dr. Maggie Davis, Pediatric Dentist
 Engage Behavioral Health
 Freedom Sailing Camp
 Haus of Style
 Heart 4 Kids Therapy, LLC
 Hugs First Kisses Later
 Lampert’s Therapy Group

Mr. Strong Foundation
 Off the Walls Photography
 Saddle Up Riding Club
 Shaklee Independent Distributor
 Special Needs Lawyer, PA
 The Center for Special Needs Trust
 The Kids’ Clinic of Tampa Bay
 The Kidz Club
 The Littlest Trunk
 Toni & Guy International Mall
 Usborne Books and More

The highlight of the morning was a kid’s fashion show starring 25 of our very own Morning Star models. Fashions were provided by The Littlest Trunk, a resale shop in St. Petersburg, and by Haus of Style. Toni & Guy International Mall donated their time, services & products to make our models extra beautiful.



Above: Miss St. Petersburg, Tiffany Jockers, poses with Olaf

Thank you to those who donated goodies for our giveaways: Target, Coastal Properties Group, Suncoast Surf Shop, The Littlest Trunk, Toni & Guy and Canoe Outpost. Thank you to Off the Walls Photography for the great Olaf photos. Thank you to all of those MSS families and staff members who volunteered for this event. We are blessed to know each of you. Thank you for giving back to the community!

Old McMicky Had A Farm

Thanks to generous grants from Target and Old McMicky's Farm, MSS Elementary students were able to spend a fun March day on the farm in Odessa, FL. Highlights included learning about an agrarian lifestyle, milking cows, riding horses, feeding chickens, goats and pigs, going on a hayride and having a picnic.



High School Happenings

Under the guidance of Mrs. Steele and Mr. Laux, the high school students settled into their new classrooms and were very busy this year. In addition to their ongoing academic instruction, they participated in a life skills program that focused on skills necessary to be successful in the future including: cooking simple meals, computer and keyboarding skills, sewing skills, wood-working, and gardening. The gardening project began with the students researching how to construct a garden and what were the best materials and culminated in the construction from scratch their own garden. They were able to plant and harvest their crops before the end of the school year and enjoyed sampling the cucumbers and green beans. The gardening project was funded through a grant from the Dunkin' Brands Foundation. Thank you Dunkin' Donuts!

The students also spearheaded a school wide collection of money to send to an orphanage in Nicaragua. Mrs. Steele's husband and daughter personally delivered the monetary donation. The students were thrilled to be able to help out other students in need.



Fall Fun

Zoo School in the House

In addition to working hard on their lessons and projects, our students enjoyed an in-school field trip in October with a visit from Busch Gardens Zoo School.



Halloween Madness

The MSS High School hosted a Halloween Party for the elementary and middle school students. While the younger students dressed up as their favorite characters, the high schoolers handed out goodies and helped with crafts. The MSS teachers and staff entertained everyone with their flash mob performance of Monster Mash!



Hosanna Rock!

Morning Star School celebrated the birth of Jesus with the program, Hosanna Rock!, on December 17th at Sacred Heart Church. The students, under the guidance of music teacher Mrs. Dalia Gibson, recounted the Christmas story through words, song and dance. This holiday tradition is one of the highlights of the school year for the students and their families. Thank you to Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Gillespie and all the teachers and staff who helped deliver this beautiful Christmas program. The joy of the season is reflected in your efforts. We are so proud of all of our students and of their many talents.





Morning Star School

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Like us on 

O.T.H.E.R.S. Membership

The annual membership dues of O.T.H.E.R.S. is \$25 per year. Annual membership is from January 1 to December 31.

Please use the attached envelope for new membership and renewals and donations.

In Gratitude

Morning Star receives thousands of dollars in donations each year from caring individuals and organizations. These donations go directly to special projects, as specified by the donor, or to our operating budget that funds the education for our deserving students. We grew to 80 students in 2015. We could not open our doors to so many students without this kind of community support. We are deeply grateful for and humbled by this generosity. Thank you!

In Memoriam

Veronica Bistrovic

Suzanne K. Carli

George Curly

Joseph Farina

Rick Timmel

