

St. Mary School HSA Meeting Minutes

November 3, 2023

HSA Board Attendees:

Ann Russell, HSA Co-President

Marcy Miller, HSA Co-Vice President

Janine Simon & Vera Melkonian, HSA Co-Treasurers

Meghan Newman, Room Parent Coordinator

Welcome and NEASC Updates from Rachel Ambrosio:

- Rachel opened the meeting with a prayer and discussed the NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) visit that took place on November 2nd.
 - A few SMS members welcomed the team with a dinner at Hotel Zero in Danbury.
 - Rachel believes the overall visit was very successful and is looking forward to receiving their report.
 - There will be a program visit at the end of April.

Guest Speaker Kira Knox:

- Kira Knox is the Guidance Counselor at SMS. Her office is on the 3rd floor. We are happy to have her full time this year. Last year, she was an employee of Catapult.
- As a full time, employee of SMS, she is also able to help in other capacities in the school. You may notice Kira on the car pickup line waving as you exit the school.
- Kira meets individually with students as well as in small groups. These meetings might consist of playing games or reading books. Whatever Kira feels would benefit the child.
- She will request parental consent from parents before meeting a child. You always have the option of opting out if you do not want to have your child meet with Kira.
- A student can be referred by a parent, teacher/staff or Kira even herself.
- Kira also will go into the classroom and do lessons based upon what the teacher feels the class needs work on. Some examples of lessons have been respect, empathy, friendship and resolving conflict. You always have the option of opting your child out of these lessons.
- Amy Dowding added at the end that the staff at SMS really appreciates all her help!

HSA News from Ann Russell:

- Ann thanked Dayna and Lou Perri for chairing the Trunk or Treat.
- Ann also thanked all of the room moms for putting together the Halloween Parties.
- Lastly, thank you to the 3rd grader for stocking the teachers lounge with snacks and drinks.

- Ann introduced Laura Maher who had an idea of having a monthly meeting to discuss a different topic each month. Stay tuned for more information to come.

Updates on Gala from Renee Whitworth:

- The gala will be May 4, 2024 at Hotel Zero in Danbury from 6-10pm.
- The night is completely and totally handled by HSA volunteers.
- There are few different ways we fundraise on the night of the Gala.
 - Silent on-line bidding the night of for those on-site and you can share the link for those who want to bid from home.
 - There will be some items for “buy it now” such as a gift card pull.
 - Paddle raise- last gala, proceeds went to smartboards for the classrooms. The night of, Rachel and Amy will give a presentation on what this year’s proceeds will go towards.
- There are many ways to help without volunteering.
 - If you came from a school that unfortunately closed, ask those who used to donate to the fundraiser to contribute to ours.
 - If you recently made a big purchase (house, car, pool etc) ask that business if they would place an ad in the program.
 - Check if you/your spouse have corporate connection that might consider a donation or match yours.
 - If you are a frequent patron of a restaurant, nail salon, gym etc. we ask that you approach that business to increase our odds and shorten our cold-calling.
- Free ways you can help us reach our goal:
 - Donate an experience-week or weekend at a beach/ski house, tickets to Yankees, Jets, Knicks etc. These are very popular items and make the top 5 list in donations.
 - Maybe you have a special skill or talent that people would be willing to bid on (personal training, tutoring, piano lessons etc.)
 - Donate unexpired gift cards with receipts or proof of balance for our gift card raffle.
 - If you have Amex points or other credit card rewards that you are willing to cash points in for a gift card.
 - We are also collecting things for the kid’s raffle.
 - This lets the kids get in on the auction action too!
 - It takes place the week leading up to the gala. Kids can purchase tickets and bid on baskets during lunch.
 - We will take extra new/unopened crafts, bracelet kits, Legos, nerf balls etc. Check your closets!
 - Drop off items at school to the attention of Renee or Vera.
 - Class moms will be pushing requests and notifications through sign up genius

****Our next HSA Meeting will be held on Friday, December 1, 2023.****