

Children of the Prairie

Your seasonal newsletter from St. Joseph's Indian School

Spring 2024

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair and glasses, wearing a pink shirt. She is smiling broadly and holding a piece of food, possibly a sandwich or a slice of pizza, near her mouth. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

“Thank you for donating to us, I am very thankful for all you do.”

— Aubrea, St. Joseph's student

From the Desk of Fr. Greg



Fr. Greg, Chaplain

We had our first sightings of snow flurries in October. While those flurries also made our hearts flurry with joy and excitement, after months and months of more and more snow ... well, the flurrying begins to diminish.

Which is why at this time of the year, we take deep breaths on mornings when the sun is shining and spring shows its prayed for face. We feel blessed in the renewal and rebirth that's beginning, just as it always does. The darkness never lasts.

In this edition of the *Children of the Prairie* newsletter that you hold in your hands, we want to tell you about another event at our school which brings that same sense of renewal. It's called the Annual Sobriety Walk. As you know, poverty creates many negative

circumstances, some of which involve the abuse of drugs and alcohol. That's why it's so important we help our students toward a path to a brighter future.

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures ... but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.”

— Titus 3:3-5

May this spring season fill you with a sense of rebirth and renewal, as well.

Peace and Blessings,

Fr. Greg

Fr. Greg Schill, SCJ
Chaplain

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: St. Joseph's Student Selected for Prestigious Medical Forum

Mersayis, an aspiring nurse and St. Joseph's student, was the only student from South Dakota selected for the National Youth Leadership Forum (NYLF) Medicine & Health Care. She was there to experience the collegiate lifestyle firsthand, learn from doctors, participate in an interactive curriculum, test her medical knowledge during clinical skills rotations and explore professional opportunities.

Mersayis said seeing real medical professionals in action and speaking about their respective fields was inspiring.

“Something I took away from this experience is how nurses and doctors truly take their jobs seriously — how much they want to help people,” said Mersayis. “When I decided I wanted to be in the medical field, the main reason was because I love helping people. The doctors and nurses showed me that their number one priority is to help the patient and work in the safest way possible.”

It was an experience Mersayis won't soon forget. Read the full story about Mersayis' experience at stjo.org/Mersayis.





Breaking the Cycle of Substance Abuse, One Step at a Time

It's not just a Sobriety Walk ... and your support makes it possible!

Your generosity allows St. Joseph's Indian School to give Native American children the tools they need to build a brighter future. While we do this in a number of ways, there is one event held each spring that takes the spotlight: The Annual Sobriety Walk.

The Annual Sobriety Walk at St. Joseph's aims to instill the importance of living a drug-free and alcohol-free life into our students. It gets students out of the classroom to walk with their siblings, friends and others in solidarity.

According to recent data, Native Americans in South Dakota face significant alcohol-related issues. A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveals 43% of deaths among Native Americans in the state are alcohol-related. The report also highlights how Native American communities in South Dakota experience disproportionately high rates of alcohol abuse, which contribute to various health problems and social issues.* Further, 50% of students were exposed to drug and alcohol use prior to their enrollment at St. Joseph's.

These alarming statistics highlight why it's crucial to provide students with the guidance and support they need to make positive choices.

(over, please)



During the Annual Sobriety Walk, our students exhibit exceptional strength, determination and resilience. Approximately 200 children and staff members walk side-by-side. Each step taken is a symbol of the progress we are making in our collective efforts to combat substance abuse. In spirit, you walk with us each spring from afar as a member of our **thiyóšpaye** — *extended family*.

However, our programs to combat substance abuse don't begin and end with this event. At St. Joseph's, we have implemented various programs to break the cycle of substance abuse. Our comprehensive approach includes education about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, counseling services and activities to promote positive coping mechanisms and healthy lifestyle choices.

By providing students with a safe and nurturing environment, we empower them to overcome adversity and embrace a future free from the grip of addiction. We highlight the importance of cultural pride, spiritual growth and healthy relationships as essential tools in their journey.

From the bottom of our hearts, we say **philámayaye** — *thank you* — for joining us in this vital mission.



*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2017). *Alcohol and public health: Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/faqs.html>



DID YOU KNOW?

Walking the Red Road is a phrase and ideal used by Native Americans to describe living with purpose on a path to positive change. In doing so, our students embody the Seven Lakota Values, which are: Generosity, Kinship, Fortitude, Wisdom, Prayer, Respect and Compassion.

Learn about what each of these values entail by visiting stjo.org/values.



BLESS THE LAKOTA CHILDREN

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What are ways to stay drug and alcohol free?



“Listen to Music.”
— Rukia



“Go to college.”
— Dallas



“Ride bikes and
be outside.”
— Kayden



Are you looking for an easy, cost-effective and convenient way to support St. Joseph’s Indian School? You may want to consider sharing a gift through your IRA or Donor Advised Fund. You can help make a difference for approximately 200 Native American children who call St. Joseph’s their home-away-from-home.

Please contact Denise Hyland at 1-800-584-9200 or dhyland@stjo.org for more information! Or visit our website at stjo.org/plannedgiving for easy ways to give. Special giving options should always be researched and discussed with qualified individuals, so friends are encouraged to call St. Joseph’s Major Gifts Department or contact their own legal representative.

Do you have a question to ask the Lakota children? Email it to saintjosephs@stjo.org.



THANK YOU  FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE!