



ST. MICHAEL INDIAN SCHOOL

CARDINAL NEWS

FALL ISSUE | OCTOBER 2020





ST. MICHAEL INDIAN SCHOOL

Fall 2020

CARDINAL NEWS

FOUNDED BY SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL | LOCATED ON THE NAVAJO RESERVATION IN NORTHEASTERN ARIZONA



SMIS APPOINTS NEW VICE PRINCIPAL

St. Michael Indian School announced in July the newly appointed vice principal, Celie Henderson, who is a SMIS 2008 graduate. Henderson has served at SMIS since 2014 as a fourth grade teacher—and then as elementary department head from 2018 to 2020.

Henderson's promotion to vice principal is supported by an impressive professional background in education. In 2008, she was named a Gates Millennium Scholar. Henderson received a Bachelor's Dual Degree in Elementary and Special Education from Northern Arizona University (NAU) in 2012; is a certified Arizona teacher with a certification in Cross Categorical Disabilities (high incidence) and Low Incidence Disabilities; and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Northern Arizona University.

Henderson participated in the notable PRAXIS program at NAU, which is three semesters long and includes 200-plus hours in classrooms that are completed in the Flagstaff schools. Only 16 participants are selected for the program. According to NAU, PRAXIS means "theory to practice." To apply this philosophy, the instructors place students in actual classrooms, where they teach under the guidance of professional educators. The curriculum covers all required coursework leading toward Arizona credential certification for elementary (grades K-8) and special education (grades K-12). This includes low- and high incidence disabilities.

Henderson is a parishioner at the Mary, Mother of Mankind Catholic Church in Saint Michaels, Arizona, where she is a Eucharistic Minister and a member of the Navajo choir.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

DEAR FRIENDS,

Every day, I have the privilege of working in St. Katharine Drexel's mission school, which was founded in 1902. Think about all the challenges connected to keeping a mission school on the Navajo Nation operational for 118 years. +Sr. Joan of Arc DeBernardo--an SBS sister who spent many years at Saint Michael Indian School--sent me a picture of Saint Katharine that I keep in my office in clear sight. The picture has a caption: "What would Mother Katharine Do?" and I smile each time I think of the significance of these words.

I remember +Sr. Joan, as I am sure many of you do, walking the halls of our school, checking on students who she was certain needed extra help with their studies. She was a force of faith and an example of sacrifice to all who encountered her. There were times when she was not in the best of health, but she still showed up. Basketball games, math class, after-school study sessions and even early mornings, +Sr. Joan never stopped giving.

Giving is the topic of the upcoming season. For some of us, it feels as if giving has been the topic of 2020: What more can we give? I think of +Sr. Joan, +Sr. Loyola Edelen, +Sr. Kathryn Gates, and many others who served these children, and I think of the many things I can sacrifice in order to make a gift to Saint Michael Indian School.

We have not reached our annual giving goal for 2020, however I am not worried. We are just coming into the giving season, and I know we have many generous "givers" out there. While we might all feel exhausted and done with 2020, please remember those who set examples of giving in your life. No gift is too small when it comes from a generous heart.

What would Mother Katharine Do? We all know the answer to that: She would give everything she had to ensure "Black and Indian Children" have access to a quality Catholic education! Now the question becomes, What will you do?

As we move into this season of giving, my prayer is that God will bless you and your family in the same way you have chosen to bless others.

May God provide many blessings to you and your family.

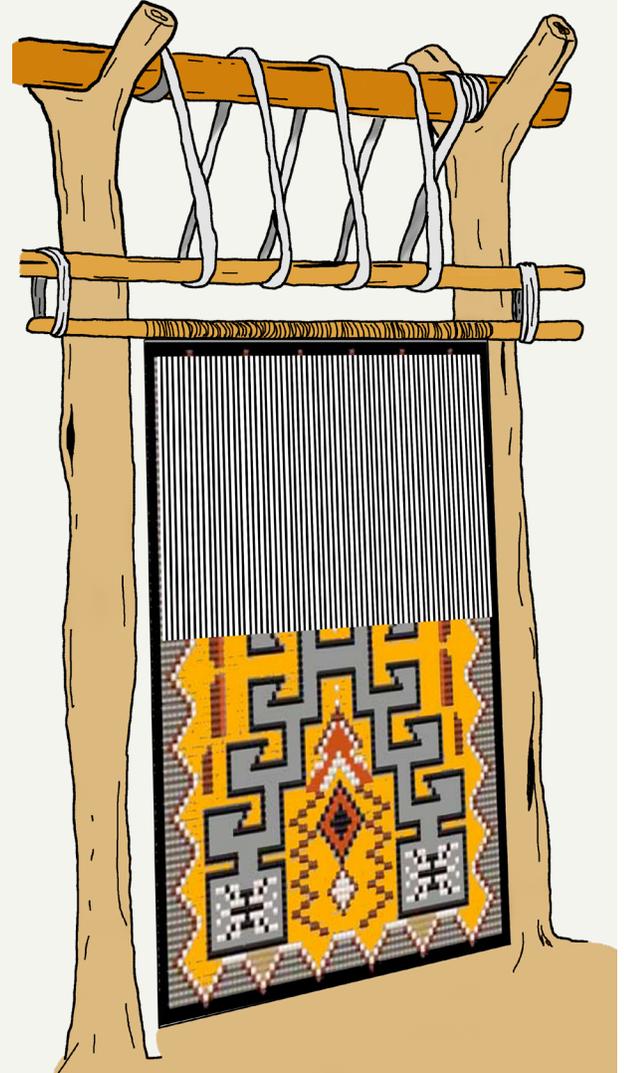
DOT TESO, PRESIDENT

Email: Dot.Teso@smischools.org
Direct: 505.979.5590 Ext. 3031

ANNUAL FUND UPDATE

CURRENT = \$184,887

GOAL = \$325,000



ST. MICHAEL INDIAN SCHOOL

PRESIDENT DOT TESO
PRINCIPAL TAZBAH YAZZIE

St. Michael Indian School provides students from local Native American communities with a quality education that is rooted in Catholic values, is sensitive to Native heritage, teaches leadership skills, and enables students to contribute in a culturally diverse world.

Cardinal News is published by the SMIS Development office.

Our mailing address is: PO Box 650 | St. Michaels, AZ 86511
For inquiries or to make a gift, please call us at (505) 979-5590 or visit us online at STMICHAELINDIANSCHOOL.org.

(Pictured Below): Fourth grade teacher Kendra Shebala set up a Star Wars virtual background for online learning of her class.



BACK IN SESSION



Teachers returned to campus on August 19 eager to prepare for the upcoming academic year. School began on September 8th with a targeted distance learning model in place. During the school closure, our cross functional response team created several different learning models for students. These models included in-person on campus, online at home, and a combination of both in-person with online. Technology Manager Alexandra Sando was tasked with finalizing technology upgrades which began nearly five years ago.

"We would not be able to provide the first day of school with such a seamless flow had we not been planning technology implementation for several years now. We began with upgrading our Wi-Fi to be able to provide high speed internet into each classroom. As we begin to move toward dual enrollment with Xavier University, technology is essential for that program implementation," stated President Dot Teso.

Over the summer, new access points were placed throughout campus to provide a stable foundation for daily live class sessions happening in most classrooms on campus. While there are teachers on campus in the classrooms, they appear on students' Chromebook or iPad screen to their students at home.

The Navajo Nation Department of Health announced in August that beginning on the 17th, the Navajo Nation would be transitioning from the red phase to the orange phase indicating moderate-high risk status according to the Nation's reopening plan. SMIS's response to this transitioning phase was to convert to solely online instruction. When teachers returned, they anticipated welcoming students on campus following CDC and APA guidelines of safely returning to school.

However, on August 31, 2020, the decision was made by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the SMIS Board of Directors, and leadership of SMIS to open virtually. In a recent virtual meeting with parents, President Teso said, "Saint Katharine Drexel was respectful of the Navajo leadership when opening the school. Decisions made today by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, who own our school, are duly considerate of this longstanding agreement and understanding of the school in this community. We are confident that following the Navajo Nation Department of Health guidelines are in the best interest of our organization and our community."

For our SMIS teachers, learning the new Microsoft Teams technology was challenging. However, it was not a difficult challenge them to overcome. Microsoft teams is the software being utilized to carry out the daily live recorded instruction. Although many challenges surfaced, our teachers remained positive in their outlook on virtual instruction. "I'm looking forward to seeing interaction between students online and possibly in person," said art teacher Cody Begay. First-year fifth grade teacher Kellen Denny added: "Our young scholars have so much potential, and it is my job and pleasure to help guide them through their educational journey. I strongly believe in this quote by Ignacio "Nacho" Estrada, he says, if a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." The teachers spent a majority of their first week back at work learning new software and technology capabilities, while finalizing classroom syllabus and schedules for their students.

This year, our schedule allows for kindergarten to 10th grade students to be in class from 8:25 AM to 2:45 PM while juniors and seniors are scheduled for 12:05 PM to 4:55 PM classes. On Fridays, teachers in 3rd to 12th grades work remotely. This schedule is in effect for the virtual learning currently in place.

Since campus closed in March, the food service department served 27,763 meals to children in the community and prepared 150 weekend bags each Friday. Occasionally, there were more families than other Fridays for the weekend bags. The school is currently serving Meals To-Go in a drive thru style on campus Monday to Friday while also driving the buses around to four local stops during the lunch hours to allow for families to pick up meals. School nutritionist Dee Weber ('09) stated, "This school year the school qualified for all students to receive meals which means we have 62% of students normally receiving free or reduced costs for meals through the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program. Creating accessibility is critical for the students so we run buses to offer daily lunches and weekend bags on Fridays."

Since many students live as far as 20 miles away from the school, daily pick up is not easy, therefore weekday bags are being provided for students who will get their breakfast and lunch meals for the week every Monday.

**Find the latest updates on the school website:
www.stmichaelindianschool.org**

SAFE CAMPUS

Safety precautions outlined in the re-entry plan of the SMIS Crisis Team were implemented in September.



AROUND CAMPUS



Fourth grader Briseis Jackson shares her workspace at home with her family and created a learning cove just for her.



Third grader Clayton Henderson meets his new teacher online during the first day of class.



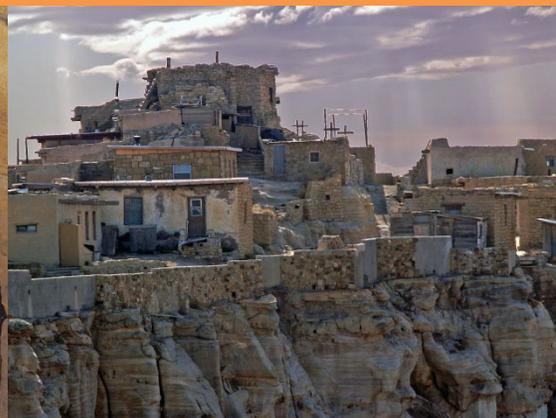
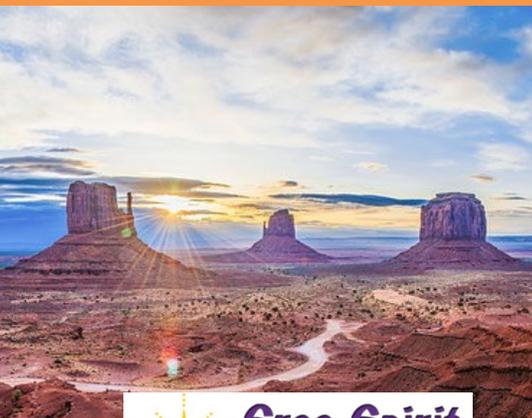
A new shade was installed in the Saint Kateri Garden to enhance outdoor learning spaces.



New preschool playground equipment was installed granted through funding from the Raskob Foundation.

Native Arizona

Discover Hopi and Navajo Lands



7 Days/6 Nights • March 24-30, 2021 and May 2-8, 2021

Day 1

Fly into Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. Check into the Holiday Inn Express. An afternoon visit to the **Pueblo Grande Museum**, an archaeological site once inhabited by the Hohokam culture, is included prior to a **Welcome Dinner**. (Meals: D)

Day 2

Depart for Northern Arizona. Tour **Montezuma's Castle National Monument** before arriving in Flagstaff for lunch on your own and a tour the **Museum of Northern Arizona**. Continue to Tuba City and check into Moenkopi Legacy Inn N Suites. Dinner and a Hopi program are included this evening. (Meals: B, D)

Day 3

Highlights today include **Old Oraibi** and a walking tour of **Walpi**. Walpi is situated on top of **First Mesa** nearly 300 feet above the surrounding land. The village is a living village where the homes are passed down through matrilineal clan lineage. Just as it has been over the centuries, there is no electricity or running water in the old village of Walpi. You will witness life at it has been lived over the centuries. This full day tour gives guests the opportunity to meet Kachina doll carvers, basket weavers and potters in their villages. You will learn about Hopi agriculture and see the dry farming that produces crops of beans, squash and corn that have been the staples of Hopi life for centuries. Return to Moenkopi for the evening. (Meals: B)

Day 4

Visit the **Interactive Navajo Museum** this morning before traveling to Page and tour **Antelope Canyon**, a small but exquisitely beautiful slot canyon geological formation. Also visit **Glen Canyon Dam** and view **Lake Powell** before traveling to Kayenta for the evening. Check into Kayenta Monument Valley Inn. (Meals: B)

Day 5

Tour the fabulous and beautiful **Monument Valley** where you will discover why it is considered one of the centerpieces of beauty on Navajo Land. Beautiful red sandstones push skyward from the vast expanse of desert floor, creating a striking set of formations

that stand together against an umbrella of blue skies. Lunch is on your own in Kayenta before you depart for Canyon de Chelly. You will thrill to the delights of the beautiful and breathtaking Canyon de Chelly! Nowhere in Navajo land is the blend of past tradition and present Culture more evident than at **Canyon de Chelly National Monument**, this Monument is home to several periods of Indian Culture dating from 350 A.D. to 1300 A.D. The 26-mile Canyon's sheer cliffs range from 30 to more than 1,000 ft. providing a spectacular Backdrop for hundreds of Anasazi Ruins, as well as modern Navajo homes and farms. Check into the Thunderbird Lodge.

Day 6

Visit **Window Rock** this morning. This park has many symbolic structures: a circular path outlining the four cardinal directions, 16 angled steel pillars with the name of war veterans, and a healing sanctuary that is used for reflection and solitude that features a fountain made of sandstone. Also visit the **Navajo Nation Council Chambers** – similar to our US Capitol Building. Lunch is included at **St. Michael Indian School**. Then depart for the **Hubbell Trading Post and National Historic Site**. Hubbell Trading Post is the oldest continuously operated trading post in the United States, a National Historic Site that features a bookstore, exhibits, rug weaving demonstrations and picnic tables. Then return to the Phoenix and check into the Holiday Inn Express. Dinner is included this evening. (Meals: B, L, D)

Day 7

Visit the world-famous **Heard Museum** this morning before departing for home. (Meals: B)

**Tour Price: \$1695 per person/double
\$2125 per person/single**

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SAINT MICHAEL INDIAN SCHOOL

Virtual Tree Lighting & Luminaria Walk

Friday, December 4th



This Christmas, Light the Path to Student Success

A luminary is lit in recognition of each supporter who has gifted in the last ten months to SMIS. We are inviting you to join in on the walk to recognize your loved one, someone special, a family member, or your graduating class.

Donate \$25 or more now through December 4th--and a luminary will be lit for you or for an intention/person you choose. With your \$50 gift, a digital photo of your luminaria(s) will be emailed to you.

Make your gift today at stmichaelindianschool.org!

CARDINAL XC



ALI UPSHAW ('20) SIGNS WITH UNM LOBOS

Ali signed with the University of New Mexico Lobos to run Track & Field and Cross Country. Ali became a two-time individual state champion at St. Michael Indian School after winning the 2019 Arizona AIA Cross Country State Championships in 17:49.5—with her team winning the 1A Girls Cross Country state team title as well.

In 2018, she won the Division 4 Girls state title which gave SMIS its fourth state title in Girls Cross Country while earning a triple crown. Ali earned her varsity letters in cross country, track and field, and basketball having been on the 2017 and 2018 1A Arizona Girls Basketball back to back championship team.

She was awarded the Female Senior Athlete of the Year and Valedictorian this year. She is a member of the National Honor Society, Student Council President and a Student Ambassador. Ali's mom, Kelly Upshaw-Bia ('96) has been her coach, following the footsteps of her grandfather, Terry Thompson who helped to begin the running program.

Pictured: Ali signs with UNM with her family present, her coach Kelly Upshaw-Bia ('96), aunt Kelsey Thompson ('08), grandparents Vinnie and Terry Thompson, and her younger siblings.

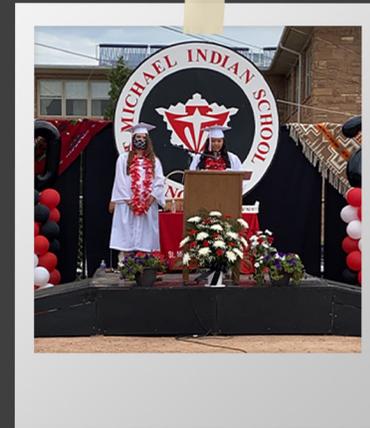
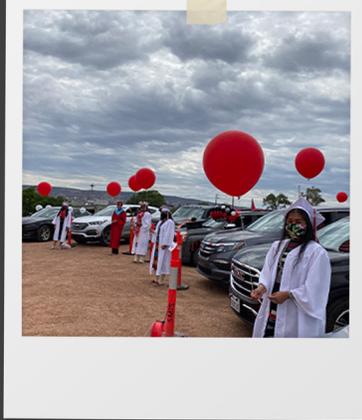


GIRLS XC STATE CHAMPIONS PICK UP RINGS

Members of the 2019 Girls Cross Country state championship team stopped by individually in August to pick up their state rings. State team members were Seniors Ali Upshaw and Cameron Nelson, Juniors Chiara Holgate, Arianna Quintana and Ashley Phillips, and Freshmen Amber Woody and Nizhonibaa Phillips.

GRADUATION

CONGRATULATIONS



Class of 2020!

GRADUATION



SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL AWARD

Aliandrea Upshaw, Valedictorian

Saint Katharine Drexel, Foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, established St. Michael Indian School in 1902 as an expression of her commitment and Christ-like devotion to the oppressed in American Society. Through her inspiration, Catholicism enhanced the land without subverting the profound spirituality and elegant traditions of the Navajo. This award is given to a student who honors a commitment to personal dignity and respect for the rights of others.



SISTER MARY HONORA AWARD

Colby Yazzie, Salutatorian

Sister Mary Honora served as a dynamic example of the pioneer spirit of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She arrived at St. Michael Indian School in October 1910 and served her beloved Navajo for 50 until her death on August 12, 1962. She was a friend to Chief Dodge and Father Anselm and to many other tribal leaders and Franciscan missionaries. This award is given to a student who is reverent of the traditions and culture of the Navajo and other peoples within the school community.



SISTER KATHARINE BARRETT AWARD

*Gwendolyn Flowers-Morgan,
Student Ambassador*

Sister Katharine Barrett held responsibilities as Principal from 1979-1989. In the early 1980's, with declining enrollments and fiscal constraints, the closing of the school became an imminent possibility. Sister Katharine marshaled the support of the community in persuading the General Council of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in sustaining the continuance of the school as a resource for Navajo youth. This award is given to a student for service and loyalty to the school community.



GRADUATION SPEAKER: SHAWNELL DAMON ('96)

Shawnell Damon is the granddaughter of the late Molly Damon, the late Code Talker, Anson Damon, Sr., and the daughter of Lucinda Damon from Old Sawmill, AZ. Shawnell's born for the Ashiichi and her paternal clans are bilaganna, her cheii's are Todichii nii. Shawnell is the mother of two lovely little girls, Avianna Damon-Showalter and Giselle Damon-Showalter.

Shawnell was born and raised on the Navajo Nation. She proudly attended St. Michael Indian School from kindergarten through 12th grade. After graduation, she attended Arizona State University. She obtained a Bachelor of Science in Biology and minored in History in 2002. Upon graduating from Arizona State University, she worked at the National Institutes of Health in Phoenix, AZ, conducting research on genes linked to diabetes in American Indians. Two years later, Shawnell was admitted to the College of Public Health and received a Master's in Public Health in 2008 at the University of Arizona. After graduation, Shawnell was hired by the Texas Department of State Health Service as an Epidemiologist for the 36 counties in West Texas. She combatted her first pandemic of the H1N1 epidemic while working there.

In 2018, Shawnell received another Master's Degree in Cellular and Molecular Medicine and now works as the Health Promotion Disease Prevention Coordinator at the Navajo Area Indian Health Service. In March 2020, Shawnell was appointed Epidemiology Chief for the Navajo Area Indian Health Service. Shawnell works in close partnerships with the Navajo Nation Epidemiology Center, the surrounding states and the Navajo Nation. As the Epidemiology Chief, the teams are working on increasing testing capacity, increasing contact tracing, analyzing and producing creditable data, and increasing team capacity, which will allow the teams to follow patients from diagnosis to recovery. Through these epidemiological goals, their team will mitigate the incidences of COVID-19 on the Navajo Nation.

ALUMNI NOTES

CALL TO SERVICE: BRIANNA NEZ ('10)

Brianna Nez ('10) attended SMIS beginning in fourth grade. As an active student athlete, she enjoyed learning and competing in volleyball, track, and basketball, where she received numerous awards such as Rookie of the Year for track. "Sports was a big motivation for me to stay on top of my grades throughout the school year," said Brianna. While doing great in athletics, Brianna maintained her academic rigor earning her a membership in the National Honor Society. She received the honor of Valedictorian in 2010 to wrap up her high school career. Brianna went on to attend Georgetown University in Washington, DC, to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Science in International Affairs/Relations.

In 2016, Brianna became a teacher's aide and soon transitioned to be the fifth grade teacher. Having taught a variety of subjects in middle school, this year she moves into the role of math teacher for grades eighth through 12th. Brianna gives acknowledgement to Brother David Landry, who helped her gain a greater appreciation of math. She wants to do the same for her students and feels that she has succeeded at that. "My favorite moments are the ones where everything comes together, and I can show my students how everything is related to each other. I can see the smiles on their faces because they get it and are blown away by how smart they are. They'll usually say 'Wow, Ms. Nez, my brain is going to explode [with knowledge]!'" said Brianna.

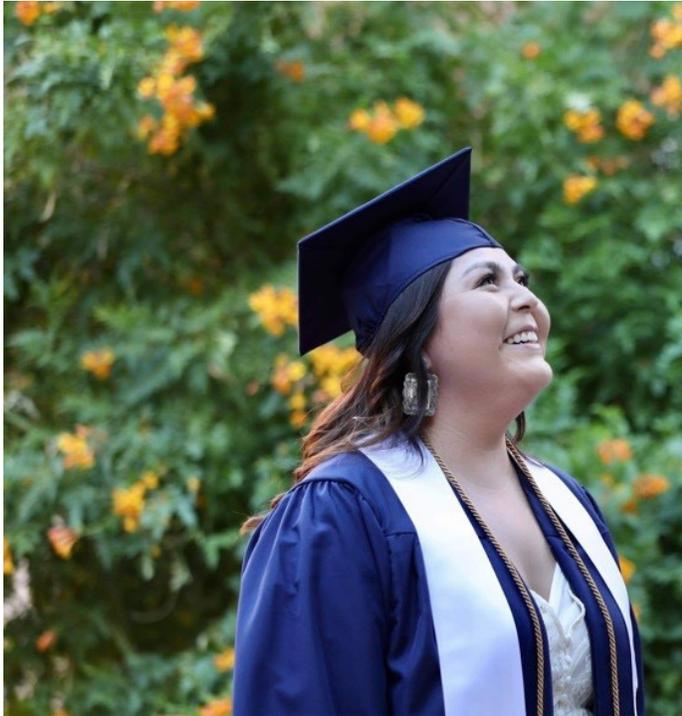
Brianna's biggest concern when switching to home learning in March to May was ensuring she was staying connected with her students, "I had to send out Google surveys and set up Zoom classes." The surveys helped Brianna get feedback from parents and students while home learning. Though the chaos of the pandemic continued, Brianna was interested to know how her students were staying active.

Brianna appreciates the Catholic education she received and expressed this is the reason why she returned back to teach. "I feel so content and at peace with myself knowing that I am doing my best [at SMIS]" said Brianna adding, "I consider myself fortunate to be among a strong beautiful Catholic community with former teachers I keep in contact with today."

Her older, Larissa Nez, graduated from SMIS in 2007 and her younger sister, Lauralyn is a sophomore at SMIS.



ALUMNI NOTES



RECENT COLLEGE GRADS

DESIREE YAZZIE (SMIS '15)
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE - CIVIL ENGINEERING
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

KENISHA BEGAY (SMIS '16)
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE - SPECIAL EDUCATION,
REHABILITATION STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

JORDAN UPSHAW (SMIS '16)
BACHELOR OF ARTS - POLITICAL SCIENCE, LAW AND
PUBLIC POLICY & AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

COURTNEY HALE (SMIS '16)
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE - EDUCATION, SECONDARY
EDUCATION; MINORS IN NAVAJO LANGUAGE & ASIAN
STUDIES
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

CARDINAL KUDOS

SMIS FOOD SERVICE STAFF TO BE FEATURED IN UPCOMING WEBINAR

No Kid Hungry is putting on a nationwide webinar that will highlight back-to-school efforts in tribal communities of how schools are implementing practices to successfully get meals to kids, review challenges and successes, and explore what are some situations unique to rural and tribal communities. Dee Weber ('09), School Nutritionist, and Melissa Kee, Food Service Director, will represent St. Michael Indian School on the webinar scheduled for late October.

The food service is led by Food Service Manager Melissa Kee. "Serving food for the children has always been important. I was humbled to help parents in the community feed their kids at a time when they couldn't because they might've lost their jobs and been in quarantine. Even though people told me they were afraid to go to places in the community, they felt safe to come get food here from us for their children. That was an awesome feeling. "

The food service meets the challenges of delivering meals by cross training and practicing teamwork. Monday to Friday, the team of four preps and serves.



#CARDINALUP

Examples of members of our Cardinal community stepping up to serve our students and others to make our school better each day.



School nurse and science teacher Jamie Adams works alongside high school teachers to distribute the monthly materials to students on October 2.



School nutritionist Dee Weber ('09) drives to deliver meals to families in the Fort Defiance area.



New sheetrock for walls of the new health and nurse's office gets installed.

UPCOMING CARDINAL EVENTS



OCT
23-25

DREXEL RUN

VIRTUAL RACE
OCT 23 - 25

10K | 5K | 1-MILE
REGISTRATION INCLUDES
T-SHIRT AND FINISHER'S MEDAL
DREXELRUN.ORG

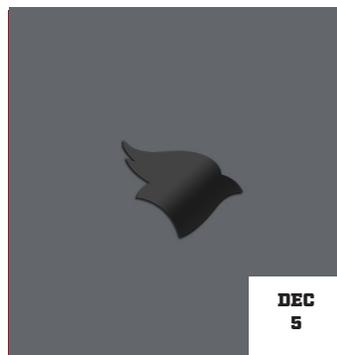


DEC
4

VIRTUAL TREE LIGHTING

LIGHT THE PATH
TO STUDENT SUCCESS

MAKE A \$25 GIFT
TO LIGHT A LUMINARIA
FOR THE TREE LIGHTING.



DEC
5

CLUB 1902

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ATHLETIC FUNDRAISER
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JAN.
28

DREXEL DINNER

SAVE THE DATE - JAN. 28!

OUR SECOND ANNUAL
DREXEL DINNER IS COMING
UP ON JAN. 28TH.
FOR MORE
INFO, EMAIL
BROOKE.OVERTURF@
SMISCHOOLS.ORG



TAXPAYERS HAVE UNTIL APRIL 15 TO DONATE TO CHARITIES, STOS & PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR 2020 TAX YEAR

INDIVIDUAL TAX CREDIT LIMITS FOR TAX
YEAR 2020 (THROUGH 4/15/2021). SINGLE
FILING \$1,183 AND MARRIED FILING \$2,365

VISIT STMICHAELINDIANSCHOOL.ORG FOR
ORGANIZATION LIST OF WHERE TO MAKE
YOUR ARIZONA TAX CONTRIBUTION.

Join Us!

VIRTUAL MASS



Join us throughout the school year for Mass with Father Edgardo Diaz, OFM, school chaplain from the Sister's Chapel of the school. View the Mass on the St. Michael Indian School YouTube channel and become a subscriber to see our latest videos.

Mass is streamed for students and families viewing at home. Please send us your Mass intentions.

Upcoming Mass: Nov. 3 and Dec. 8. at 9:00 a.m.



St. Michael Indian School

PO Box 650

St. Michaels, AZ 86511-0650

www.stmichaelindianschool.org

