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Renovations provide imaginative learning space

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St. Thomas renovations



Photo by Father Steven Kunkel

Erin Regan (Preschool Teacher), Mary Coffman (Principal), Father Steve Kunkel, Annemarie Mansour (Preschool Director),

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Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2016 12:00 am

By Katie Mayer

You can always find smiles and friendly faces around the St. Thomas the Apostle Roman Catholic School campus, but now there are even more of them.

On August 9, the 63-year-old school opened its newly renovated preschool and kindergarten, which offers a program for 3-year-olds, expanded pre-K classes and a redesigned outdoor play space focused on nature and imagination.

The new "school within a school" not only expands campus offerings, but also provides a developmentally appropriate space for 3- and 4-year-olds, said Bri Cooney, St. Thomas parent, as well as development director of project art and design for the school. The preschool will have its own space as well as traditions, and its students will graduate to the larger campus for elementary school.

"Our youngest students have different needs and experience the world at a different scale, so this is creating an experience for the whole family where they can come together in community and fellowship," Cooney said.

This year, St. Thomas the Apostle began a capital campaign to raise money for a new school building, cafeteria and media center. Phase 1 of the campaign raised funds to renovate existing buildings to create a new preschool.

"Community is at the heart of St. Thomas and we recognize that preschool is a special time for parents and children," said Principal Mary Coffman, "so we wanted to create a school and resources specifically for this age group."

As part of the additions to the St. Thomas family, experienced preschool administrator and teacher Annemarie Mansour joined the staff as preschool director. Mansour's children have attended St. Thomas the Apostle since her family moved here and she calls it a "welcoming and embracing community."

Mansour said she is a strong believer in play-based preschool and teaching to the developmental level of a child. She has structured the curriculum around this philosophy.

For parents like Cooney, who have children of multiple ages in school, the new 3-year-old program will now allow her to have all of her kids on the same campus.

"It's great to be able to offer this to the community and the St. Thomas family," she said. "It's just going to make our campus even better."

For more info visit: staphxschool.org.

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Posted in Schools & Sports on Thursday, September 1, 2016 12:00 am.

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Arcadia News
 August 14 at 12:30pm

The AHS Titans are getting ready and raising funds for a new season. We spotted Titans James Howard, Damon Stratton, Ben Anderson and Rudolfo Maravillas Duran at Safeway. The Titans have their Kick-Off Rally at OHSO tonight - best wishes for a great season boys!

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