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Saints Scene

November 2010 YOUR MONTHLY REPORT ON THE ST. AUGUSTINE HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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This is Fun!—Getting into the swing of the annual ninth grade dance lessons in Dougherty Gym are Saintsman Nick Dhuyvetter ('14) with his OLP partner Courtney Govan. That's Mike Young ('14) in the background. More photos see page 5.

Saints/OLP Freshmen Turn Dougherty Gym Into Ballroom

By John White (Parent '11, '13)

as there ever a more noble use of Dougherty Gym than to bring together first-year students from Saints and OLP in Latin dance lessons and the first annual Saints-OLP Freshman Social?

Monday through Thursday in the first week of October, the gym served exactly that purpose. Each afternoon, two long lines of freshmen and -women in stocking feet shook hands, giggled nervously and plunged into the timeless practice of social dance lessons to the sounds of Buena Vista Social Club and other Latin bands. Two instructors at center court from Positive Energy Dance Company called steps and set the social tone, aiming for the Freshman Social that Friday.

--"Boys, shift right and change partners. Introduce yourself. Ask her name."--

At Saints, Messrs. Hecht, Sipper and Dent collaborated on this year's weeklong event, and on the ladies' side, Freshman Class Moderator Ms. Ilene Nagem orchestrates the OLP's involvement.

"This is really fun, and I enjoy being a part of it," says Mr. Isaak, who also helped supervise lessons. "It's remarkable how much these students learn in just an hour, even the students who have never danced a step in their life."

--"All right, here we go. Take her hand, and we're going to do the basic step. And 5-6-7-8, forward so rock-step-together, rock-step-together...-

So, what do our freshmen look like as they're learning to dance? Their steps are tentative. Their grins are sheepish. The chatting never stops. They crane their necks to keep an eye on the instructors. They're doing their best to pay attention to their partners. And, in the middle of all of this, they're try-

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Mark of a Great School; Saints Passes

By Edwin Hearn, President St. Augustine High School

the Test



Photography by Saints Yearbook Staff

f you read a daily newspaper, you know that just about every day there is an article or editorial criticizing the educational establishment. The difficulties facing K-12 education across the United States are unsettling and

Edwin J. Hearn, Jr.

vexing. There are no easy answers. It is a complex problem with many facets from the breakdown of the family and immigration to learning styles and the necessary approaches to teach. The structural dynamics of the American educational system does not allow for simple solutions.

The major concern centers on the position of the United States in the world and the ability of our country to compete in the future. With so many students dropping out and/or undereducated, the United States seems to be dropping continually lower in the world rankings. The educational establishment is being reshaped by the political establishment.

The broad ranging plans of both the Bush and Obama Administrations – "No Child Left Behind" and "Reach for the Top" – attempt to reshape public education with high-stakes testing and teacher accountability in exchange for federal dollars. While the intent is commendable, the resulting process is flawed. With the "test" becoming the most important assessment tool to determine student growth, the curriculum has been narrowed.

Test scores do have a place in education. It is important to annually assess students' academic growth and make some comparisons with other schools. However, test scores show only academic progress. They cannot measure the other complexities that make up the human person, the spiritual, social or ethical growth that is a core component of a Saints education.

The mission of St. Augustine High School is to incorporate the core Augustinian values

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Dear Parents and Friends

Now More than Ever



Principal James Horne

tas Carítas

"What sculpture is to a block of marble," said Joseph Addison, "education is to the soul."

he Augustinian education provided at Saints helps shape a young man's character and his view of the world. However, a stronger force than their formal education is the learning they get in the home. Therefore at Saints, as in many Catholic schools, we believe that parents are the "primary educator".

Furthermore, because we value community (Unitas), we desire to have a school environment that boasts of great parent support and involvement.

The type of parental involvement that makes a positive difference in student achievement is more than "volunteering." While supporting the school in activities such as student retreats and athletics is important, your concerns go deeper than this; and so should your involvement.

We encourage parents to become directly involved in their student's academic learning experience. Stay connected with instructors. Ask your student to share his insights and reflections as he journeys through the semester. Current evidence shows that when parents are meaningfully involved in their student's education, scholastic achievement can greatly improve. According to the book, The Evidence Continues to Grow by Anne Henderson, the positive impact of parental involvement "is beyond dispute".

On behalf of the faculty and staff, in this season of Thanksgiving, I want to thank you for entrusting to us your most precious gift, your boys. Together we can sculpt the hearts and minds of these young Saintsmen, preparing them for our changing world.

Yours in the Spirit of Catholic Education,

James Home

James Horne Principal

An Augustinian Prayer of Thanksgiving Fr. Gary Sanders O.S.A.

Father, thank you for the gift of family Which challenges and loves me For friends who listen to and support me And for calming and guiding my restless heart

Thank you for the search for Truth Which leads me to your Son And for his gospel message Which leads to me love

Thank you for the invitation
To let me love myself as I am
And inviting me to change
Those things that do not give you honor

Thank you for encouraging me To be a part of a community of faith Where everyone is called To pray, to sacrifice, to love and forgive.

Thank you for not always saying "yes" To every request I make of you And for heeding the needs Of those less fortunate than I

And, Father, thank you for the bounty You give me and those I love May it be put to our use So that we may better serve you

Amen.













Dancing in the Gym

ing to figure out what to do with their feet. There is a nervous, energetic anticipation in the air that would make grown-ups smile fondly and reach for a camera.

Parents may wonder why their presence is not required at dance lessons. The reason is simple: The youngsters do not want us there. For that matter, neither do the moderators. "You don't want parents or even too many teachers here," explains Mrs. Nagem, "because it's important to the students to have a good time on their own."

--"Now you're going to lead her into a turn. Men, you take her hand, and we start from the basic. 5-6-7-8, forward-for-the-men, back-for-the-men, basic-to-the-side, and lift-her-hand and left...and right..."--

"This is really a first formal opportunity for Saints freshmen to meet their peers from OLP," explains Mr. Sipper. "Our schools do so well academically, athletically and spiritually that we want to round it out socially. It's a good chance for them to learn real dance steps, which – face it – everybody is going to need sooner or later. My freshman classes told me that they were apprehensive at first, but once they get in here and start moving, they're much more interested and they have a very good time."

--"Now a dip. Men, it's rock-step-left-arm-out-and-hold. Ladies, it's rock-step-turn-and-lean-and-trust-him. He's not going to drop you. I promise..."--

"Back when I went to OLP in the late 1960s, we started freshman dance lessons with Saints," says Ms. Negem. "They had hundreds of us in the gym at the same time, and it was chaotic. Now we break it up so that there are about 50 students from each school per day, which is a much more manageable number. The freshmen tell me that they enjoy it and look forward to it. It's the first exposure to Saints for many of them. For a long time the program was around traditional ballroom dancing – foxtrot, waltz, swing – and about five years ago we switched to Latin dance, like cumbia, salsa and merengue. The students seem less daunted by this than by the ballroom dancing."

"Both Mr. Sipper and Ms. MacVay have done a lot of work in bringing these dance lessons to where they are today," acknowledges Mr. Hecht. "Now, I'm glad to have Positive Energy working with us on this, because they do a lot more than just teach the steps. Michael adds a hint of cotillion to it by having the students introduce themselves and observe decorum. That's important for the Freshman Social, where first-years from both schools are in the same boat, meeting in a non-threatening environment. It's an opportunity for them to put their dance lessons into practice use while the steps are still fresh in their mind."

--"OK, that was a cumbia, and you all did very well. Give yourselves a hand."--

The Freshman Social took place on Friday, October 8, in the gym. Positive Energy guided 200 freshmen through their steps for the first hour, then they were on their own with Latin rhythms for the second hour. How did they look at the end of a week of dance lessons? Better than we parents expect. Their steps were more confident, their knees were bending, their hips were moving, and several of the most accomplished dancers won iTunes gift cards.

So, parents, are you curious? Ask your freshman to show you what he learned.

Social Media Goes Live—Twitter, Facebook or e-mail all you want, but there are few events that can duplicate the fun of an old-fashioned "live-and-in-person" sock hop in the gym. Among the Saints/OLP students participating in this year's Saints/OLP frosh dance mixer were (top row, left to right): Christian Fessia and Kaitlyn Cook and Anthony Sylvester and Marianna Ripa;

(Second row, left to right); unidentified Saintsman with Viana Pham; twirling OLP-er is Charlotte Yim; Pablo Ortega and Kaylyn Talia; (Middle lower inset photos, L-R starting from top: Ada Herrera and Branca Gonzalez; Jessica Kuhn and Joseph Zaccaro; Kimberly Ha and Julia Brekka;

(Bottom row):Philip Park and Annie Calvet and Natalie Nemeth and Hector Castellanos-Gonzalez.















