SAINT MARK'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL
FRIDAY FACTS

Volume 7, Issue 9-
October 14, 2022

SAINT MARK'S
CATHOLIC SCHOOL
EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
ESTABLISHED 1967

St. Mark's Catholic School Vision

St Mark's Catholic School is dedicated to educating student disciples in body, mind and spirit, through the collaboration of families, community and the Church.

Our Mission

St. Mark's Catholic School is a ministry of St. Mark's Catholic Community that fosters academic excellence, rooted in the Catholic faith, and Christian values.

Letter from our Pastor

Dear Family and Friends of St. Mark's,

We would love to have you join us for Mercy Night coming up tomorrow night in the Sanctuary from 6:30 pm-8 pm. We have a beautiful evening lined up with confession, adoration, prayer, and healing of the sick. What a great chance to come and take time out of our week to be with our Lord. It is a drop-in and-out format, so join us anytime between 6:30 and 8 pm.

Additionally, we have our Evangelization Retreat coming up on November 11-13th. Since I am new to St. Mark's, I am planning to go on this retreat as a participant, so please join me. Here is what I know: You get to sleep at home each night, all your meals and snacks are covered, and you get to spend meaningful time with the Lord and sing praise and worship music. Opportunities to sign up will be provided this weekend as we will have an announcement at each Mass and a table in the Narthex. Additionally, you can sign up to attend this free retreat at **https://www.stmarksboise.org/Evangelization-Retreat**

Prayerfully,

Fr. Paul

Letter from our Principal

Dear St. Mark's Families,

Today marks the end of the first quarter. It is hard to believe we are 25% through the academic year! Your children are working incredibly hard, and we

are seeing their growth - mind, body, and spirit.

Report cards will be available at parent-teacher conferences and will also be available on PlusPortals on Thursday afternoon. Parent-Teacher conferences are live and in-person this year. Please sign up for a conference time if you have a preschool through fifth-grade student. All middle school parents are invited to the gymnasium during conference hours; no sign-up is necessary.

I pray you have a blessed weekend.

Blessings,
Donna Gordon

THIS NEWSLETTER CONTAINS A LOT OF INFORMATION, AND THE LENGTH OF THE NEWSLETTER CAUSES IT TO BE TRUNCATED.

LOOK FOR THE LINK AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EMAIL THAT SAYS "VIEW ENTIRE MESSAGE" TO EXPAND THE EMAIL, OR CLICK HERE TO VIEW NEWSLETTER ON OUR WEBSITE.

Revitalization News

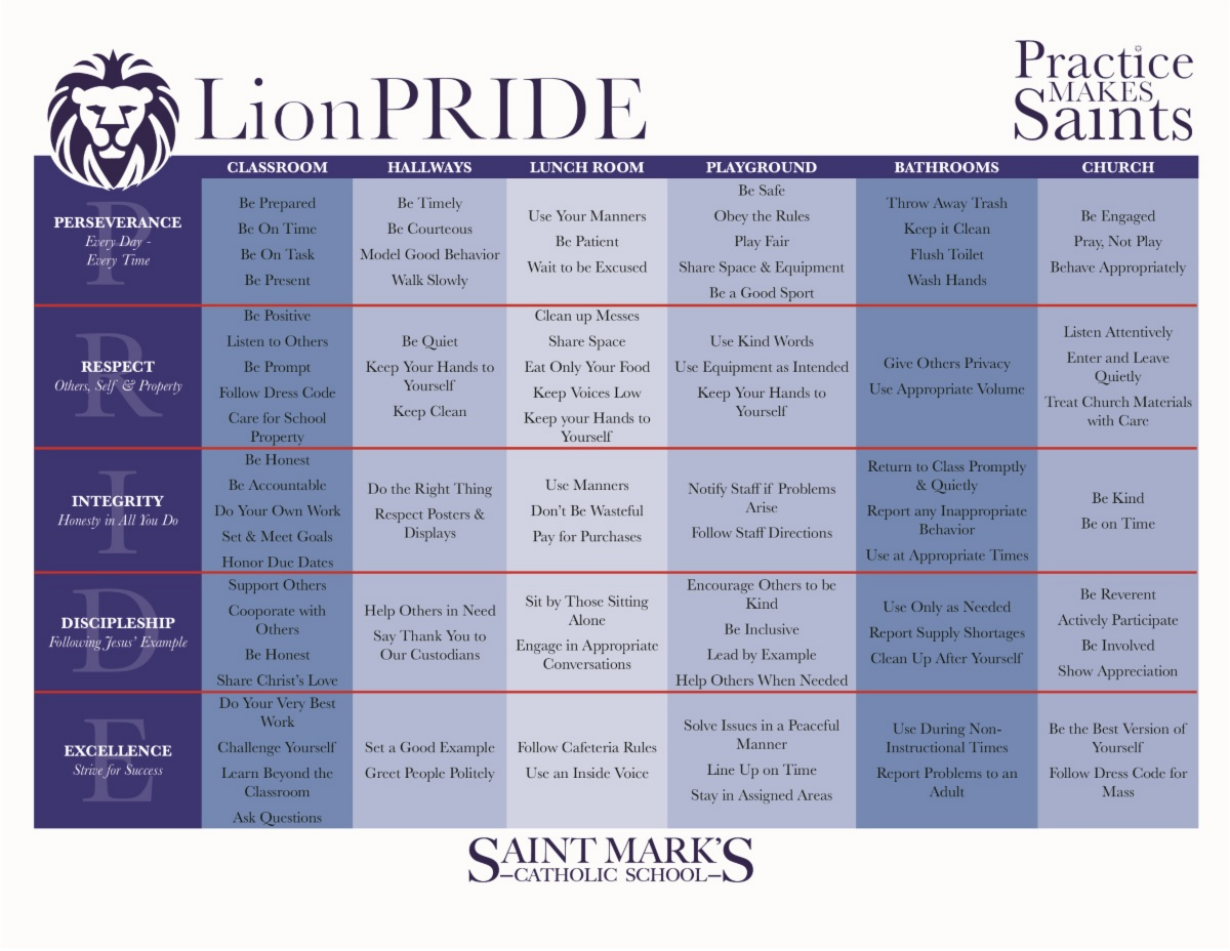
REVITALIZING OUR PARISH SCHOOL
Journey with Us
PHASE II

For more information about how to participate in the Journey with Us campaign, please contact Kathleen Brinegar in the School Office at 208-375-6654.

Student Spotlight

The TVCS football Team ended up in an undefeated 6-0 season! We are super proud of these boys!!! So cool! We had 8 St. Mark's players on the team:
Vinnie P, Evan M, Jack M, Vaughn W, Grady N, Matteo W, Jack W, Ander A

Lion Pride Recognition



LionPRIDE

Practice MAKES Saints

	CLASSROOM	HALLWAYS	LUNCH ROOM	PLAYGROUND	BATHROOMS	CHURCH
PERSEVERANCE *Every Day - Every Time*	Be Prepared Be On Time Be On Task Be Present	Be Timely Be Courteous Model Good Behavior Walk Slowly	Use Your Manners Be Patient Wait to be Excused	Be Safe Obey the Rules Play Fair Share Space & Equipment Be a Good Sport	Throw Away Trash Keep it Clean Flush Toilet Wash Hands	Be Engaged Pray, Not Play Behave Appropriately
RESPECT *Others, Self & Property*	Be Positive Listen to Others Be Prompt Follow Dress Code Care for School Property	Be Quiet Keep Your Hands to Yourself Keep Clean	Clean up Messes Share Space Eat Only Your Food Keep Voices Low Keep your Hands to Yourself	Use Kind Words Use Equipment as Intended Keep Your Hands to Yourself	Give Others Privacy Use Appropriate Volume	Listen Attentively Enter and Leave Quietly Treat Church Materials with Care
INTEGRITY *Honesty in All You Do*	Be Honest Be Accountable Do Your Own Work Set & Meet Goals Honor Due Dates	Do the Right Thing Respect Posters & Displays	Use Manners Don't Be Wasteful Pay for Purchases	Notify Staff if Problems Arise Follow Staff Directions	Return to Class Promptly & Quietly Report any Inappropriate Behavior Use at Appropriate Times	Be Kind Be on Time
DISCIPLESHIP *Following Jesus' Example*	Support Others Cooperate with Others Be Honest Share Christ's Love	Help Others in Need Say Thank You to Our Custodians	Sit by Those Sitting Alone Engage in Appropriate Conversations	Encourage Others to be Kind Be Inclusive Lead by Example Help Others When Needed	Use Only as Needed Report Supply Shortages Clean Up After Yourself	Be Reverent Actively Participate Be Involved Show Appreciation
EXCELLENCE *Strive for Success*	Do Your Very Best Work Challenge Yourself Learn Beyond the Classroom Ask Questions	Set a Good Example Greet People Politely	Follow Cafeteria Rules Use an Inside Voice	Solve Issues in a Peaceful Manner Line Up on Time Stay in Assigned Areas	Use During Non-Instructional Times Report Problems to an Adult	Be the Best Version of Yourself Follow Dress Code for Mass

SAINT MARK'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Respect

The entire month of October, we are focusing on this schoolwide learning expectation - Respect. Students are earning Lion's Pride tickets for exemplifying this virtue.

- A 2nd grader always waits quietly in the lunchroom after eating for her teacher to come.

- An 8th grader was respectful to the substitute.
- A 1st grader picked up the classroom without being asked.
- A 5th grader helped his teacher pick up trash at recess.
- A 5th grader showed kindness to Mrs. Rosania by asking her if she was feeling better after her absence.

Congratulations to this week's winners:

Sawyer H, Evan M, Alex M, Lexie D, William W, Corabelle Z, Genevieve S, Hayden P

Weekly Calendar

Sunday, October 16
12:30-2:00 p.m. First Communion Parent Make up Meeting
Mrs. Rosania's Birthday

Monday, October 17
National School Bus Safety Week
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Book Fair Begins
4:00-8:00 p.m. St. Mark's night at The Farmstead

Tuesday, October 18
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Book Fair

Wednesday, October 19
8:30 a.m. Student Body Mass presented by Ms. Ouimet's 4th grade
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Book Fair

Thursday, October 20
8:15 a.m. Individual Picture Retakes
4:00-8:00 p.m. Parent/Teacher Conferences (Full Day of School)
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Book Fair
4:00-8:00 p.m. Book Fair

Friday, October 21
Parent/Teacher Conferences - No School
8:00 a.m.-Noon Parent/Teacher Conferences

Upcoming Events

Sunday, October 23
8:30 a.m. School Sponsored Mass host by 7th grade

Monday, October 24
6th graders to MOSS

Wednesday, October 26
8:30 a.m. Student Body Mass presented by Ms. Murray's 3rd grade

Friday, October 28
$1 Optional Spirit Day

Home & School

Why does it take a Pirate so long to learn the alphabet?

Because they get stuck on "C"!

Be sure to keep checking out our Sign-up Genius page, we are still in need of a few volunteers.

Send us a picture and a brief summary of you, your child(ren), or your family demonstrating how you are reflecting this year's auction theme by "seizing the day". Each week an entry will be selected and featured in the Friday Facts and on our official Facebook Event Page. Email your entry to: **stmarksschoolauction@gmail.com**.

Thank you to this week's donors: Jump Time, Big Daddy BBQ, Starlight Mountain Theater, J Oats Portraits, Studio Move, Pure Barre, Jon Smith Subs, St. Marks Foundation, St. Marks CCW, Fredriksen Health Insurance, Fast Lane, Tacanos, Gyro Shack, and Amano Restaurant. This week's St. Marks Families, The Jameson, The LaMott, The Anderson, The Wayne, The Downing, and St. Mark's Staff, Bobbi Rivas and Tina Kasper.

Important links:

Signup Genius: **https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b044eaca62baafd0-2019**

Auction Frogs: **https://stmarksauction2023.afrogs.org/#/index**

Facebook Event page: **https://fb.me/e/1laKxNIB6**

LEGENDARY
ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY NIGHT OUT
Lowe Family
FARMSTEAD
FARMING FUN • HARVESTING MEMORIES
2500 S Eagle Rd, Kuna, ID 83634
Monday, October 17th,
4pm to 8pm
DISCOUNTED COST IS $9.99 (+TAX) PER PERSON
(Regular price $14.99)
AT THE TICKET OFFICE, MENTION ST. MARK'S TO RECEIVE THE DISCOUNT. $1 PER ADMISSION WILL BE DONATED TO OUR SCHOOL!
Includes:
• 18-acre Corn Maze
• Corn Poppers
• Cow Train rides
• Grain Train rides
• Bee Line Ziplines
• Farm Animals
• Farmyard Games
• Idaho Potato Sack Slide
• Hayrides
WWW.LOWEFAMILYFARMSTEAD.COM

St. Mark's Community
Trunk or Treat RSVP

Parking spots are first come, first served. Please RSVP so we make can keep track of how many people plan to attend.

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080A49ADAE28A5FC1-trunk

Festival of Trees

LET THERE BE LIGHT

The theme for Festival of Trees is Let there Be Light, and we are creating a themed tree for this year called "**Be the Light**", and are looking to be someones light this Christmas. We are asking for donations to be included with the tree and will be given to a place in need once the tree is purchased.

Donations must be made by November 7th

Pre-k: Toothbrushes
K: Socks
1st: Travel size toothpaste
2nd: Travel size body wash
3rd: Travel size deodorant
4th: Travel size shampoo/conditioner
5th: Travel size hand sanitizer
6th: Diapers
7th: Water bottles
8th: Travel size Tylenol/Ibuprofen

Volunteer Opportunities

We still have volunteer opportunities during the Book Fair next week. **Click here** to sign up.

Lunch Room Volunteers

NEXT WEEK'S LUNCH HELPERS
Monday (17)—Manzanares, Wilmer, Hudspeth
Tuesday (18)—Manzanares, Cavazos, Storli

Wednesday (19)—Anderson, LaMott
Thursday (20)—Corcoran, Holtz, Laubhan, Manzanares

St. Mark's offers a healthy, delicious hot lunch to students and staff EVERY FULL DAY OF SCHOOL!

4LUNCHROOM HELPERS ARE NEEDED EACH DAY to make the lunchroom experience enjoyable for all. Please call (208) 375-6654, email the **School Office** or sign up in the binder outside the school office to volunteer.

Daily Lunch Schedule: 11:15 a.m. (PS-2); 11:35 a.m. (3-5); 12:00 p.m. (6-8)

News

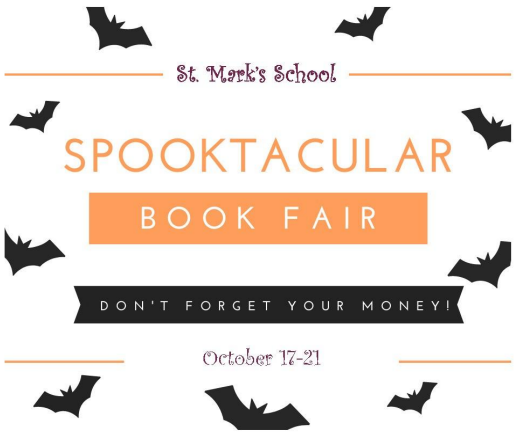
Thank you Mrs. Godfrey and Mrs. Cox for cooking and serving our hot lunches every day. We appreciate all you do to keep our students healthy and well fed. National School Lunch was this week.

Individual Student Photo Retakes will be taken on Thursday, October 20, from 8:15-9:15 a.m. This is for students who were absent on Picture Day or students who want to retake their photo from Picture Day. Students may wear their picture clothes to school but must change back into their uniform after the picture is taken.

Thank you to our 7th grade parents for providing this month's Home & School lunch. It was delicious and enjoyed by all staff members.

Please remember that the School Office needs a Dr's excuse when a student returns from an appointment during the school day.

No Homework Club on Thursday, October 20 due to Parent/Teacher conferences.



THE BOOK FAIR STARTS ON MONDAY!

WHAT: St. Mark's School Spooktacular Book Fair

WHERE: School Library

WHEN: October 17-21, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

PLUS **EXTENDED HOURS** on 10/20 during P/T Conferences from 4:00-8:00 p.m.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED, click here to sign up to help. Email Mrs. Rosania with questions.

There will be a Library Bake Sale at the Book Sale on Thursday, October 20 from 10:00

a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Baked goods are being accepted for the sale. Proceeds go to our Library Fund to help purchase books.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are scheduled for Thursday, October 20 from 4:00-8:00 p.m. and Friday, October 21 from 8:00 a.m.-Noon.

Click on the link below to sign up for your conference(s):
https://www.ptcfast.com/schools/St_Mark_s_School

Grades Preschool through 5th Grade:
Will have 15 minutes per conference.

Middle School:
Due to the number of Middle School students, we have allotted 5 minutes per conference. **MIDDLE SCHOOL CONFERENCES WILL BE HELD IN THE GYM AND WILL BE ARENA STYLE, WHERE YOU GET IN LINE TO TALK TO A TEACHER AND EACH 5 MINUTE CONFERENCE IS ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS** If more time is needed, there will be a sign up with each teacher to set a time for a more in-depth conference.

Thanksgiving Feast for parents of Preschool - 2nd grade

On Wednesday, November 16th we will celebrate our traditional Thanksgiving Day Feast for parents of Preschool-2nd grade and their students.

LUNCH TIMES

11:00 a.m. - Preschool
11:10 a.m. - Kindergarten
11:20 a.m. - First Grade
11:30 a.m. - Second Grade

Parents, please click on this link to sign up for the Thanksgiving Feast.

Cost of the lunch for adults is $5.00 and we ask that you send your payment to the School Office by Tuesday, November 2 with student name on the envelope and Thanksgiving Feast in the memo line. This is how you will be signed up for the Feast. Because of the lead time to order the food, late orders will not be accepted. Students eating hot lunch will have their lunch account charged.

Lunch includes: Turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy, stuffing, green beans, roll and pumpkin pie.

When you arrive for the Feast, please check in at the School Office. Parents will be escorted to their student's classroom when it is time to walk to the cafeteria as a group.

All students eating hot lunch this day will be served the Thanksgiving lunch.

Would your student each pizza on Pizza Friday if we had a gluten-free option? Email **Mrs. Godfrey** if you are interested. She needs at least 2 students each Pizza Day to be able to offer it.

Schedule for Middle School Engage Retreat on Thursday, October 20

8:00-8:30 a.m. Check In/Catch Up on Homeroom Info

8:45-10:15 a.m. 1st Rotation 6th Grades-Church-Deacon Chris-Altar Server/Liturgical Formation
7th Grades-Donoghue Hall-Angela Labrum-Youth Activities

8th Grades-Classrooms-Teachers-Seminarian Cards, Rosary Making

10:30-Noon 2nd Rotation 6th Grades-Donoghue Hall-Angela Labrum-Youth Activities
7th Grades--Classrooms-Teachers-Seminarian Cards, Rosary Making
8th Grades-Church-Deacon Chris-Altar Server/Liturgical Formation

Noon-12:45 p.m. LUNCH and RECESS

1:00-2:30 p.m. 3rd Rotation 6th Grades-Classrooms--Teachers-Seminarian Cards, Rosary Making
7th Grades-Church-Deacon Chris-Altar Server/Liturgical Formation
8th Grades-Donoghue Hall-Angela Labrum-Youth Activities

Please try not to schedule appointments on this day to avoid disrupting the Retreat. If a student has to be checked out, they must be signed out at the office and depending on their location, will either be called from the Middle School or the parent will be sent to the Church to retrieve the student.

8th Grade Altar of the Dead Projects

Wednesday, November 2nd (All Souls' Day)

Please come and visit the School Gym on Wednesday, November 2nd, from 12:50-2:45 p.m. to view the 8th Graders Altar of the Dead Projects.

This is an opportunity for them to share about someone meaningful in their lives who has passed away.

8th graders will be taking orders for your holiday wreaths at Parent/Teacher Conferences on Thursday, October 20 from 4:00-8:00 p.m.

There are many different types and sizes of wreaths available.

You may purchase a wreath from any 8th grader or leave your order and check with the school office. Please make checks out to St Mark's School.

Wreaths will be delivered on November 16th

and pick up will be at St. Mark's Church.

Thank you in advance for your support of our 8th graders!! If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Brady at **mbrady@stmarksschoolboise.com**

Outdoor Winter Greens by JanLar Florists

M. WREATH 20" $35.25
Fresh Evergreens with cones and bow.
Also available:
28" $ 42.78
32" $ 59.35
42" $ 72.86
48" $ 89.99
60" $ 226.74
72" $ 296.96

CC. CANDY CANE $39.38
Fresh Evergreens with cones and bow.
Approx. 28" in length.

CR. CROSS $42.35
Fresh Evergreens with cones and bow.
Approx. 28".

G. GARLAND 10' $34.63
Cedar adds a warm welcome to guests. 2 Bows included.
Also Available:
25' $ 62.75
(3 Bows)
75' $170.06
(6 Bows)

Hand tied bows will vary in pattern and color

Prices include Idaho sales tax

The St Mark's School Foundation Board is looking for New Members!

The St. Mark's School Foundation is gearing up for another eventful and productive year of service to the St. Mark's School community. The Foundation's main focus is to manage and grow its investment portfolio in order to support the St. Mark's School student financial-needs scholarships. Additionally, the Foundation Board of Directors directly assists in the public relations of the St. Mark's School, most notably by holding the annual Spring Foundation Golf Tournament and supporting the Journey with Us Campaign fundraising efforts.

There is currently a need for interested and available members of the St. Mark's community to serve as members of the Foundation Board of Directors. If you, or someone you know, is interested in learning more about the Foundation's goals and efforts and the potential to serve on its Board of Directors, please contact the Foundation's

- President Greg Daggett, via phone (208) 850-4974 or email **greg.daggett@gmail.com**
- Vice President, John Jameson, via phone (208)565-9261 or email **jojameson@firstam.com**

Educational Outfitters of Boise is a school and team uniform provider. We also offer custom embroidery and screen-printing services and work with businesses throughout the state.
We have an opening for an assistant manager and retail associate position at our location near downtown Boise that will move closer to Meridian within the next two months. We offer a somewhat flexible schedule with plenty of opportunities to learn new tasks and skills along the way. If you are energetic, upbeat and would love to work with a fun team in a retail store setting, you may be a great fit for one of these roles!

Retail Associate duties and responsibilities include:

- Ensure high levels of customer satisfaction through excellent service
- Remain knowledgeable on products offered and discuss available options
- Process POS (point of sale) purchases
- Comply with inventory control procedures
- Suggest ways to improve sales (e.g. planning marketing activities, changing the store's design)
- Fill orders accurately and promptly
- Use embroidery and screen-printing equipment

Assistant Manager additional duties and responsibilities:

- Provide leadership & guidance to retail staff
- Ensure that deliverables and daily goals are met
- Ensure high standards for quality and timeliness of orders
- Ordering product and ensuring inventory standards are met
- Database management and online platform maintenance
- Work with Manager to meet revenue goals and build strategic new business plans
- Onboard new schools and maintain ongoing relationships to ensure family and school needs are met to meet overall uniform and dress code guidelines
- Additional tasks as needed

Job Types: Full-time, Part-time

Salary:
Retail Associate $15.00 - 18.00 per hour
Assistant Manager $20.00 - $25.00 per hour
Benefits:

- Flexible schedule
- Paid time off

TVCS Events/Sports

Click here to see all the TVCS sporting events.

7th & 8th Grade TVCS Dance

on

Friday, October 14

at St. Mark's School

7:00-9:00 p.m.

Bring $5.00, your Student ID
and 2 cans of food for St. Mark's Food Bank

Enter at the West end of the building
(At the Morley Nelson Elementary end of the school)

NO COSTUMES—All TVCS dress code guidelines must be followed

Preschool Happenings

We had a special visitor in preschool this week. Fr. Paul played a couple of songs on his mandolin. The kids loved singing the Angel of God prayer with him.

Church Connection

If you would like to receive the Parish Newsletter **text** BOISESTMARKSNEWS **to** 42828 to sign up **OR Click here** to sign up.

Notes from the Nurse

Vitamin D-The Sunshine Vitamin

Saint Alphonsus
SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM

Vitamin D has the ability to be absorbed by the body through sunlight and is a major player in keeping the human body healthy. According to the National Institute of Health's Offices of Dietary Supplements the major role of the "Sunshine Vitamin" is to promote Calcium absorption.

Here are a few other benefits of Vitamin D:

1. Healthy bones
2. Healthy teeth
3. Supports lung function
4. Assists in regulating insulin levels
5. Improves brain function and mood
6. Boosts your immunity
7. Plays a role in a healthy cardiovascular system

Sources of Vitamin D

1. Sunshine- as little as 5-15 minutes a day
2. Fatty Fish
3. Orange juice
4. Egg yolk
5. Cheese
6. Caviar
7. Supplements- always check with you doctor before taking any medications.

Through the St. Alphonsus School Health Program, Mrs. Fuchs, our school nurse, is at St. Mark's on

Thursdays and Mrs.Placido, CNA, SASHP Assistant is here on Tuesdays.

COVID/Heath News

Children learn best when they are healthy and well-rested. Please, for your child's health and safety, and for the health and safety of others, keep sick kids home. If your child is experiencing any of the symptoms below and these symptoms are not attributable to any other condition they may have, then your child should stay home.

- A temperature of 100 or higher without the use of fever reducing medication
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of appetite
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing OR a change in their cough from baseline for those with allergies/asthma
- New congestion or runny nose OR a change in symptoms from baseline for those with allergies/asthma
- Severe sore throat
- New or unusual onset of severe headache, muscle, or body aches
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- New or unusual rash
- Pink eye with discharge not associated with diagnosed allergies

A student may return to school when:

- They are asymptomatic or symptoms have significantly improved
- There has been no vomiting, diarrhea, or fever for 24 hours without the use of medication
- They have been evaluated by a healthcare provider and cleared to return to school with a note from the provider
- They have been taking a prescribed medication for impetigo, strep throat, pink eye, or any other communicable conditions for 24 hours or per their healthcare providers instructions/recommendations

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COVID-19 Testing and Positive Cases

- Consider testing if illness symptoms persist and/or your healthcare provider recommends testing, test results must come from a lab
- Report positive COVID-19 tests to the school
- Positive COVID-19 students must self-isolate/stay home for 5 full days, the first day of symptoms is considered day zero
- May return to school on day 6 if asymptomatic or with improving symptoms, masks recommended for another 5 days
- The school will no longer track, trace, or communicate positive cases in the facility

Notes from the Counselor

Dinner: 30 Minutes to a More Connected Family

"Surrounded by the people who matter, gazing into the faces we love, we count our blessings and share our burdens, reliving the daily dramas of missed buses and skinned knees. We raise jelly glasses and champagne flutes, toasting accomplishments in classrooms and boardrooms. The table is where we mark milestones, divulge dreams, bury hatchets, make deals, give thanks, plan vacations, and tell jokes. It's also where children learn the lessons that families teach: manners, cooperation, communication, self-control, values. Following directions. Sitting still. Taking turns. It's where we make up and make merry. It's where we live, between bites." -Doris Christopher

You've probably heard that having dinner together as a family is a good thing for your kids, but you may not realize that it could change your child's life. Dinner is the best predictor we have of how kids will do in adolescence. The more frequently kids eat dinner with their families, the better they do in school, and the less likely they are to get involved with drugs or alcohol, suffer depression, consider suicide, or become sexually active during high school.

Why?

Maybe because families who eat together talk more, which helps them stay connected and build better relationships.

Maybe because parents who show up to eat with their kids are more likely to express their love constructively in other ways, too, in the form of both attention and supervision.

Maybe because families who offer kids more structure are more likely to keep kids attending to their homework as well as out of trouble.

Maybe because dinner transforms individual family members into a "group," which gives parents more clout to rival the power of the peer group.

Or maybe because children, even more than the rest of us, need something to count on every day, the tangible security of belonging and being nurtured that is represented by the ritual of sharing food with those we love.

Whatever the reason, dinner is a pretty easy insurance policy to build into your home life. If you're too busy to have dinner as a family on a regular basis, it's worth re-examining why, given how important it is.

"What's a regular basis?"
The research shows that the more meals together, the better, meaning that two is much better than none, and four is much better than two. Obviously, it's ideal if both parents -- when they live together -- can have dinner with their kids every night. But we don't live in an ideal world, and by definition no human is an ideal parent. So we do what we can, which can often mean one parent holding down the fort at many weeknight dinners. That gives Friday, Saturday and Sunday a celebratory tone as everyone sits down to savor the meal together.

"I eat with the kids every night, but my spouse can't get home till later. Does that matter?"
Sometimes that's the best a family can do during the week, and you make it work. But it becomes all the more important that the whole family have time together on the weekend. There's something magical for building family identity when all members of a household share meals together, at least some of the time.

"What about kids' sports schedules that keep them away at dinner?"
Once a week of dinners on the run is inconsequential, but if conflicting schedules mean your family can't sit down at least a few times during the week for dinner, it's worth some creative thinking. Can the schedule be changed so that you all eat earlier or later? Can a child switch to after-school rather than evening activities? Can you all at least gather together for fruit and milk or herbal tea before bedtime so that you get some family time that evening?

"We eat together, but we eat in front of the TV. Does that count?"
Does it make you feel more connected to your family? Not as much as a conversation, I suspect, so the short answer is No. It's challenging to make dinner fun and relaxing when everyone is pressured and tired, so it can be a lot easier to turn on the TV at the end of a long day than to interact with your kids. But eating in front of a screen builds your relationship with the screen, not with each other.

"I'm so wiped out at the end of the day that I don't have the energy to make dinner into anything special."
After work and sports schedules, parental exhaustion is the single biggest obstacle to family dinners. But this should be a time for everyone in the family to recharge and reconnect, including you.
The first secret is to minimize the cooking -- remember, the food is not the point. (See #3 below.) The second secret is to nurture yourself as well as your kids, not just in the evening, but throughout your day. We lose an important opportunity to check in with our kids and and re-connect if we lose dinner, especially if we work away from them all day. Dinner seems so important to me as a foundation for family culture that I would rather think of it as a cherished family tradition, and skimp somewhere else, if I have to.

"What about date night?"

While your kids are young, you may want to sit down with them for Saturday night dinner before the babysitter arrives and you head out for an evening with your partner. Of course, if you have dinner as a family most of the other nights of the week, this won't feel necessary. And if you don't, then consider this first part of your Saturday evening "date night" with your kids and make it festive.

"As my kids have gotten older, they don't want to have dinner with us on the weekend."
Again, if you have dinner as a family most other nights, you can feel comfortable exempting Saturday night as "party night" for everyone. But if you don't, then your family needs the connection time -- even if your tweens and teens don't know that!

Naturally, as your kids get older, they'll be the ones having date night. But if you open your doors to your kids' friends for dinner, tweens and even teens often enjoy a delicious free, home-cooked dinner -- and are willing to engage in an interesting discussion, if you don't embarrass them -- before they head out to a movie or party. That may seem hard to believe, but my children's friends have commented that they love hanging out at our house because the conversations are always so interesting. With some discussion ideas in mind and a little energy, you can create a dinner hour that will have the teens almost wishing they didn't have to head out. (I said almost.)
How do you create a dinner hour that's so nurturing that everyone in the family -- including you -- looks forward to it? We will be looking at 15 ideas to get you started over the rest of the month. Stay tuned. This week try to look at your schedules to see what day of the week can start the family meal night. What things can you drop out of your schedule to have some free time. What can your kids do to free up some time for fun as a family. How does the idea of a family game night sound? Talk it over with your kids and ask them, what would make the evening fun for them. What kind of activities would they like to do together that does not involve screens.

More ideas are available at **https://www.ahaparenting.com/guide/communication**

Joe Lipetzky Psy.D.

Dr. Joe Lipetzky, our school psychologist, is at St. Mark's on Monday and Friday mornings.
TBA, our school counselor, is at St. Mark's on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

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