

Summer 2021



Blessings Abound

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A Gratitude Report from the special needs students at
Villa Marie School



Matt Merwick

Matt was 10 years old when he came to Villa Marie. He enjoys woodworking and rock collecting as his hobbies. He loves to bring his favorite rocks to school and share them with the other students during his student of the week presentation. Matt is very talented in sewing class. He's made a snake, blankets, and shorts for boys in Haiti. He did a tremendous amount of work on the Villa Marie Quilt that was auctioned off during the virtual dance. Matt has been shadowing the maintenance staff at Villa Marie and helping with fix-it projects and doing some fun building projects such as a bird house and a cornhole set. His favorite field trip is going to the State Fair. His favorite school project was the Science Fair. His artwork is on the Villa Marie Christmas cards that are for sale on the Villa Marie website. It will not be the same around here with out you Matt!

Trenten Holeka

Trenten has been a student at Villa Marie since he was 13. His hobbies include building with Legos and playing video games. This past year Trenten has participated in our distance learning program due to COVID-19. Prior to last year, he was a Special Olympics Athlete and loved his cooking class. He enjoyed getting to help bake stuff and eat it! His favorite field trip each year was going to Vala's Pumpkin Patch (sponsored by the Gretna Knights of Columbus.) His favorite activity there was riding on the hayrack and picking out his own pumpkin. He also loved getting to select a sweet treat for snack at the end of the field trip. Happy Graduation! We will miss you Trenten.



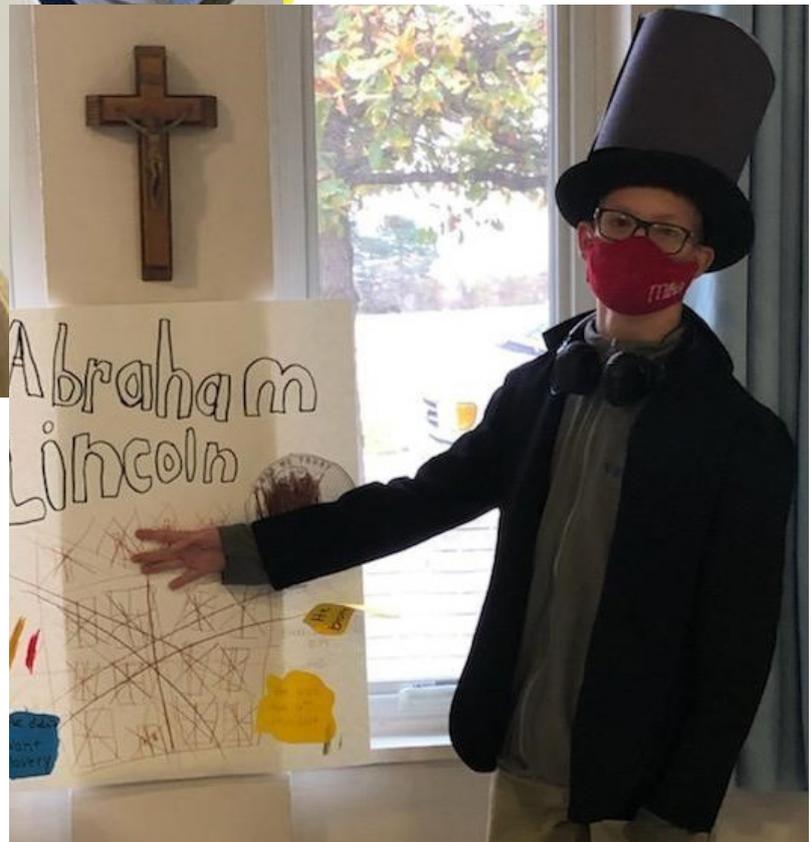
oh, WHAT a Year!

We are extremely blessed and grateful for the flexibility of the students, their families, and our staff this past year. COVID-19 presented challenges and we tackled them head on. As we are limited in space, we had to find ways to allow for social distancing such as moving our chapel to the garage, and splitting into two lunch sessions. We are blessed by the donations that supported our in-person and distance learning programs. While we started the year and ended the year in-person, we were forced to move to a complete distance learning platform for all students in November and December, as many of our families and the Sisters were quarantined. Although delayed until January, we were grateful to be able to have our Christmas Play and record it so it could be watched by friends and family online.

This year we offered a variety of interesting new and continuing programs. Running Club started in the fall and has evolved by combining with Social Studies. While the students are running the Appalachian Trail thru My Virtual Mission, they are learning the states, climate and attractions of the southeast region of the U.S. We also hosted our first Wax Museum, where our students researched a famous person and dressed the part for their presentation. The students loved the project and many of our visitors offered students more than the required dime to hear the famous sculpture speak. We had our Science Fair, with 7 of our advanced science students presenting their research. Sewing class has been making dresses and shorts for children in Haiti, amongst other amazing projects like the quilt for the Dance. Our cooking classes have focused on preparation of healthy foods, with the occasional fun of baking cookies or other treats. We are grateful for our creative teachers, and their patience and devotion to our students.

Academics & Specials

It's not all academics. Students at Villa Marie have the opportunity to take classes such as cooking and sewing, and participate in activities such as Running Club and Special Olympics. In addition, they learn life skills by helping with jobs at the school, doing community service projects and leading a healthy lifestyle.





Running Club

Running Club was started through grants from the Westerman Foundation and Kids Run the Nation. The 3 teams of students are running virtually on the Appalachian Trail and are learning about it in Social Studies. Running Club has helped us to spearhead a new Healthy Lifestyles program, which involves healthy snacks, meals, activities, and guest educators.

Sew & Cook

In addition to sugar cookies to celebrate Easter, the cooking class helps Sr. Paula in making healthy snacks and dinner meals.

The sewing class has made several projects this year. One of their favorites was sewing the dresses and shorts for the children of Haiti. Thank you to Sr. Carol and Mariann Kozisek for teaching sewing class.

Students learn in a fun, interactive way at Villa Marie!



Presenting Ideas

Students at Villa Marie practiced their presentation skills during both a Science Fair and a Wax Museum this past fall. Research, writing, creating materials and presenting are important life-long skills for our special needs students.

Student Achievement and Recognition

John: is working hard to improve his math skills. He has made a great deal of progress in improving his behavior and social skills. He has been a good role model for the younger students in friendship group.

Lillia: is a very creative writer and artist. Sr. Jeanette is grateful for her help in writing this year's Christmas play. She was a wonderful snowman and helped other students with their lines.

Luke: always makes everyone smile when he acts like Bugs Bunny at lunch crunching his carrots. He is the best tour guide for Villa Marie. He is making a book of 100 hand-drawn Pokemons. He is in the 12th and final set of books in reading. He is our fastest runner.

Rosalayah: is a dedicated distance learner who is always prepared and ready to learn! She is very mature and caring. She has a great love for Jesus, Mary and the saints, and is a faithful prayer for anyone in need.

Trenten: is faithful and neat in completing his Reading, Spelling and Math work at home. He is always glad to see everyone when bringing his work back.

Mary: is a fashion trendsetter at Villa Marie with her clothes and ever-changing hair styles. She is maturing into an excellent listener in Social Studies. Mary has made great improvement in reading and is always ready to start a new book.

Thomas: takes pride in his amazing drawing ability. He is a very good reader and knows his phonics skills. He adds a lot to Religion class by sharing Bible stories that he has learned. Excellent kitchen worker.

Mike: shares with others when he has learned something new – "Success" and "I learned from the best." He has made great progress in trying new foods, expressing his needs, reading and spelling. He is a great friend to Carol, our cook. He can tell all of the religion stories we have talked about.

Sarah Grace: Helping Hand Award – she is always ready to help out her peers. She is optimistic, enthusiastic and ready to learn.

Zoe: has had great improvement in math skills and her ability to try math problems. Willing to learn all she can in sewing and cooking. She is bubbly, kind, and a very good and forgiving friend to others. She colors her religious pictures neatly.

LaStara: most improved behavior at Mass. She realizes she is a beloved daughter of the Father. She uses the Magnificat book at Mass and enjoys reading the newest books on women saints.

Delaney: great improvement in following instructions even when she doesn't want to or doesn't like to. She has a great smile, always greets everyone. She has made great improvement in her reading. She loves Jesus and Mary and is looking forward to her First Communion this fall.

Joseline: always has a beautiful smile and is friendly to everyone. She has an empathetic heart to cry and pray with others. Has made great progress in reading and always brings her homework back completed.

David: frequently compliments others. One of our most literal minded students. Great friend especially to John.

Landon: great kitchen helper. He is very creative and takes a lot of pride in his creations. Eager to share what he knows with others.

Titan: excellent behavior at Mass. He is concerned about other students when they are absent. He is becoming a true conversationalist and has been playing little tricks on his friends to make them laugh.

Matt: Willing to take on any project without complaint, including cleaning out the old van. He is a very observant Maintenance Man who sees things that need to be fixed and takes care of it. He always helps teachers and staff. All of us enjoy his sense of humor.

Jasper: is very creative and wants to keep doing difficult things in math. He has made great progress in writing, using longer sentences and stories. He contributes in religion class and remembers many of the stories we have learned about.

THE MONSIGNOR DAWSON SERVICE AWARD

Since 2009, the staff and faculty of Villa Marie have selected a student(s) to be honored with this prestigious award for behaviors and service that exemplify the heart of servitude displayed by our late founder, Monsignor James D. Dawson. The winners of the 2021 Monsignor Dawson Service Award are Sam Schmieding and Andrew Kluck.

Sam: Top Maintenance Man award for being willing to always help Jeff. He has made a huge improvement in his math ability, problem solving and willingness to try new things. Looks good in his florescent vest.

Andy: The Good Spirits Award. He is always in good spirits and helps put other students in a good mood. Has a wry sense of humor, is caring, kind and always willing to help.



SAM



ANDY

Villa Marie Fundraising Dance

This past year the Villa Marie annual dance fundraiser, *A HEART like His* became a virtual event. Jenny Allamby, Executive Director of Development and Advancement, was the lead on this project. “The parameters of the event changed about every two weeks, depending on COVID-19 restrictions, who was available due to quarantining, and technology challenges. I’m just really happy that it turned out as well as it did. It was a huge learning opportunity for me to film all the video, get the sound right, do all the editing, and get creative with the musicians and students who were in and out of quarantine the whole time I was filming. There were many prayers to God for wisdom and help.” The video which features entertainment by Freedom Train, Dave Egr and Bethany Lynn, as well as interviews with current and prospective students. You can view the video on Youtube by searching for Villa Marie Waverly.

The virtual video was also accompanied by an online auction, raffle and wine pull. “This is something we are going to continue in the future. This way the friends of Villa Marie, all over the country, will be able to participate in the auction, raffle and wine pull, not just the attendees of the dance,” Allamby said. “Donors supplied 1/3 of the budgeted amount for Salaries and Benefits through the funding from the dance. I am so grateful for you(our donors) and your impact on the lives of our students.” The goal for the 2022 Dance is to increase funds raised by \$25,000.

“We need more ‘worker bees’ on our committee, we need to elevate our auction and raffle offerings, and find sponsors for food, entertainment, the emcee, and an

overall lead sponsor.” said Allamby. “Last year, if it weren’t for our new board member, Erin Stueven and her willingness to take on the logistics of the raffle, auction and wine pull, they might not have happened. God sent her just when I needed her.”

If you would like to help with the dance, or have connections to a high-end opportunity for auction or raffle item, or feel God leading you to sponsor part of the dance- Jenny would love to get a call from you. You can reach her at 402-874-0577.

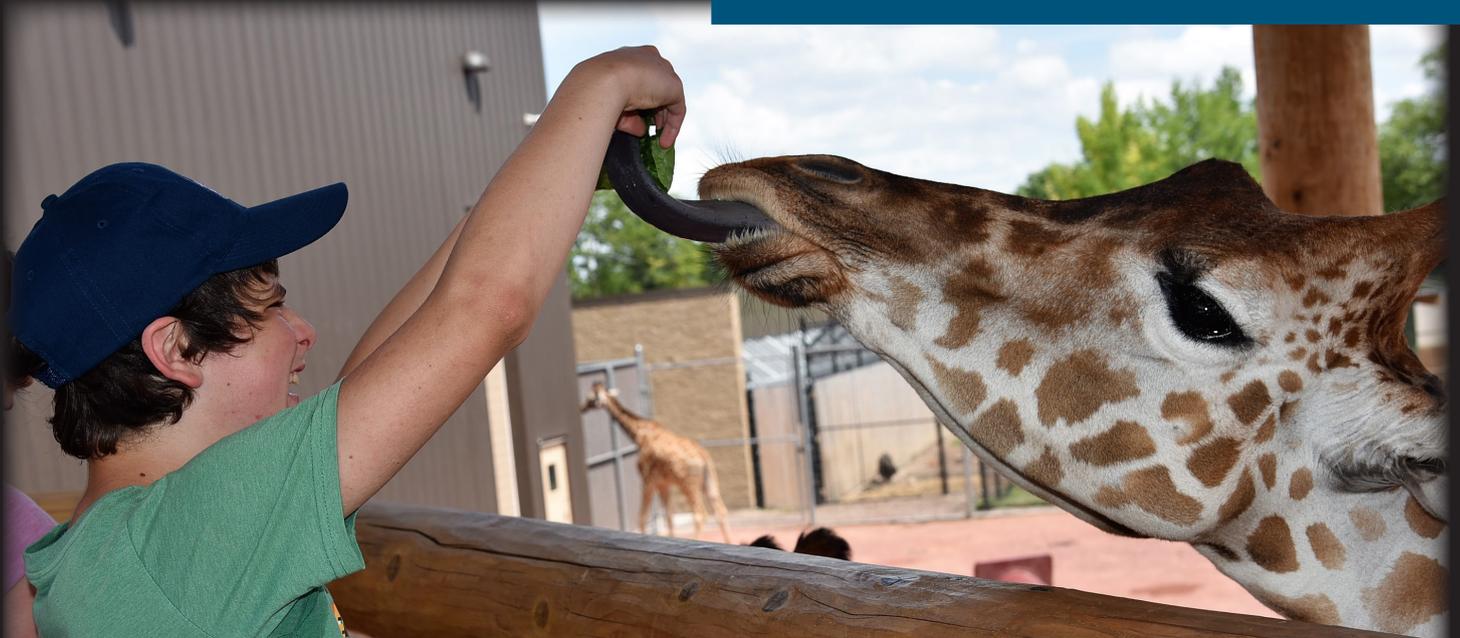
“Donors supplied 1/3 of the budgeted amount for Salaries and Benefits through the funding from the dance. I am grateful to you (our donors) for your impact on the lives of our students.”

THE DANCE FOR 2022 WILL BE HELD AT THE LANCASTER EVENT CENTER ON JANUARY 28TH.

WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE OUR EMCEE FOR THE EVENING IS MIKE ZELENY.

THE BAND AMFM WILL ROCK THE HOUSE WITH ITS "TOTALLY 80'S" SHOW. BE READY TO DANCE!





Summer Camp Fun!

Thank you to all our volunteers and donors that made our Summer Camp at Villa Marie truly special for our Campers this summer. We had 22 campers for Villa Marie Camp and 12 day campers for Adult/Alumni Special Needs Camp with 20 volunteers helping throughout the week. We all had the time of our lives.

Activities included visiting a wildlife safari, and camping under the stars followed by a pancake breakfast. We enjoyed a trip to the Lincoln Children's Zoo, and arts and crafts. We hooped and hollared at Hollywood Bowl, went fishing and boating at Nick Cusick's house at Pine Lake, and ate 11 large Valentino's pizzas. We did an obstacle course, played games, and petted Alpacas. We swam in

Coach Matt's pool-not once, but twice. Lastly, we built a campfire and made s'mores, sang songs and danced. We also celebrated Mass each day and ate lots of ice cream - tell me who doesn't love ice cream on a hot day?

Photos of our fun can be found on the Villa Marie Facebook page by searching for Villa Marie Waverly. Thanks for all the Give to Lincoln Day donations that provided scholarships for students to attend camp. Also, a big shout out to the 55 Bishop Neumann Students from Wahoo and their leaders Gery Kenney and Eva Fujan who sponsored the Alumni/Adult camp day activities and worked on community service projects at Villa Marie. Thanks for all the fun, food and service work.

“Their progress & maturation are a joy to behold!”



Greetings, I'm Pam Murray and I began volunteering in September of 2018..

As to what I do at Villa Marie, the simple answer is: anything that is asked of me. I have a degree in elementary education, and I enjoy working directly with the students – individually, in small groups, or with an entire class. Examples include assisting them with their work, helping with the music program and the Christmas play, accompanying them on field trips, and just being there for a student who needs to talk. On the more mundane but necessary side, I've helped with office and domestic duties, including washing dishes, ironing boys' dress shirts that were donated for the Villa Marie Dance, addressing and stuffing envelopes, and making copies. I am also on the planning committee for the annual fundraising dance. I did quite a bit of writing and proofreading in my 42 years at the University of Nebraska, so I contribute that expertise for newsletters, brochures and other materials. And sometimes I am just the required second staffer in the vehicle that transports students. I also read and help with the singing at Mass. I enjoy watching the transformations that happen in the students. I admire so much what the teachers are able to accomplish. I have seen students go from being nonverbal to being able to carry on a conversation. It doesn't happen overnight, but with the patient directing of the students' energies and individual abilities, their progress and maturation are a joy to behold!

April 13 marked a very special day for one of the Villa Marie students, LaStara Yates, daughter of Jeremiah and Shadon Yates. She was able to finally fulfill a long-awaited desire and make her First Communion.



New students enrolled in January of 2021: Thomas and David Thaller. You saw their story on the Virtual Dance Video.

Your donations make all of this possible.

U-R-A blessing

As we move into the 21-22 school year, you can find your purpose at Villa Marie as a new volunteer program is unveiled, a new sponsorship program is activated, and our fundraisers are elevated to increase funding to give our students the future they deserve.

- Subscribe to our emails or volunteer at www.villamarieschool.com
- Follow us on:
Facebook (search Villa Marie Waverly)
YouTube (search Villa Marie Waverly)
- Donate with envelope provided or online at www.villamarieschool.com

For more information, visit:
www.villamarieschool.com

