

**A PARENT'S
DECLASSIFIED GUIDE TO
SURVIVAL AT
ST. MARTHA CATHOLIC SCHOOL
2011-2012**



(AN “UNOFFICIAL” GUIDE)

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Virtus Training: As part of the Safe Environment Program, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston requires all school volunteers to be Virtus Trained. The Virtus training session is entitled "Protecting God's Children" and is offered throughout the Archdiocese many times during the year. The schedule and registration application can be found at www.virtus.org. A VIRTUS workshop will be offered at St. Martha on Wednesday, September 14, 2011, at 6:30 PM in the Family Life Center. Other workshop dates can be found on the VIRTUS website.

In order to provide a safe environment for all students, siblings are not allowed in the classrooms for class parties. Additionally, siblings should not accompany volunteers performing committee work on campus during normal school hours.

Communications: To keep costs down and conserve paper, the school primarily communicates via email. **Please be sure you have sent an email to your child(ren)'s home room teacher(s) with your most current email address.** Also, be sure you have set your online parameters to receive emails from PLUS@stmarthacs.org. Checking your emails regularly will ensure that you do not miss important information communicated from the school. The weekly newsletter, *The Crusader*, is posted each Friday directly to our website, www.stmarthacs.org.

Tuition: Tuition payments are due no later than the 10th day of each school month, in order to avoid a late fee. Directly outside of the school office, there is a white box marked "Payment Drop Box."

Tuition payments and Before/After School Program payments may be placed in this box.

Drop-off/Pick-up Procedures: In the mornings, the students may be dropped off by the main entrance to the school through the carpool line (manned by staff members). The carpool line is staffed from 7:30 - 8:00 a.m. For the safety of the students, please do not drop them off at any other location or outside of those hours. The students may also be walked into the building by an adult. So that the classroom environment is maintained, please say a quick goodbye at the door. Students may be picked up in the afternoons by either "Park and Walk" or "Car Line." The car line begins at the main entrance to the school building and continues through the parking lot and onto Oak Shores. Park and Walk is at the back door of the main school building (on the Family Life Center side of the building). Dismissal is at 3:15 Monday - Thursday and at 2:15 every Friday (unless otherwise noted in the calendar on 11 a.m. dismissal days). **For the safety of our children, please refrain from using cell phones while in the drop-off and pick-up car lines.**

The school doors will automatically open at 7:30 a.m. under the computerized controlled access system. The doors will automatically lock at 8 a.m. and any visitors to the school after 8 a.m. must go to the main entrance and buzz the office to gain access. Visitors must check in at the school office and obtain a visitor's badge.

Class Parties: The room parents and teachers host two class parties per school year: Christmas and Valentine's Day (service project will be completed by students at this party). The teacher and/or home room

parent coordinator will notify the class parents if any assistance or supplies are needed. No siblings may attend class parties, and parents must be Virtus trained to attend.

Lunch Program: The school contracts with an outside catering company, Geomar. Please log onto <http://geomar.h1.hotlunchonline.net> to create an account, view the menu, order and pay for lunches. All orders are completed through Geomar and not the school. Please note that lunch orders must be placed three days prior to the date of lunch service. The price for a regular lunch is \$3.80 and the large lunch is \$4.30. Lunch is normally held in the Family Life Center. On the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Wednesdays during the month, the school is unable to use the Family Life Center and thus lunch is held in the classrooms. Parents wishing to have lunch with their child may do so only on days lunch is held in the FLC or must check their child out and eat by the outdoor picnic tables. Parents will need to check in at the school office. Parents will not be allowed to attend lunch in the classrooms.

Student Birthdays: As a fundraiser, the Beta Club sponsors a birthday program in which your student can have his/her name and birthday listed on the bulletin board and greeting read in the morning announcements. Additionally you can order cupcakes or a cookie cake. Information will be sent home early in the year regarding this program. If you choose to send a dessert (or any food) into the building for any occasion, you **MUST** inform the teacher ahead of time and you **MUST** complete a Food Approval form to be authorized by the school nurse at least one week prior to bringing food. The request form is included at

the back of this handbook and will also be available online under the "Parents" drop down menu under "Nurse's Notes."

Teacher and Staff Birthdays: Students wishing to honor a teacher or staff member's birthday may do so by decorating the classroom door and/or bringing in a flower. Any gift giving is optional and must be between the individual student and the teacher or staff member. No food may be brought to the classroom for a teacher birthday. Home room parent coordinators will send home more information regarding teacher birthdays as the date of the birthday approaches.

Lost and Found: The "lost and found" items are collected and located in a bin outside of the school office near the registrar's office. Additionally, a table is located near the lost and found where items, which students have forgotten from home, can be dropped off. Items must be clearly labeled with the student's name and teacher.

Scrip Program: A "no-cost to you" way to support SMCS! Purchase Scrip gift certificates at face value from a huge selection of retailers, and a rebate comes back to SMCS! Detailed information will be given at Orientation, Open House and will be posted on the website.

SMCS Clubs: The school offers the opportunity to become a member of certain extra-curricular clubs such as the following:

Rosary Guild - This club meets once per week to participate in the parish ministry of beading rosaries. The Rosary Guild normally meets on Thursdays after school until 4:30 p.m. Students in grades 3rd-8th may join this club.

Band - Available for 4th-8th grades and will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays after school from 3:15 to 4:15.

Choir - The school choir sings at all school Masses throughout the year. Practice is normally held on Tuesdays after school until 4 p.m. Students in grades 3rd-8th may join the school choir.

National Junior Beta Club - SMCS has a chapter of this nationwide club cultivating ideals of service, academic excellence and leadership. Students in good academic standing in grades 5th-8th may join this club. Dues are required, and service hours are required to attend the annual state convention.

Student Council - Student Council (StuCo) - Student Council is a group of 15 elected representatives, comprised of five students from 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Students perform various duties throughout the school year including, paper recycling, host middle school dances, sponsor service projects, Red Ribbon Week, serve in various capacities at school sponsored events outside the normal day and a variety of activities to also support school spirit.

Drama - The club will be for 3rd-8th graders and will meet on Fridays from 2:30-3:30. There will be a minimal fee and parents may be required to provide costumes for productions.

Athletics: SMCS has soccer, basketball, volleyball, baseball and track teams for middle school students. Also, fifth graders may try out for basketball and track. Try-outs are held before each season begins. The coaches are volunteers, and the teams compete against other

Archdiocesan schools. Annual physical forms **MUST** be completed prior to team practices for any of the sports.

Spirit Day: The first Friday of each month the students can wear the current year's spirit shirt with full-length jeans (no rips, tears or stains) or uniforms shirts, pants, skorts or skirts. Spirit shirts are also worn on most field trips. The spirit shirts are available for sale for \$10 each.

T-Shirt Tuesday: This is an opportunity for the students to wear any SMCS spirit shirt with appropriate jeans or uniform shorts/pants on each Tuesday in the semester for which the privilege is purchased. For the fall semester, this opportunity may be purchased for \$50 for one student, \$75 for two students and \$100 for three or more students in the same family. For the spring semester, this opportunity is sold as an auction item at Casino Night in November. Details on T-shirt Tuesday and start/end dates will be announced via PLUS and *The Crusader*.

School Uniforms: The school uniforms are sold at Parker School Uniforms located on Post Oak. Online purchases can be made and the online code for SMCS is HO011189 (the letter H, letter O, number 0, number 1, number 1, number 1, number 8, number 9). In May, Parker Uniforms holds a "trunk sale" in the Family Life Center on campus. Please refer to the full SMCS handbook for uniform requirements.

Counseling Services: SMCS has a part-time guidance counselor available for students as deemed necessary by the parent, student or teacher.

Standardized Testing: Our school administers the ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) to 2nd through 7th grade students in the spring. Results are sent home with the final report card in May.

Local Advisory Board: The school has an advisory board in accordance with the Archdiocesan guidelines. The board members are elected through a discernment process and serve a three-year term. Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month. The meetings are open to visitors; however, you must let school administration know before you plan to attend a meeting so that the agenda for the meeting can be properly stated.

School Events & Programs: Following is a brief description of school programs and events happening throughout the year. Details will be communicated through PLUS, *The Crusader*, and the school website.

Recycled Uniform Sale - Happening three times per year, a chance to purchase gently used uniforms at a great price. Proceeds benefit the school's general operating fund.

Orientation/Open House Nights- A chance to meet the school staff and visit the classrooms.

Book Fair - An SMCS fundraiser which benefits the school library. Book fairs are held in the fall and spring. Each class will visit the book fair and have an opportunity to create a wish list and/or purchase books. Parents, grandparents and others are also invited to visit the book fair during certain hours.

Grandparents' Open House - All SMCS grandparents are invited in September and April to attend a school open house in the classrooms and view the school book fair.

Middle School Dances -The Student Council plans dances for the middle school students.

Camp Kappe - It is an SMCS tradition for the 5th graders to attend an overnight camp (for three nights) at the Archdiocesan environmental camp in Plantersville, TX.

SMCS Thinks Pink - On this day, SMCS supports Breast Cancer Awareness by providing an opportunity for the students to donate a dollar (or more) in order to wear a pink shirt and jeans to school. The funds go to the Tuition Assistance Program in memory of a former teacher, Kathy Ensley.

Red Ribbon Week - A nationwide campaign in order to take a stand against drugs and educate students on drug prevention.

Saints Parade - In honor of All Saints Day, students in pre-k - 3rd grades will dress as their chosen saint and process around the campus for onlookers.

Donuts with Dad - Dads are invited to the pre-k classrooms for donuts and juice in the morning.

Casino Night - Join the party in the FLC on Saturday, November 12, 2011! Guests ages 21 and over can attend this evening of food, drinks, music and gaming tables in support of our SMCS fundraising efforts. Sponsorships are available, as well as a live

and silent auction. Dress code varies with annual theme. Invitations will be sent in the mail to school families.

Veteran's Day - SMCS presents a wonderful tribute during the all-school Mass to those who have served our country in the armed forces.

Gobble Gathering - Celebrated by pre-k and kindergarten classes in November, families are invited for a short program (performed by the students) and munchies.

Pre-K Christmas Program - Pre-k classes perform songs for families.

Santa's Secret Shop - A Beta Club fundraiser; students are brought to the store by their teachers to have the opportunity to purchase inexpensive gift items.

Christmas Journey - Celebrate the birth of Christ as you and your family walk through several scenes of the Journey to Bethlehem recreated by the students (grades k-5). Middle School students act as narrators and tour guides. Scenes for each grade level are created by volunteers.

Christmas Party - Each classroom hosts its party during the last hour of class on the designated party day.

Vocations Presentation - In honor of National Vocations Awareness Month, the Vocations Committee plans a school-wide presentation (based on age appropriateness) for an opportunity to enrich the students with the education of Catholic vocations.

Spelling Bee (Grades 3rd-8th) - Each class submits students to the school-wide bee based on in-class contests. The winner of the school-wide bee attends the Archdiocesan Spelling Bee.

Manners Banquet - In lieu of a Valentine's party, the 5th grade classes will attend a luncheon (planned by the class parent volunteers). The students will also attend a manners presentation and dress up for the luncheon.

Valentine's Day Party - Each classroom hosts its party during the last hour of class; refreshments are provided by the school. During this party, the students participate in a service project to assist Martha's Kitchen (a ministry of the church which feeds homeless and needy families).

Kingwood Mardi Gras Parade - Show your school pride by riding the SMCS float in the parade around Kingwood Town Center.

Pre-K Mardi Gras Parade - The pre-k students have their own parade, dressed in Mardi Gras colors on Fat Tuesday.

Catholic Schools Week - A week celebrating the choice to attend Catholic School. Many activities are planned during this week including a blessing of the school, a teacher raffle, staff luncheon, etc. This week also begins the registration process for the following school year.

Family Fun and Dinner Night - On Friday, February 17, 2012, families gather in fellowship and get powered up for the *Steps for Students* event the following day.

Steps for Students - *Steps for Students* is a USA Track & Field officially sanctioned run and Archdiocesan-wide fundraiser to benefit our Catholic Schools and St. Martha directly. The event is comprised of a 5k run/walk, The David K. Guite Memorial 1k Family Fun Run and a post-race celebration. This year's event will take place on Saturday, February 18, 2012.

St. Joseph's Table - In honor of St. Joseph whose feast day is in March and who is the protector of families, the religion department sets a traditional table and the students are invited by class to partake in the feast. Each student brings an item for the table.

8th Grade Trip - An SMCS tradition, the 8th graders take a trip to T-Bar-M Ranch in New Braunfels.

Beta Convention - The members of the SMCS chapter of the National Junior Beta Club attend a state convention where the students can compete in different events.

Crusader Open - An annual golf tournament with proceeds supporting the fundraising efforts of SMCS. This year's tournament will be on Thursday, April 26, 2012, at Kingwood Country Club; sponsorships or individual entries are available.

Cinco de Mayo - It's a fiesta at SMCS! A school-wide celebration where students can sample food and celebrate the culture.

Teacher Appreciation Week - Held in May, this week is an opportunity to show our teachers and staff how much we appreciate all they do to educate and love our children.

Muffins with Mom -- Moms are invited to the pre-k classrooms for muffins and juice in the morning.

Athletic Banquet - This event held in May honors the soccer, basketball, volleyball and track teams; dinner and awards.

Fun Day - A "fun day" for students to participate in games around campus.

May Crowning Reception - In honor of the crowning of our Blessed Mother, the students who have recently received 1st communion are invited to a breakfast following the school mass. Students may wear their 1st communion clothing to the Mass and breakfast. The breakfast is hosted by the first grade parents.

8th Grade Farewell - The program in May honors our graduates and is attended by students in the elementary school, as well as 6th and 7th grades. Songs are presented by certain grade levels, traditions passed from 8th to 7th and a good-bye to the 8th grade reading buddies from the elementary students.

8th Grade Graduation - Held on a Saturday in May, the 8th grade students and their families attend a Mass and reception in honor of their graduation from SMCS. The reception is held in the FLC and hosted by the 7th grade class.

End of Year Mass/Awards - On the last day of school, the students attend a school-wide Mass. Following Mass, the 3rd - 7th grade students receive academic awards. Parents are invited to attend.

Alumni Event - All students who have graduated 8th grade from SMCS since inception are invited to attend this alumni reunion.

Student Showcase - Each grade level (pre-k - 5th) will have an opportunity to "showcase" their learning to families on the assigned day for that grade. An email will be sent home to parents as the day approaches for that grade.

PLUS/Volunteer Opportunities: The parent volunteer organization at SMCS is referred to as PLUS (Parents, Parishioners and People Lending Useful Support). For information on becoming a PLUS Chair, please contact the Director of Development. Refer to the PLUS organization chart for the many committees in need of volunteers. Following is a brief description of each committee:

Casino Night - This committee plans our fall fundraising event, from food to decorations to the auction.

Crusader Open - This committee plans our spring fundraising event (golf tournament), from sponsorships to on-course events to the sponsor party.

Recycled Uniforms - This committee is responsible for organizing the donated gently used uniforms for our three sales during the year.

Box Tops - This committee promotes creative incentives/rewards for the collection of box tops/labels, as well as counts the box tops/labels for submission to the vendors. This committee also coordinates other redemption programs such as Coke Rewards and the Fiesta Super Sports Club.

Home Room Parent Coordinator - The Home Room Parent coordinator is the liaison between the teacher and the parents in the classroom, with regards to classroom parties, sign-up sheets and other teacher needs.

Clinic - The school nurse needs volunteers during the year for vision screening and height/weight measurements.

Library - The school librarian needs volunteers on Tuesdays/Thursdays each week to assist with students checking out books and filing returned books. Volunteers may also read to children in the library only when prearranged through the school librarian.

Book Fair - This committee will assist the librarian with the two annual book fairs.

Workroom - Individuals volunteering for this committee will assist teachers with photocopies, laminating, cutting, or other tasks in the workroom. Certain tasks may also be checked out and completed at home.

Yearbook/Photo - Volunteers are needed to attend school events to take photos, organize photos and assist with the yearbook layout.

Teacher Appreciation - Volunteers of the Hospitality Committee are needed to assist with special projects in honor of the school staff during this week in May.

Staff Luncheons - Volunteers of the Hospitality Committee are needed to provide food/drinks, set-up and clean-up for our staff four times per year: Teacher Conference days in September and February, Catholic Schools Week in February, and Teacher Appreciation Breakfast/Lunch in May.

Hospitality for Other School Events - Volunteers are needed to assist with the Grandparents Open House in September and April and other school events during the year.

Parade Celebrations - This committee helps promote SMCS to the community by participating in the two Kingwood parades: Mardi Gras and Fourth of July. Volunteers will decorate the floats, arrange for students to "come aboard," and clean up the float after the parades.

Alumni Association - This committee maintains a database of SMCS alumni, as well as communicates with them and plans an annual reunion.

Family Fun and Dinner Night - This committee plans our family gathering for fun and fellowship in February. The event is normally held in the Family Life Center on a Friday night.

Vocations Committee - As a liaison to the Parish Vocations Committee, this school committee focuses on bringing Catholic vocations awareness to the students.

Athletic Banquet - Under the direction of the athletic director, this committee is responsible for assisting with the invitations, awards, set-up and clean-up for the annual SMCS Athletic Banquet in May. The banquet honors the middle school soccer, basketball, volleyball, baseball and track teams.

Athletic Photography - Volunteers are needed at athletic events to photograph the events and submit to the yearbook committee.

P.E. Volunteers - Volunteers are needed to support the P.E. teachers throughout the year as needed for small group training. Additionally, we are looking for volunteers to demonstrate an athletic skill to the classes (i.e. badminton, tennis). This committee can also help with Fun Day in May.