



WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CATHERINE KASPER

Building a Community, One Student at a Time

Cristy Jordan
Principal
St. Joseph School

The newly re-organized St. Joseph School, with principal Cristy Jordan at the helm, is much more than your average elementary school. Principal Jordan characterizes it as a “family community.” Students arrive at 7 a.m. for breakfast, something not offered at most schools, and many days there are Adult Learning Center programs until 9 a.m. for parents. With this “learning center for all generations,” Jordan believes she and her staff can help to make a tremendous difference in the lives of many people throughout the community.

In August of 2014, St. Joseph’s reopened with an enrollment consisting almost completely of low income, Spanish-speaking children from families with, on average, a yearly household income of \$17,000 or less. On top of this, many of the families are new to this country and

are struggling to gain access to health care. The School strives to educate them on traditional academics, as well as things such as healthcare and financial literacy, along with making them aware of resources and opportunities available to them. According to Jordan, the parents who send their children to St. Joseph’s are “people who really want to

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get connected to resources” and improve the lives of their families. And, Jordan points out, they must do so in a “linguistically and culturally competent manner.”

Catholic schools perform

a special service in blighted communities. They do an especially good job of building “social capital” in these areas, Jordan explains, by building “the family network of a Catholic school.” Catholic schools have the power to provide a sense of stability in students’ and parents’ lives, as well as the greater community.

To do all this, though, schools like St. Joseph require a good deal of money. Among the services are a school nurse and bi-lingual health aide, to assist each student and their family, assess their health and access healthcare resources, which The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation is committed to fund.

After meeting earlier this year with Bishop Rhoades, the Foundation’s sponsor, the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, are also considering additional ways to support new immigrants at St. Joseph School, through a grant from their Ancilla Domini Sisters Ministry Fund for several classroom aides. Sister Carole Langhauser notes that “Poor Handmaids have a long history in education...since we do not have the personnel to send, we decided

to support St. Joseph School with a financial donation.” She goes on to say that “Working with immigrants is also a long-term ministry for us,” one that Poor Handmaids have carried out since their arrival in Fort Wayne in 1868, when they came to minister to German immigrants at the request of Bishop Noll.

The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ were delighted to learn of a personal story of shared legacy as well. It comes from Cristy, who enjoys sharing the story of how the

Poor Handmaids helped her mother several decades ago when she moved here from Puerto Rico with two siblings, little money, and minimal English, for a chance to be educated in America at Central Catholic High School in Fort Wayne. Cristy’s mother struggled until she crossed paths with the Poor Handmaids, who operated St. Joseph Hospital at the time. The Sisters encouraged her in multiple ways, including offering her first job.

Few stories better illustrate

the enduring legacy of the Poor Handmaids in Fort Wayne. Taking all of this into account, St. Joseph School is a perfect place to continue the work of the Poor Handmaids and their belief in a “commitment to collaborate with others who embrace and share a common mission.”

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Cristy Jordan with (from left) Carl Loesh, Secretariat for Catholic Education, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Father Timothy Wrozek, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, after an all-school Mass on Sept. 2, 2014.

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This spotlight series honors community members who exemplify values that Blessed Catherine Kasper, the Foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, held dear. To the left is a picture of Catherine Kasper’s shoes, which she frequently walked many miles in to see the Bishop and discuss building a house for those in need. Catherine took a personal interest in being out in the community and listened attentively to the needs of others. To learn more on Blessed Catherine Kasper and the mission of The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, [visit sjchf.org](http://www.sjchf.org).