

February 2011

St. Paul Lutheran School: Where “Small” is “BIG”

While driving down Washington Avenue in Batavia, most people easily spot St. Paul Lutheran Church and its adjacent Memorial Hall. However, many are unaware that bustling classrooms are inside. St. Paul educates students of all faiths from 3-year-old preschool through 5th grade and currently serves 54 children. The principal, Mrs. Ann Werk, says about the school, “We’re Batavia’s best kept secret.” But with enrollment on the rise, it looks like the secret is out.

According to parents, St. Paul’s teachers and staff are one reason enrollment is climbing. “They’re excellent teachers with lots of experience, and they care about each child,” says Jennifer Wagester, the parent-teacher association president. “Parents can rest assured their child is getting exactly what he or she needs academically, socially, or spiritually during the school day. With small class sizes, each student has an opportunity to shine.”

The school also has the support of the St. Paul Lutheran Church congregation. Long-time parishioner and school board member, Betty Van Nest, is optimistic about the school’s future. “We’ve had a preschool at St. Paul for over two decades. In 1998, we started the elementary school with Kindergarten and 1st grade and then added two grade levels each year till grade 5. Each year was better than the one before and I continue to see improvement at St. Paul.”

This year the school’s facilities are a focus for improvement. They are under renovation to provide an improved library area and media center along with making the church more handicap accessible. Genesee County’s 2010 Health and Humanitarian of the Year and St. Paul member, Ron Burroughs, is heading up the construction. Though some may consider construction a distraction, the students don’t mind. They think dump trucks and back hoes are fascinating.

Through construction, school has gone on as it normally would. Students spend their time mastering the core subjects of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies along with art, music, P.E., foreign language, computer science, and Bible studies. But learning isn’t all work and no play at St. Paul.

This fall, K-5 students studied ecology as they hiked and dipped nets into ponds at Genesee County Park and Forest. Preschool through 1st grade students also learned about growing and harvesting apples at Roanoke Apple Farms in Stafford. Then in November, K-5 students explored the world and beyond at the Rochester Museum & Science Center Planetarium.

Literacy came to life for students when Curious George visited St. Paul’s book fair in December. Curious George attended story hour and enjoyed lots of hugs, hand shakes, and high fives from students. Also in December, students performed their Christmas play – Hark the Herald Angel – for family members. The church was full with standing room only for the performance and all the students, even the preschoolers, were confident on stage. K-5 students later traveled to The Manor House in Batavia to share their play with senior residents.

Looking ahead to spring, students have a lot to look forward to. Though of their spring activities, National Lutheran Schools Week, held March 6-12 this year, is their favorite.

Principal Ann Werk says of that week, “It takes a tremendous amount of work from teachers and staff to make that week happen. But the kids love it, which makes it worth the extra effort.”

For starters, on Monday, March 7, students will bring their pastors to school for morning chapel and then Fast Forward begins at 10:30 a.m. along with the school’s visit Kindergarten event. For an hour, current and prospective students will get to try out their fall 2011 grade while parents tour the school. During that week, there will also be times for students to wear pajamas, bring their grandparents, and have breakfast food for lunch. Then it will conclude with parents, family, and friends gathering at St. Paul Lutheran Church for the students’ Spring Program on Friday evening.

Each year, St. Paul Lutheran School begins with a theme that remains throughout the school year. For 2010-2011, it is “Laughing, Learning, and Living as Disciples of Christ.” In many ways, this theme describes what happens at St. Paul every day as students grow in knowledge, spirit, and character. As school board member Debi Thom states, “We’re here to give kids a great start in life. Learning, being part of a school family, and knowing God all make a big difference for kids. Though St. Paul may be small in size, it makes a big, positive impact on our community.” More information about St. Paul Lutheran Church and School can be found online at: www.stpaulbatavia.org.



Inside St. Paul, classrooms buzz with learning, laughter, and friendship.



Kindergarten, 1st Grade, and 2nd Grade students enjoy a story with Curious George at the Book Fair.



Preschoolers start their day with Mrs. Deb Porter at the blue table.



The elementary students at St. Paul performed “Hark the Herald Angel” for Christmas.