



HOPE IN THE HEIGHTS

A Newsletter for the Alumni, Parents and Friends of

St. Elizabeth School

Washington Heights, New York City

Winter 2011



Dear Alumni and Benefactors,

St. Elizabeth School is proud to present our new edition of *Hope in the Heights*. It has been the tradition that each *Hope in the Heights* includes a letter from the principal. This will not be the case for this issue. On February 6, 2011, St. Elizabeth School lost one of its most beloved members.

Sr. Noreen Nolan O.P. gave 23 years of dynamic and strong leadership to our school. In this issue we bring you the words spoken by her brother-in-law, Joseph Ripp, at her funeral Mass which was celebrated on February 9th at the Dominican Convent in Sparkill, New York.. We will miss you, Sr. Noreen. May God grant your soul eternal rest.

Thomas G. Cunningham
Principal

In Memoriam



On behalf of Sr. Noreen's family I want to thank all of you for joining us today at this special Mass for her. As evidenced by the number of people who are here and the stories many of you have told me about her, she was a very special person.

Over the last several weeks, I have found what a wonderful family Noreen had here at the Dominican Convent. So many people went out of their way to be nice to her. To make sure that she was comfortable, to make sure that she was cared for. My family and I want to thank all of the staff at the infirmary and all of her friends here at the convent. I could not name them all so perhaps I could ask the President of the order, Sister Mary Murray to do that for me. What an incredible group of people you are.

I especially want to thank Dr. Mary Flood, the Dominican Sister of Blauvelt, who was her physician. Dr. Flood was Noreen's physician, and part-time counselor for Ginny and I. Noreen, Ginny and I were always so thankful for what you did for her. You are a kind and compassionate physician in a world filled with clinical practitioners.

Bishop Walsh, Noreen always admired your ministry as the Pastor of St. Elizabeth's. She spoke of it often. I am sure she is so happy that you are here to celebrate her mass today.

In 1971, I was sitting in my dorm room at Manhattan College and a friend asked me to join him at a clam bake at another college. We packed the car with friends and we drove up to St. Thomas Aquinas College, just a few hundred yards from here. There on the hill behind the school they had clams and beer and that was all that mattered to a Jasper from Manhattan College.

Woody Allen once joked that half of life is showing up. I often wonder what life would have been like for me if I had not shown up that day.... it was there that I met my soul mate Ginny and later Noreen. Ginny and I dated during Junior and Senior years, fell madly in love and married soon after graduation.

I quickly learned that the Nolan's and the Tierney's, Noreen's mother's side of the family, are an extremely close family. Celebrations are all about laughter. Friends and family are always around. Add many nuns and priests for a visit and you get the picture. Of all the celebrated holidays, I think St. Patrick's Day was the biggest....certainly the one that was the most well attended. The day was always filled with stories of Ireland, lots of music, stories of Ireland, many big pots of corned beef and cabbage cooked by her father Frank, and more stories of Ireland. It was an annual event that everyone looked forward to.

Noreen's family was also one of incredible faith. As a simple example on learning Sunday morning of his daughter's death, Frank's first comment was, "Ginny, she just walked into heaven." He knew that she had committed her entire life to God and now she is with him.

The Nolan and Tierney women are a strong lot. One of my favorite stories often told is one of Nora Tierney, Noreen's grandmother, leaving her mother at the age of 16 and traveling to America to start a new life. I guess you have to be strong to do such a thing and Nora was certainly that. She gave that inner strength to Noreen. It was one of her finest qualities.

The Nolan and Tierney women have a special bond with each other that you do not see in many families. They share a very special relationship with their faith, they talk often, they share stories of the good old days, but more than that....they are best friends.

"Best friends" is the only way to describe the relationship that Noreen had with her sister Ginny, her mother Theresa, her grandmother Nora and her aunts, Ronnie and Eileen. They could complete each other's sentences. It was actually a remarkable thing to watch.

Later on in life Noreen was able to take many trips with Ginny, Ronnie and Eileen and their days were always filled with stories and laughter. In preparation for one of her trips, Noreen had to get her passport renewed. When she went to the passport office she brought copies of the same school picture she had used ten years before for the old passport. The clerk told her that she needed a recent picture. She tried to convince the clerk to use the old one because she thought looked better in it.

Their favorite trip was to a cooking school in Tuscany. The toured Tuscany, they sampled the wine, and cooked some great meals. When I picked them up at the airport they couldn't stop laughing, talking about their experiences, and were so happy about the time they spent together. Many families grow apart in life but the Nolan and Tierney women only grew closer. I have often felt privileged to have witnessed that kind of love.

It's funny, if you look at Noreen and Ginny you would never think they were sisters. In fact no one ever did. Noreen was all Nolan and Ginny was all Tierney. They were very different people in so many ways and yet the same in so many others. Their faith was strong, they shared an incredibly deep love for each other, and they talked often. There is an old saying that sisters are God's way of giving you a best friend for life. Noreen was that for Ginny. Ginny was that for Noreen.

Noreen was around so much she was much more like my sister than a sister-in-law and she was just like a second mother to my sons, Brendan and Daniel. She was there at every birthday, every graduation, every event in their lives. When our boys were younger Noreen often babysat for them. They have never forgotten all of the fun things they could do at her schools on the weekends, especially that rooftop playground at the Daycare Center where she lived while she was Principal at Good Council. I cannot imagine life without her around. It will be so hard for all of us.

A simple way to describe Noreen is that she got things done. Her life was one of achievement. She was always working on something, organizing some project at school: class list, fundraising, the Peace garden, redoing the gym, the annual Christmas card, the pre-school program, the new science lab, the computers, the next Middle States review, etc, etc, etc. When she was not at St. Elizabeth's, she was always thinking about the school.

If she was not working at the school then it was some event with the Dominican Sisters, or off to some function at the church, or a dinner with her friends. She was always full of energy and she applied it to everything she did.

Noreen was blessed with an incredible group of friends from the convent. Ginny and I often called them the Nuntucketers. Noreen and her friends looked forward every year to a week's vacation on the island. One year Ginny and I ordered them tee shirts that had "Nuntucket" printed on them. A repairman came in one day and thought they should return the shirts since the store spelled Nantucket wrong. "Nuntucket" has become one of those special stories.

Her friends from the convent have been with her throughout her adult life and they were all with her during the last days of her illness. When she was with Ginny and I, she spoke so fondly of you all. Thank you all for enriching her life the way you did with your love, friendship and faith. You are very special people.

A college professor once said to me that you have to make sure that your life makes a difference. If the world existed without you in it....would it matter at all? When asked at the end of your days, "How have you changed the life of others around you?... what will you say?"

We are sitting in this beautiful chapel. For seven years Noreen chaired the committee that helped build this chapel. In part, her efforts helped make this place of God. It is so fitting that we are here to say goodbye.

Noreen had a real mission in life....to make sure that all children had the same opportunity through education. She believed that every child deserved a quality education no matter where they came from. She dedicated her entire life to this mission from the age of 17 and she served it well. How proud she must be right

now looking back at her life. She spent her entire life serving children and their educational needs. Thousands of people can say that their world would be very different if Noreen had not lived her life the way that she did. All of them are her enduring legacy.

For the last 22 years, Noreen and Sister Eileen have worked together serving the children of Washington Heights, NY at St. Elizabeth School, a Catholic school in upper Manhattan filled with hard working families ...many from the Dominican Republic. Noreen asked me to take the school pictures one year and I left so impressed at what she was doing and the kids that I met there. The energy inside the school reflected her personality: focused, happy, devoted to learning.

Last night at the wake, I met a couple who live in Westchester yet send their children to St. Elizabeth's. They told me that Noreen didn't just teach their children....she helped raise them.

Bishop Walsh, who is celebrating this mass was the pastor at St. Elizabeth's for many years. He often told people that the secret to his school's success was to just stay out of the way and let Sister Noreen and Sister Eileen do their thing.

One of her doctors once asked Noreen if she was concerned about anything....in her situation there are a lot of things one could say. Her only concern was that she did not feel well enough to continue with her mission. That she could no longer serve the children.

There is a group of Sister Noreen's students with us here today from St. Elizabeth's. Perhaps you can take this one last lesson from her....make sure that your life, like Sister Noreen's, makes a difference for the good of the world.

Last week my new grandson Nolan came to visit Noreen upstairs in the infirmary. I was watching the two of them in the room and I was so sad that she would never be able to be a part of his life, that he would not get to know her. I now understand that I was terribly wrong.

Like the Nolan and Tierney women and their stories, we will always tell the stories of Noreen and her life. We will always be proud of what she has accomplished and the thousands of children that she helped. We will make sure that the future generations of the Tierney's, the Nolan's and the Ripp's never forget her. And I will always be happy in the knowledge that Nolan will now have his own personal guardian angel to watch over him.

Noreen, I am so happy that I went to that clambake thirty-eight years ago and you became a part of my life. Over the last two years, Ginny and I tried so hard to keep you....we never really had a chance. God just wanted you more.

We love you. We are so proud of you. You have enriched our lives. You may rest in peace knowing that your life truly made a difference. The world is a much better place because you were here. God bless you.

Catholic Education Means...

By Estefani Hernandez and Gabriela Morales (8th Grade)

What is a Catholic education? A Catholic education is a form of learning that is enriched by Catholic teachings and values. We have been in Catholic school for our entire educational career and we can say it has been a wonderful experience that has helped shape who we are today. Our teachers are passionate about the material they teach and patient when students do not comprehend. An important aspect of Catholic education is our character development. Our teachers make sure our conduct and behavior is appropriate and well-mannered. We are taught to stand up for our beliefs and to always help someone in need. It is so important for these values to be instilled within us at an early age so that we will grow up to be responsible and well rounded adults.

At an early age we are taught right from wrong and understand there are consequences for our actions. We are expected to help each other and we are encouraged to always try our best. At St. Elizabeth, the focus is not only on academic achievement but teaching to reach the whole child and bring out the best in each of us. The Religion classes that we take in each grade educate us about Jesus and motivate us to incorporate Jesus' teachings into our lives. We learn the value of respect and the importance of treating one another with kindness. Catholic schools create a safe environment where you do not have to worry about being judged and are accepted for whom you are. Asking questions is encouraged and students, as well as teachers, are willing to help.

Our relationships among our peers begin to blossom into friendships that last a lifetime, especially once you reach the eighth grade. This is the time when we make our moments count the most, because while we are excited for high school, we are leaving behind our childhood and all the memories we have gathered here amongst our St. Elizabeth family. We are anxiously await-



ing our high school letters and are beginning to start a new chapter in our lives. It is important to have guidance and support from your friends who are all going through the same process. Through rigorous midterms, difficult projects, time consuming extra-curricular activities and extra academic programs, we keep our sanity by chatting with our friends. We are not alone in this process.

We are in 8th grade now and looking back upon our years at St. Elizabeth, we are so grateful for every opportunity that has been afforded to us. Attending Catholic elementary school has provided us with a stellar education, unforgettable experiences, amazing friendships, and the best memories. Now that we are finding out what high schools we are accepted to, we are realizing how much our Catholic education has paved the way for success in our lives. We are going to miss St. Elizabeth and all our teachers but we know we can always come back to visit our family.

A Day in the Life of a Third Grader By: Rhiannon Luna (3rd Grade)

My name is Rhiannon Luna and I am a third grade student at St. Elizabeth School. I am grateful to be a student here because all the children are kind and sweet to me and the teachers help me understand more about my class work. I like Catholic school because I learn about God and we pray every day. St. Elizabeth has the best teachers. Every morning when we get to school everyone meets in the gym for morning prayers and then we all go up to our classrooms to start our day.

My third grade teachers are Mrs. Ferry, Ms. Kietur, Ms. Fendelman and Mr. O'Boyle. Mrs. Ferry is my third grade teacher. My class is huge!! We have 38 students in the classroom, but it is well organized and we do lots of group work and activities. We get homework every day, even the weekends so we are always learning and making sure we understand everything our teachers have taught.

Mrs. Ferry teaches us different things every week about Math, Science, Social Studies, Religion and English. She taught us how to make snowflakes on the computer. She called them God's snowflakes because every snowflake is unique and God made all of us unique too! I brought my snowflakes home and my mom put them on our living room window! We use a Smart Board to help with our lessons each day and it is so great to be able to interact with technology in our classroom. I like Math, it is my favorite subject but I also love Reading. I read *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series*, by Jeff Kinney and I am reading the whole *Magic Tree House* series by Mary Pope Osborne.

Ms. Kietur is my Librarian and I love going to library every week to learn something new and check out a book. I love to read adventure stories. Ms. Kietur helps me with my writer's notebook so I can be the best writer ever and she shows us how to use Venn diagrams to compare different characters from our stories. She makes me feel excited about reading! Ms. Fendelman is

my Art teacher and she teaches about different types of artwork and we always have an artist of the month. My favorite style of art is self-portraits using oil pastels and paints. Mr. O'Boyle is my Gym teacher and we play fun games like volleyball, basketball, and cops and robbers. We also do laps, which are not my favorite.

On Saturdays, I do my homework. After my homework is done sometimes my dad takes me rollerblading, which I love or my mom will take me to the bookstore or the movies and I love that too! I also enjoy playing board games, video games, and listening to music.

Being a student at St. Elizabeth School is the best and I am so lucky this is my school. I couldn't imagine being anywhere else. I have learned so much since I started here in Kindergarten and I have made wonderful friends. My teachers are always there to help me whenever I need it and I feel so special to be a part of our St. Elizabeth family.



75th Anniversary News

Spread the news! The date is set! The invitations are in the mail!

Please join us for a special evening to begin our 75th Anniversary Celebrations!

On Saturday, May 21, 2011, we will begin with a special 5 p.m. Mass for our alumni at St. Elizabeth Church. Following Mass, we will gather in the gym for an evening of food, fun and memories as we look ahead to our next 75 years of educating the children of our Washington Heights neighborhood.

Many of you have kept in touch with friends and classmates over the years; please invite them to join you for a wonderful time where you can see your “old school” and see for yourself how St. Elizabeth has evolved into the 21st Century school of today!

Do you have any names, addresses or emails you could share with us? We may lose touch with an alumnus/a when they move or change jobs—help us to reach as many graduates as we can!

Would you like to help in some way? Please email Mary Ann Lynch, Director of Development at officedev@steliznyc.org.

We are looking forward to seeing you on May 21st!

St. Elizabeth School Alumni Form

Name _____ Graduation Year _____
Maiden Name _____ Company Name _____
Address _____ Address _____
Phone: Home _____ Cell _____ Business _____ E-Mail _____

Please tell us about yourself. What high school and college did you attend? Do you have an advanced degree? What is your career or job title? Do you own your own business? Are you married? Do you have children? What are their names and ages? Do you keep in touch with any classmates or friends from St. Elizabeth? Any interesting news you would like us to share?

Do you know someone who would like to receive our newsletter or other publications? Please give us their names and addresses.

“We Educate the Whole Child for a Full Life”

Student to Teacher: A St. Elizabeth Story

By: Fanessa De La Rosa, Kristiana Biga and Arielfy Perez (8th Grade)

Mrs. Pagan is one of our beloved kindergarten teachers, but before she became a teacher here, she was a student at St. Elizabeth. Mrs. Pagan attended our school from 1st grade until she graduated in 8th grade; because there was not a kindergarten back then. We thought it would be so interesting to talk with her about her experiences as a student and what inspired her to become a teacher and how it feels to teach at her elementary school.

Sr. Josephine was Mrs. Pagan's third grade teacher and her classroom was in what is now Ms. Nuez's room. There were 43 students in her class and they had three classes per grade. The uniforms were different too. Instead of green,



they wore maroon and gray plain with gray or white socks and tights with Oxford shoes. Fourteen of the teachers at St. E's were nuns and even Mrs. Ferry taught here at that time. Every morning the students would line up outside and were picked up by their teachers. Then they went straight to their classroom to unpack and say morning prayers and the Pledge of Allegiance. They worked hard all morning until it was time for lunch. But they didn't eat in the

cafeteria; all the students went home to eat lunch. The school looked the same, except for the fourth floor because there was no library or computer lab. Instead, the fourth floor was for the nuns and this was their kitchen and dining room area.

Mrs. Pagan loved attending St. Elizabeth School because her time here was filled with wonderful activities, great friends, and a feeling of community that she will never forget. Everyone looked after one another and treated each other kindly and with respect. She has carried these valuable memories throughout her life. Mrs. Pagan especially loved playing sports with her friends on Friday nights and one of her best memories is playing basketball and winning the championship!

Reading was her favorite part of being in third grade. There was a reading system called SRA and everyone was on a different color which stood for your reading level. Though she never had a favorite subject, Religion, Reading and ELA were the best! Mrs. Pagan loved hearing all the stories the nuns would tell her from when they were growing

up and how things were different at that time. One of her favorite classroom memories was penmanship time. Sr. Josephine told her class that you had to swing your letters when writing in script and she used to make her students actually practice swinging their arms in the air!

Mrs. Pagan had some very funny stories to share with us about her time here at St. Elizabeth School. The students actually had to go up to the fourth floor and wash the dishes for the nuns and one time Mrs. Pagan finished cleaning up early. Instead of waiting for the nuns to finish praying in the chapel, she took the elevator downstairs. Now the students were not allowed to take the elevator without a teacher and when Mrs. Pagan was inside, the elevator got stuck! She pushed the emergency button but it didn't work so Mrs. Pagan climbed inside the elevator, opened the top and climbed up on the rope to open the door! When she got there, a nun was waiting for her and Mrs. Pagan got in big trouble. Looking back, she realizes it was a silly thing to do because she could have gotten very hurt!

Now for the past six years St. Elizabeth School has been blessed to have Mrs. Pagan back as a Kindergarten teacher. We asked her how she felt about coming back to her elementary school now as a teacher and she said, "I feel privileged to be a part of this community and a teacher at St. Elizabeth School." One piece of advice she offers to the students is to study hard and really know your times tables. Math was not Mrs. Pagan's favorite subject and she hopes everyone memorizes them because you need to be able to know your basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts. They are the foundation for all Math; so study and pay attention to your teachers! She also hopes everyone reads as many books as they can because reading makes you smarter and allows your imagination to grow. We are so happy to have Mrs. Pagan here and we look forward to her staying with us for a very long time.

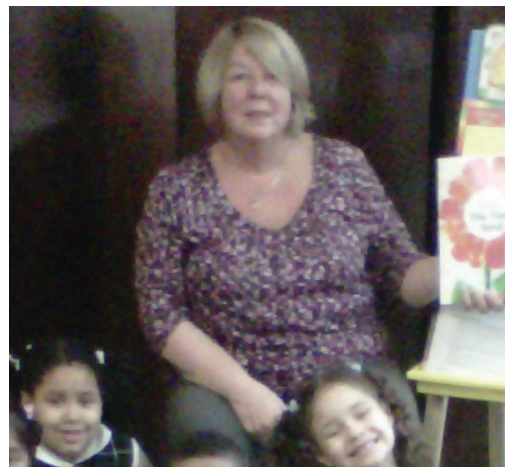


Photo Gallery



Hope in the Heights

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Check our Website...

...for many interesting features including current news, student information, and, of course, alumni news! We love to receive old photos which we post and save. Your memories and stories are the legacy for our current students. We welcome your contributions to our website.

Visit our Website at

www.steliznyc.org