



SPECIAL EDITION **EDUCATION WEEK 2011**

When people think about education, they often picture it in classrooms with teachers, desks and books. But so much of our learning comes from experiences outside of the classroom setting. Evergreen Catholic Schools strives for its students to venture beyond the class-

room to get the most out of these experiences.

Learning outside the classroom is extremely beneficial, especially when schools are part of an active and engaged community, like Evergreen's schools are. It's fitting

that this year's theme for Education Week, celebrated across the province, is "Education: The Heart of our Communities".

The communities of Devon, Hinton, Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Westlock have a huge impact

on our schools and our students. The relationships and partnerships formed in each of these communities are invaluable to the success of our young people. For this special edition newsletter, we would like to share the positive stories that are the result of these relationships.

ST. MARY



Being an active member of the community is embedded in the culture of St. Mary School in Westlock. The students see the benefit of this relationship on a daily basis, whether it is by using one of the many recreational facilities in the community, or being coached or supervised by one of the school's parent or community volunteers.

We are very grateful to the parents and other family and community members who volunteer in a variety of capacities – in the classroom, supporting fundraising campaigns, driving band instruments to festivals, chaperoning school trips, supervising dances, and providing a helping hand in any number of ways.

Students benefit from using the local pool, recreation centre, tennis courts, arena and curling rink. They also benefit from community groups like the Knights of Columbus, the E.L.K.s, the Busby Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Sisters of Charity, and local individuals who



provide scholarships and gifts to graduates. The school's breakfast program is supported by generous donations of food and money from the community. The list goes on.

"We have a very longstanding relationship with our community," said Principal Audrey MacDonald. "It's very positive and benefits everybody."

St. Mary students do a lot to give back to the community that gives them so much.

"Our students and their families have been very supportive of local community endeavours – the Westlock Food Bank, Santa's Anonymous, and other local initiatives," said MacDonald.

High school students and local businesses both benefit from the school's work experience program, which has been very well supported by the business community. Grade 12 Religious Studies students are involved in a program that sends them to a local long-term care facility to do volunteer work.

"There are just so many great positive relationships," said MacDonald. "It's a great thing to celebrate."



ST. JOSEPH



It's hard to imagine what a school would look like if it didn't have a supportive community, according to St. Joseph Principal Ray Renaud.

St. Joseph Catholic School benefits in so many ways, from countless volunteer hours, donations and much more. The elementary school is very appreciative of the benefits of an active community, and does what it can to give back.

"Our students and families are very giving," said Renaud. "They are incredibly supportive of programs like Coats for Kids, the Parkland Food Bank, The Holy Childhood Association and so many other programs."

When St. Joseph School thinks of their community, they think of it on a more global scale. During the last school year, Grade 4 teacher Paul Maykut, embarked on a 16-day trek to Ethiopia as a part a fundraising and social justice initiative. He was involved with several schools over the past 13 years and Maykut's trip was to see how the \$90,000 raised by the generous people in the various school communities has helped the people of Ethiopia.

"We're proud of what we do in our local community, but also how we help people across the world," said Renaud.

The principal said his school is often involved in fundraising for the Stollery Children's Hospital as well, since many local families have relied on it for treatment of their children.

"St. Joseph helps raise money and awareness for the hospital pretty much every year," he said. "It's a cause that is really close to many of our families." ■



JOHN PAUL II

With a strong group of parent volunteers and strong willed students who want to make the world a better place, the sense of community at John Paul II School is huge.

“The community of Stony Plain is very close and strong and we like to be a part of that,” said Principal Dave Dempsey. “We’re always coming together and working together, which is really positive.”

The school benefits from a large number of dedicated volunteers, who are incredibly supportive of the school.

“We couldn’t do what we do without all of our volunteers,” said Dempsey. “They are so valuable to us, whether it is helping us with field trips or being part of our student council!”

One event in particular that the school hosts always captures the heart of the community — the Ethnic Lunch. It’s basically a giant potluck meal that has residents from throughout Stony Plain provide a dish for what ends up being a huge eclectic lunch.

The school also has several programs that encourage students to get out in their community to do volunteer work. One of those programs the Snow Angels, which is a group of students that heads out into the snow and shovels the walkways and driveways for nearby residents.

“It’s a great program and I think our students are really rewarded when they are thanked by some of the seniors in the area, who are grateful to not have to shovel,” Dempsey said.

Students also regularly raise money and supplies for local charities, like the Parkland Food Bank, Mustard Seed and Bissel Centre. ■



JPII Snow Angels

HOLY SPIRIT

The local community is integral to Holy Spirit and it’s hard to imagine the school without the strong local relationships they’ve formed, says Principal Steve Dempsey.

“We’re constantly involved and engaged with the people of Devon,” he said. “We all work very well together and we’ve been lucky to see the results of these relationships.”

Dempsey first recognized the Parish community, which is very close to the school.

“We’re constantly at the church,” Dempsey said. “The church helps us out with things like building stages for us and we’ve helped them. It’s a great parish-school relationship.”

The school is also a gathering place for the community with many groups benefiting from using the facility including the Challenge Girls Catholic Youth Group, the Father and Son Club, the St. Maria Goretti Youth Group and many more.

The school is always benefiting from these groups. When the school hosted its play “Jolly Roger and the Pirate Queen” last week, the Chal-

lenge Girls provided all the treats for the dessert theatre evening.

One initiative currently being worked on with the Town of Devon is Bike Days. Students will be able to get their bikes inspected and they’ll be encouraged to ride them around the town. As part of the program, Holy Spirit is planning a day where all the students will meet in the morning and bike to school together. ■



GERARD REDMOND

Gerard Redmond is committed to having its students being actively involved in the Hinton community, says Principal Tim Fafard.

“Whether it is welcoming local experts into our classrooms to share their knowledge and skills to our students, having community coaches for our athletic teams or inviting community members to be judges at our many events and project fairs that occur during our school year, we always have an open-door policy for the many members of our Hinton Community,” he said.

Part of the school’s mission state-

ment directs them to be involved in community service projects. They have been very pleased to have student initiatives that have raised over \$85,000 in the past four years, earmarking the funds for local, national and international organizations. At the local level, Gerard Redmond students have contributed to the Women’s shelter, Send a Kid to Camp program and Kids for Cancer.

They have brought numerous donations to the local food bank, assisted in the Town of Hinton’s Pitch-In campaign to clean up litter, and dedicated hours of their time to

local seniors as part of the LINK-Ages program.

“We are very proud of our involvement in the LINKages program being facilitated by the Town of Hinton. Fourteen of our Grade 9 students have made a commitment to meet on a weekly basis with senior citizens of our community to allow them to experience relationships between the generations,” said Fafard. “This has been a very successful and rewarding program for both our students and the seniors of our community.”

Fafard said his students realize that

it’s in the small acts of giving that allows us the opportunity to bring purpose and value to our lives.



Schools:

Holy Spirit - Devon
John Paul II - Stony Plain
St Mary - Westlock

St Joseph - Spruce Grove
St Marguerite - Spruce Grove
St Thomas Aquinas - Spruce Grove

Evergreen Outreach & Distance
Learning Centre - Spruce Grove

Gerard Redmond CCS - Hinton
St Gregory CES - Hinton



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

At St. Thomas Aquinas, it seems like there is always a social justice project going on and the school is always looking for ways to help community groups.

“Our students are always doing something for the community, and that is part of the culture of St. Thomas Aquinas,” said Principal Mark McCrudden.

The school supports numerous causes including Holy Trinity Youth Group, Parkland Food Bank, Coats for Kids, Youth Emergency Center, Stollery Children’s Hospital, Kinettes Christmas Hampers, Terry Fox Run, Hope Mission and many more.

McCrudden said community work is strongly encouraged in the school and students are always very eager to get involved.

The school is also connected to the community through the use of its facility. The school provides its gym for many community sports teams in a wide range of sports. They also help local sports teams and other organizations like the local library connect with their students. ■



ST. GREGORY



St. Gregory’s staff and students are very in touch with the community and they are always lending a hand to help out.

Most recently, the school was a part of a major fundraising campaign to aid a local family in Hinton who lost their house due to a fire.

“The community has really come together for the family, which is great to see,” said Principal Tim Zarski.

The school often plays a role in community fundraising efforts like this, he said. St. Gregory has had students and families who have been affected by cancer, so there have been many fundraisers in the school to help people fight the disease.

Last week, the elementary school stepped up for Pitch In Week, where students go around the community picking up litter. The program is a partnership between the schools and the Town of Hinton, with the municipality supplying the

gloves and bags required and the local schools providing the students.

“It’s something we do every year and it really makes our community look great,” said Zarski.

Students also just finished a penny drive to benefit disabled people in the community. The school raised over \$1,000 for a community group that is building a spray park that is accessible to everyone.

The school also has many community events for locals to attend, such as their Beauty and the Beast play that was recently performed at the school. ■



ST. MARGUERITE



Having students involved in the community is an essential part of attending St. Marguerite School, says Principal James Fraser.

“Our goal is for our kids to be contributing members of society,” he said. “We want them to be part of the community as they grow so that it carries on into their adult lives.”

There are many activities in the school for students to get involved in, one of which is the Grade 8 Leadership Program. A major component of the program is for students to make regular visits to a local seniors lodge to spend time interacting with its residents.

“It’s a very positive link both for the students and the seniors,” said Fraser.

The school also has many social justice projects for students to get involved in, especially at this time of year. During Easter and Lent, the school raises money and awareness for needy children both in the community and around the world.

St. Marguerite’s is a supporter of the Holy Childhood Association and on Wednesday, May 4, students will attend the Holy Childhood Mission Day Mass for the Archdiocese of Edmonton. The school will be donating a cheque of more than \$1,000 representing student fundraising over the past three months in the school. ■



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