

St.

Michael's School



Fall, 2010

From the Teachers' Desks

St. Michael's was established in 1994 and is a ministry of Holy Dormition Orthodox Church.

Staff:

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Congratulations to alumnae Rebekah Tolbert and Alicia Krueger, co-valedictorians of Rincon Valley Christian High School, Class of 2010!

Congratulations to alumnus Joseph Anderson, newly elected president of St. Vincent's High School freshman class!

Although St. Michael's has never presented itself as a highly academic school, our graduates have consistently been very successful in their high school and college studies. Several of them have become valedictorians of their graduating class. Others have been immediately placed in advance placement classes or have told us that their first year of high school was mainly a review for them.

The success of some students did not surprise us, but the academic achievements of others surpassed our expectations. We write of this, not simply to boast about the school, but to illustrate a point. Parents and teachers hope for a certain level of academic success in their children, just as a farmer hopes for good fruit from his trees and other crops. As the quality of the fruit of a tree is dependent upon good care of the roots, so is academic success rooted in the careful development of important, non-academic, character traits.



At St. Michael's we set high standards, but not simply academic ones. We emphasize the development of the habits of obedience, attention, courtesy and concern for others, service, respect for manual labor, and always putting forth your best effort. Every part of our curriculum, including movement games, song, Psalm and poetry memorization, arts, crafts, and manual labor, is seen as an opportunity for the children to learn discipline and self-control. It is these habits and virtues that form the foundation of academic success.

Our goal is to help develop in the students a Godly self-respect, not the fragile, modern "self-esteem". This true confidence comes not because they are told how wonderful they are (because sometimes they are not), but because expectations and responsibilities have been placed on them, and they have done their best to fulfill them. Children know they are loved and respected when adults place demands upon them and then guide them toward success.



Each year we appreciate more our personal, family-like environment with its many opportunities for children of various ages to interact. This setting is so helpful in developing the roots of spiritual and academic success. The short articles in this newsletter, written by the students, demonstrate what is important to them.

From the Students' Desks

Reflections of a Recent Graduate Joe Anderson, Class of 2010

As I entered high school this year, I was nervous about many things. However, schoolwork was not one of them. St. Michael's had so readily prepared me for high school, that when I entered, it seemed that I had already learned the material. I knew Algebra I, which I took, and some of Algebra II. I had never learned more about science than with the Exploring Creation books. I learned correct grammar, spelling, and how to write essays. My love of reading was increased. I was taught all about ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, and the early United States of America. I learned the names and exploits of each of the famous explorers. Although my science, math, history, grammar, and reading and writing skills were greatly increased during my time at St. Michael's, far more valuable were the other experiences of those four years.



Many of these experiences have helped me learn more about Christ, the Bible, and my Orthodox faith. Our morning prayers, although brief, were important as they allowed us to thank God and ask for his help in our day, and ultimately in our life. In addition to morning prayers, we were taught about the Bible in our daily classes. We painted representations and wrote summaries of many Old Testament events. In later years we read the New Testament at the end of the morning prayers. We also read Sixth Hour every day in the church. The students read the prayers for this service, under the direction of Fr. James.

St. Michael's helped me in innumerable ways as I grew up. My last day was full of celebration, but also sadness. I was overjoyed as the day unfolded, including a play, speeches, and many congratulations. However, before we left I took a final walk around the grounds. Each square foot had dozens of memories packed into it. Here was where Julie missed that pass from Curtis; there was where Theo always hid to scare me. This last walk took me at least half an hour, on a route I could run in five minutes during freeze tag. This half hour was a shortened version of my journey from childhood to young adulthood that happened at St. Michael's.

Woodworking at St. Michael's Moses Anderson



At St. Michael's we learn a lot of things, one of which is woodworking. We learn how to work with our hands, and learn how to use hand tools such as coping saws, whittling knives, gouges, and a few others. Woodworking teaches us patience, as some of us have learned. It helps us pay attention to detail.

When I came to St. Michael's, the first project I did was to make a plate from a piece of pine. This took me the better part of two years to do. This, and many other projects, such the spoon I carved, taught me patience. I am currently working on a fork.



The biggest woodworking project was the fort. The whole school worked together to build it. You can see it now in the playground field. We designed our own sign with a large red and gold shield and the Greek insignia ICXC NIKA, which means Jesus Christ, Conqueror.

I have done many woodworking projects. The pictures are of my spoon and my younger sister's plate. Woodworking is many of the students' favorite subjects. It has helped me learn many things. Woodworking, in my opinion, is the best class in school.

From the Students' Desks

My Years at St. Michael's Ascher Ramsay

My name is Ascher Ramsay. I am thirteen and I have gone to St. Michael's School for seven years; next year I start high school. It has been wonderful being part of St. Michael's School. I started here in second grade, and I was the ONLY second grader! I feel that my teachers have prepared me well to succeed in life. St. Michael's is like my second home; everyone here is like family.



Every year we have had many activities that I enjoyed. We have many art and crafts. We studied the Old Testament and painted each story. Each year we have a Harvest and Celtic Festival. Once every few years we put on a play called "Grammar Gulch"; twice a year we make bread and butter for special occasions.

Most importantly, I have noticed that I learn well in this environment of kindness, yet high academic expectations. I am not compared to other students: each individual is striving towards personal growth. We get personal care, and no student is pushed to "keep going" to finish a textbook when he isn't grasping a concept. Fr. James is great about being sure we thoroughly understand something before we move on. This way, we are truly learning, not just memorizing to meet set standards.



Both my older siblings attended St. Michael's and they have had extremely successful academic careers, earning high grades, awards, and college scholarships. I will greatly miss St. Michael's but also look forward to learning more. I love learning and have many fond memories as well as many academic tools to take into the future.

St. Michael's Celtic Festival Milan Webley



When we remember the Celts, we remember their might and their history of never giving in. Once every year there is a time when we can honor their history by reliving one of their classic feasts. This is St. Michael's Celtic Festival. It harkens back to a time in which entertainment was not passive, but interactive. At our Celtic Festival there is food, games, and music.

The Celtic games include the caber toss, boulder throw, hammer throw, and the classic tug-of-war. The food includes barbeque, potatoes, hot dogs, pot stickers, and even Eritrean food. All this could be served in a restaurant environment, but is instead available here at a fraction of the price.



There is also a place where the excitement of the Celtic games seems to be distant and almost altogether forgotten. The gentler and more refined individual may enjoy what ladies and gentlemen simply call The Tea Room. In The Tea Room there is soft and lovely classical

music playing, not on a common record player, but by actual, extremely talented musicians. If you are lucky, you may hear, outside of The Tea Room, some other musicians practicing the pieces they will be playing for a performance on the stage. Sometimes, if music is not playing on the stage, there may be a comedic skit or even a somewhat complex play.



I am very happy to have shared a glimpse of our amazing Celtic Festival with you, my reader.

From the Students' Desks

My "Family" at St. Michael's By Ashlian Webber

My name is Ashlian Webber. I go to St Michael's and this is my last year here before I go to high school.

St. Michael's is a wonderful school for children six through fourteen. I love how the older students get to interact with the younger ones. All of the younger students are quite characters. If one of them wants to read to someone, they ask one of us and, of course, we say that they can. I love to listen to the children read. You get to hear how much they are improving. We play games with them at recess. When we bake bread at our school, we older ones help teach the younger ones. We teach a U.S. history or a geography class to them once a week. We do all of the research and then give a fifteen minute oral presentation on our given subject.



Every year we have a vice president. One of the eighth graders gets the honor of having certain responsibilities. Last year when some of the students graduated, there was a joke going around about who was going to be the next V.P. Ascher is now our general V.P., and I am the vice president of health and domestic affairs. I help the teachers if one of the students gets hurt on the playground.

We have two little Russian girls at the school. One is eight and her name is Katya. She has been going to St. Michael's since she was six years old. She hardly spoke any English when she first came to the school, and now she reads to all of us. Our other little Russian student is Katya's younger sister, Natalia, who is six years old. It's really funny when Katya is translating something to Natalia in Russian, and we have no clue what they are saying.

Since there are fewer than twenty students in our school, everyone is more like family. St. Michael's has become like a second home to me. Everyone cares about each other. My fellow students are more like siblings to me than classmates. If you're not good at something, the teachers will do everything they can to help you improve.



Annual Holiday Appeal

To Benefit St. Michael's School Scholarship Fund

Dear Friends,

This newsletter is part of our Annual Holiday Appeal. Your contribution will enable a young student to attend St. Michael's with the aid of a scholarship. Any amount is deeply appreciated. All donations are tax deductible and a thank you receipt will be sent for each gift.

Enclosed is an envelope for your convenience. We are grateful for your support and prayers.