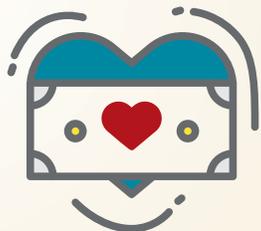


THE GOOD NEWS

FROM ALUMS & FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Providing tuition assistance to students at Community of Saints Regional Catholic School



Dollar-for-Dollar Match Until June 30!

Help us reach our goal to support tuition assistance.

See page 3 for details.



Kieran White '17



Amaya Haider '17



AJ Lopez '17

INSIDE

» Fr. Steve's Column
Page 2

» A Message from Tom Smith, Retired Chief of Police
Page 3

» COS Students Reflect on School Year
Pages 6-7

Congratulations to the COS Class of 2017 — Now High School Graduates

The COS class of 2017 was a tight-knit group with just 12 students. We talked to three of them who shared how their time at COS helped them navigate all the challenges of the last year and come out a little stronger, with a new understanding of their place in the world.

KIERAN WHITE '17, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA-TWIN CITIES

Kieran White was in fourth grade at Community of Saints when he learned his dad had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He knows that the disease forced him to grow up faster than most of his peers, but he has also come to appreciate what he's gained through the struggle.

Kieran is the only child of Bob and Argerie Diaz-White. His mother, who is from Costa Rica, came to Minnesota to study at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Kieran describes his dad as a free spirit, reeling off a list of jobs his father had over the years — everything from bus driver to French and Spanish teacher. Kieran affectionally calls his dad a goofball who's always quick with a joke (a favorite of Bob's "I have Lou Gehrig's disease, and I wish I could give it back to him.") Kieran's admiration is evident, as he wrote in a published essay describing his experience with ALS, "Despite needing help for pretty much everything he does, my dad has displayed an incredible amount of resilience in maintaining a positive attitude and sense of humor." *

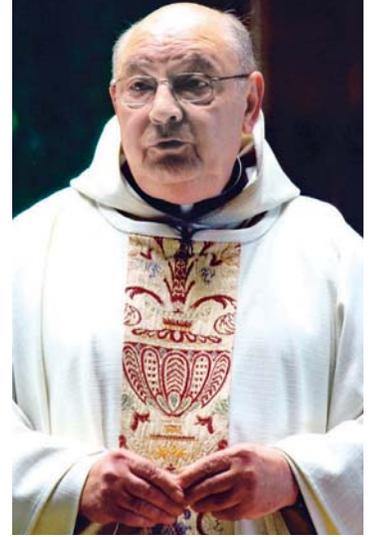
— Continued on page 4

* The excerpt is from an essay Kieran wrote on the subject of life as a young caregiver. It will be included in a collection of essays that raise awareness about ALS and published as a book this year by Anvil press. To see Kieran's entire essay go to: alsousart.com/our-als-stories/kieran



PHOTO BY DAVID HRBACEK

MESSAGE FROM **father steve**



Dear Alums, Friends, and Families of Community of Saints:

The school year is winding down — and what a year it has been; unlike any of us have ever seen or expected. Administration, teachers, and students pulled together to be successful this year, to learn new skills and to develop new ways of engaging with each other.

This issue offers some remarkable reflections by graduating eighth graders and alums. These reflections exhibit some values which COS seeks to engender.

We are a Catholic School; so Catholic values — Gospel values — are the foundation upon which we build our lives. These reflections show courage, honesty, and gratitude; the call to service and responsibility; respect and appreciation of others.

Our mission statement states: “we provide every student with a sense of belonging within a community rooted in faith, inclusivity, and love.”

Where else can I go to see and experience what is yet to be? These students are the harbinger of tomorrow for our nation, our church, our families.

You and your support are what make this possible. These are your students. You truly are Community of Saints.

With gratitude,
Stephen Adrian
Canonical Administrator of COS

“Administration, teachers, and students pulled together to be successful this year.”



Kindergarteners Celebrate Spring **COS's Biggest K-Class Ever Heads to 1st Grade**

In 2012-13, Community of Saint's first year of operation, we had 11 kindergarten students. This year, due to COVID spacing, we capped enrollment at 36 students over two classrooms. That tops off five consecutive years of rising enrollment at COS and a total student increase of 55%. The school is on track for enrollment to increase again next year.



Tom Smith, Retired St. Paul Police Chief, Pays Tribute to Father Steve Honor Father Steve with a Donation to COS

While reading the last *Good News*, I began to think about the many amazing things that Father Steve Adrian has done. He never seeks out or accepts accolades yet has touched so many lives.

For over 50 years Father Steve has done incredible work. He took bold steps at St. Matthew's by opening a daycare center, giving scholarships to children of diverse families, starting Loaves and Fishes, and much more. He made bold moves with faith, compassion, and a faithfulness I would say is unmatched.

In my 38 years working in criminal justice, I've briefed a president and CIA Director, witnessed horrific tragedies here and abroad. None of that compares to Father Steve. He has married many of us, conducted hundreds of funerals for our families, given us hope when we needed comfort, blessed the infirm, and baptized more children than he can count.

In the old days when there were still partitioned confessionals, and on one of the rare times I decided to go, I disguised my voice. I thought heck, how can I confess my sins to a friend, especially being a cop? When I was all done, I thought, I made it. To my chagrin, and without missing a beat, Father Steve said, "Say five *Our Fathers*, and an extra five for trying to trick me, Tom."

Now there are some good things having a priest as a friend. One, I learned if I take Father Steve to lunch, it kind of counts for confession — and two confessions if I take him for dinner. But seriously, during some of my most challenging times in life, Father Steve has always been there for me. More importantly, he has been there for many of you as well.

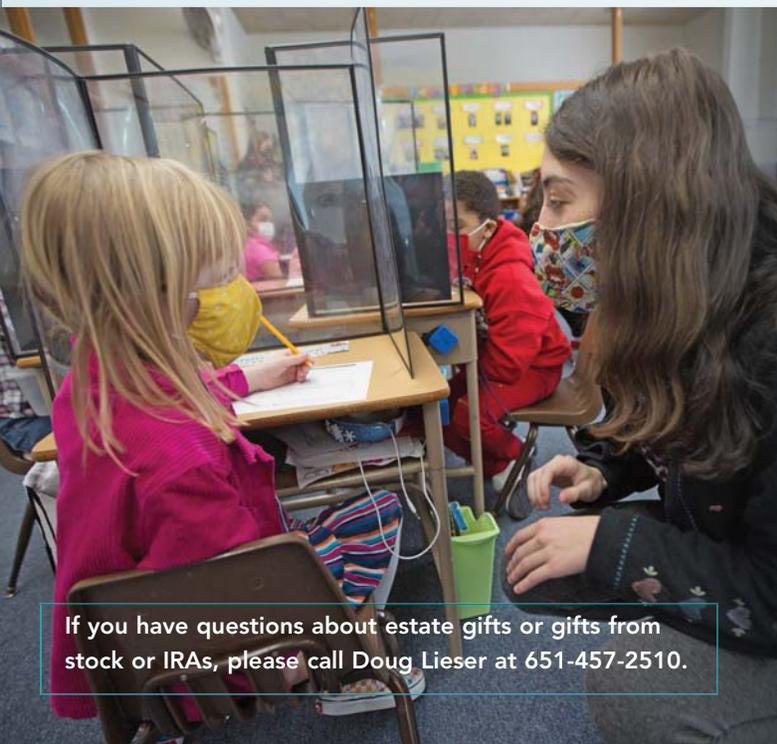
I am not sure what God believes defines a good and holy person, but I'm pretty sure Father Steve would be the example.

Father Steve never asks much of us, yet we all have asked so much of him. I'm hoping we all can do one thing for him — sending what we can in his honor to Community of Saints. If I've learned one thing in my career, it is that the best thing we can do is to invest in our children. By sending a donation, we all can make a difference.

A wise woman (Margaret Mead) once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has." I concur.

Thanks Father Steve.

Thomas (Tomas) Smith | Chief of Police (Retired) | St. Paul Police Department | FBI-Leeda – Bureau of Criminal Apprehension



DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR MATCHING UNTIL JUNE 30

100% of funds go for tuition assistance

It has been a challenging year for our students and their families at Community of Saints and your tuition assistance support is more important than ever. As our enrollment increases, so too do the needs of our families. Catholic education wouldn't be possible for many students without the support of you and other caring donors like you.

No child is denied an education at Community of Saints due to a lack of ability to pay. Ninety percent of our students now receive tuition assistance. Our families benefit from the consistency and quality educational environment we provide their children.

Please contribute today because your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar. Use the enclosed envelope or contribute online at www.communityofsaints.org/aff.

If you have questions about estate gifts or gifts from stock or IRAs, please call Doug Lieser at 651-457-2510.

COS Class of 2017 Graduate from High School, *continued from page 1*

At 18, Kieran sees himself as more of an introvert than either of his parents, but that hasn't stopped him from becoming a prominent spokesperson for the ALS Association. Kieran's been featured in campaigns promoting public awareness, has been written about in the *Star Tribune*, and even traveled to Washington D.C. two years ago to lobby members of Congress.

Since the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, Kieran has been a full-distance student at Cretin-Derham Hall High School (CDH). He and his mom have rarely left their home in an effort to protect his father. A cousin delivers groceries to their house and on the few occasions his mother goes out to run short errands, she double masks and follows a strict protocol for disinfecting afterwards. COVID also brought an end to visits from the personal care attendants who helped with Kieran's dad. For the last 14 months, Kieran and his mom provided Bob's care 24/7.

One thing that didn't change with the pandemic is Kieran's commitment to his studies. "I've always been driven to get good grades," he said. Kieran has consistently been on the honor roll for students earning 3.9 and above GPA and has received the JROTC — American Legion Scholastic Excellence Award, among other awards.

When Kieran graduated from COS, he received a Flaherty Family Foundation Scholarship to attend CDH. At the time, going from an 8th grade class of 12 to a freshman class of several hundred was a big adjustment. "But you get used to it," he said. Having several COS classmates at CDH helped. "I'm still friends with a lot of people I went to school with at COS. Having a close-knit community like we had there was really nice. It made middle school really enjoyable."

With all the different challenges his family faced during the pandemic, Kieran makes the remarkable observation that they have been lucky. "The pandemic didn't change all that much for us,"

Kieran with his mom, Argerie Diaz-White and dad, Bob. "My dad is just a naturally kind, funny person. That kindness and humor is what I'll keep with me."



he said. "Since I'm going to college next year, it was nice to have more time to be around my family. It gave us a chance to contemplate how we'll care for dad when I'm away."

Kieran has received a scholarship to attend the University of Minnesota and he plans to live on campus. "My mom wants college to be a break for me, so she wanted me to go somewhere far away," he said. "But the U was the best option given financial aid and the scholarships I received." Kieran is leaning toward studying computer science but is also interested in engineering or maybe even medicine. He's keeping an open mind. "It'll be a new thing for me. A chance for self-discovery — see what do I want to do with my life."



AMAYA HAIDER '17, COLLEGE OF ST. BENEDICT

The pandemic shook Amaya Haider's world pretty hard, upending her life both at home and school. Now, more than a year later she says things have come 360 degrees and her family is in a good place. As she graduates from South St. Paul High School, she's excited about going to the College of St. Benedict next year, and becoming the first member of her family to go to college.

When the COVID shutdowns began in March 2020, Amaya, her mother, and three siblings were living with her grandmother, and planning to get their own place. But the pandemic changed all that and introduced frightening new risks. Several members of her family have severe asthma, making them more vulnerable to the virus. As a result, her mother was forced to give up her cleaning job resulting in financial problems for the family.

Over the summer, Amaya and her older sister went to live with her father and stepmother in Anoka, which felt like a world away from her friends. When she returned for school, it was all distance learning, which was a tough adjustment for her. "The school was pretty prepared with everything online, it's just that I like to be in the classroom," Amaya said. "I like to hear teachers explain and I like to participate — put my two cents in."

It was a challenging year, but she got through it and so did her family. Her mother got a new job, the family found a place to live, and she was able to go back into the classroom in the spring. Now everyone in her family who is eligible has been vaccinated, which feels good.

Amaya said she learned a lot over the year. "COVID served as a reality check for me. It caused me to think and forced me to grow," Amaya said. "I realized I needed to make some changes." All the time at home has



Amaya Haider and AJ Lopez have been good friends since COS.

strengthened Amaya's relationships with her parents and siblings and she now values the time she gets to spend with them. Concern for family was underscored by the events surrounding George Floyd's murder and the recent jury trial. "My two younger siblings are half-Black," Amaya said. "It was something we talked about a lot in my family. The whole thing just broke my heart."

Looking ahead, Amaya is thrilled to be going to St. Ben's next year. Neither of her parents went to college, so just the process of applying was a little daunting. She credits her years at Community of Saints for laying the groundwork for her success. "COS prepared me. They taught me how to present myself to people and helped me feel really put together," Amaya said. "The teachers at COS were so invested in us." The positive role teachers have played in her life has led Amaya to consider becoming an elementary school teacher, so she can provide the same support to others.



AJ LOPEZ '17, METRO STATE UNIVERSITY

In this year's senior class poll at Cretin-Derham Hall (CDH), AJ Lopez '17 was voted "Most likely to be a political leader/activist." Before COVID-19, he doesn't think anyone considered him to be an activist, including himself, but now he's proud of the title.

For AJ, the senior class poll is further proof for how transformative 2020 was for him. Up until COVID struck, AJ enjoyed a pretty typical high school experience. He was a good student, ran on the cross country team, and participated in ROTC. He hadn't decided on a college yet, but he was interested in studying design. Socially, he felt right at home in high school and says COS paved the way. "At COS, it was easy to be myself, and that gave me

confidence that carried over," AJ said. "At CDH I felt like I fit in and could be friends with everyone in my grade."

The shutdown in March 2020 was the first of a cascade of changes that forced AJ to confront new realities and rethink what was important to him. "At the peak of the pandemic, people were going to parties and posting pictures on social media," AJ said. "It felt like a blatant disregard for people's lives, and I didn't want to be part of that." Then George Floyd's murder brought racial justice to the forefront. "People had different opinions about what happened, and some people even tried to justify it. That didn't sit right with me."

At a time when society was confronting issues around race and equity, AJ felt his experience growing up as part of a diverse community at COS was relevant. "I have been really vocal about the things that have been happening — trying to educate people as much as I can surrounding race. Trying to encourage people to speak up, use platforms, go to protests," AJ said. "A lot of people are uncomfortable talking about racial issues. But being uncomfortable is a small price to pay in exchange for making progress toward racial justice."

AJ's experiences over the last year have completely changed his trajectory. In the fall he will start school at Metro State University where he plans to earn a degree in social work. "If someone had told me a year ago that I would go to school for social work, I wouldn't have believed it," he said. "Now I care so much more about people and especially youth. I want to make a difference in my community."

For AJ, COS modeled the kind of respect everyone should have for diversity. "At COS, students learned about other cultures and learned to value differences among their peers — different races and cultures," AJ said, before getting a little nostalgic. "We were all so close. We knew each other our whole lives."



AJ with his family (left to right) his sister Aliah '15, mother Angie, and father Alfredo.

Lessons Learned — COS Students Reflect on

After a school year like no other, COS middle school students share their thoughts on what it's been like for them. While they candidly acknowledge the emotional challenges of the last year, they also reflect on what they've learned about themselves, and how they stayed grounded.

“ It was very frustrating doing online school, not seeing my friends, and not being able to go anywhere. It was confusing to have to do things a different way than we did them before. I learned that I get anxious. When I get anxious, I usually listen to music and chill.”

— **KATIE (7TH GRADE)**

“ This year has been strange wearing all the masks and distancing, along with the riots and racial injustice. My friends, family, and teachers have kept me together. Especially when I was learning full-distance I felt sad that I wasn't able to see anybody from school. We need to focus our minds on creating peace, justice, and a way to fix the world from COVID-19. With all this I found some ways to relax, to not think of the chaos, as if everything was normal again. Some ways are hanging out with my mom, or playing with my dog (Mini Australian Shepherd named Mochi), even playing games with friends, and going to the park with my dad.”

— **JASLYNN (6TH GRADE)**

“ The first few months felt like a dream (I'm an introvert so I don't mind and would take every chance I get to be able to have some alone time). I learned that I sometimes enjoy having some company and that I enjoy going on walks outside.”

— **ANNALYSSE (7TH GRADE)**



“ Quarantine was really hard for me in so many ways. Throughout my life, I had a lot of bad things happen to me, but quarantine and having to stop talking to my friends and the depression and anxiety that happened as a result was really hard. But I have learned that I am really strong. I'm really resilient. I came to Community of Saints in 7th grade. I used to not like science or social studies or math until I came to Community of Saints, because at my old school, I didn't really like the teachers and that made me not like the subject. Since I came to Community of Saints, I started liking those classes. If I had to pick a favorite class it would be either science or English Language Arts, because I like reading a lot. During quarantine, I really got close to God and having Mass again actually helped a lot too. I feel like my teachers made me feel we were all in this together. My teachers and my school community are basically my family at this point.”

— **ANGELA (8TH GRADE)**

“ The year has been kind of confusing and frustrating. I can't give my friends hugs or high fives and I can't really see my family members because of this pandemic. We have to wear masks and it is hard to breathe depending on what mask you're wearing. I have learned that I like to write and I like going on car rides a lot. I have learned that it's easier for me to learn in person and with a teacher. I think this year has made me stronger because I can do things that I never thought I would like or never thought I could do.”

— **LUCY (7TH GRADE)**

“ At first when the shutdown started, I thought it was going to be easy and that we were going to go back in a couple of weeks. But then it started to get hard because I started to miss my friends. The teachers have been really compassionate about it, so I really appreciate the teachers for that. We did this activity — it was called being in silence. And I learned it's something I wasn't good at because all these thoughts just hit my head. There's just so much stuff going on during the quarantine that all those things made me stressed. And so now I try to have a moment of silence once in a while. My favorite class is religion. Every time I learn more about my religion, I feel closer to God, and God has really helped me this year.”

— **LUIS (8TH GRADE)**



School Year



“ I learned how to work independently because my mom couldn't help me. But the teachers would always help so you didn't need to feel stressed out. It's helped me a lot just seeing my classmates and knowing that they're there helping me

succeed in my assignments. My favorite classes are social studies and math. In social studies I like learning about the world, learning about Minnesota and its history, and I like learning new things in math and how it relates it to real life. School is another part of me. I love my teachers. I love my school. I'm a serious person, but then at school, I'll try to throw out little jokes. School has always made me happy.”

— AMARI (6TH GRADE)

“ This past school year had many ups and downs, and still does. The year was very strange and wasn't like any other year. The pandemic had a huge impact on everyone including me. It changed school, we had to be home and do our schoolwork. Something I've learned about myself is that sometimes it's okay to ask for help when I need it and to not stress over my schoolwork. This year made me stronger in many ways. One being that a pandemic or current event doesn't always have to change the things we love. We can still do the things we love to do — we just need to do them safely during a pandemic.”

— YESSICA (8TH GRADE)

“ I had to become a second parent for my little siblings and that was hard because I had to learn how to take care of them a lot more and I didn't really know how to do that at the time. My teachers have really helped me with the ups and downs I've had. So, I feel really connected with my teachers in that way. My family is doing better now.”

— YANETXI (6TH GRADE)



Ricardo (left) and Shauvez haven't attended school in person since the pandemic began in March 2020.

BROTHERS RECOUNT UPS AND DOWNS OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Shauvez and Ricardo have forged a tight bond as brothers even though they have pretty different personalities. Ricardo, who is in 7th grade, is talkative, and says his favorite class is social studies. “Sometimes I'll be in a class and feel like there's a lot of work to do, and then I have social studies and I feel relieved because I like to learn about U.S. history and everything that happened before I was born.” Shauvez, who is graduating from 8th grade, is more reserved. His favorite class is English Language Arts. “We read about so many different things,” he said. “Right now, I'm learning about Anne Frank.”

Like many families, their parents chose to keep them at home this year to minimize exposure to COVID-19. Distance learning hasn't been easy, but the brothers have impressed their teachers with how committed they've been. “They're always on time and ready to go,” said middle school teacher and assistant principal, Nick Yannarely. “Since the pandemic we've made a point of teaching students how to effectively communicate by email, and both boys have excelled at it. Whether they have a question or concern, their emails are concise, clear and polite — better than many adults. It's impressive.”

The brothers agree that distance learning pushed them to do things differently. “Back when I was in school and would ask a question, if the teachers were busy talking to other students, I would get impatient,” said Ricardo. “This year I've been more patient with them because I know that sometimes they're busy, and I get that.” Shauvez agrees with his brother and adds that he's learned to ask for help when he needs it. “When we were in school, I didn't really want to ask a lot of questions,” he said. “But since we've been at home, I email or use the GoGuardian chat to ask the teachers more questions.”

Next fall, Shauvez will go to Sibley High School and Ricardo will start 8th grade, but neither of the boys are thinking that far ahead. Instead, they're looking forward to the summer and having fun with their friends outside.

**COMMUNITY OF SAINTS
REGIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

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