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Hark The Herald Angels Of Saint Mary's

BY EILEEN SYMMONS

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The month of December was very busy at The Schools of Saint Mary, as the students, faculty and administrators celebrated the seasons of Advent and Christmas as a community. Everyone joyfully and spiritually prepared and reflected as they waited to celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas.

Both schools had nativity scenes prominently displayed in their hallways. At the elementary school, the children had a prayer service and lit the Advent wreath together every Monday to mark each week being closer to Jesus' arrival, and the youngest students in the Early Childhood Education program participated in a Nativity scene and Christmas pageant. Even the parents took time out of their busy schedules to focus on "The Reason for the Season" with an Advent Day of Prayer at Our Lady of Grace Spiritual Center on Dec. 1. Throughout December, the elementary school's Toy Drive and the high school's Advent Giving Drive helped the students focus on those in need, as they collected new, unwrapped toys as well as coats, hats, gloves, mittens and scarves. Santa visited all the good little boys and girls of the elementary school on Dec. 4 at a Breakfast with Santa in Msgr. Wiest Gym and returned to visit each classroom in the early childhood and primary grades on Dec. 20.

The high school students also took time from the hustle and bustle to spend time in prayer and reflection at reconciliation services and with an Advent liturgy in the Church of St. Mary.

It wouldn't be Christmas without music, and there was lots of it, as the high school orchestra, chamber choir, and choruses had concerts Dec. 13 and



The students of St. Mary Elementary School gather around Santa Claus for a pre-Christmas visit.

14 and the elementary school chorus, band, violins and classes had their concert Dec. 15, all featuring a mix of prayerful Christmas hymns and fun Christmas classics. The high school chamber choir also spread Christmas cheer throughout the wider community, singing at outside events such as the Festival of Trees at St. Aidan's Church in Williston Park Dec. 3 and The Josephine Foundation's annual event at the Immaculate Conception Center in Douglaston on Dec. 9.

The St. Mary's High School community joined together on Dec. 12 after school for cocoa; cookies and caroling at the Christmas tree lighting outside Marist Hall, and that week each homeroom also decorated its door with a festive and creative Christmas theme. As the school break approached, everyone was feeling festive for Christmas Spirit Week as students were invited

to wear Christmas-themed, red or green sweaters and tops and everyone attended a Christmas Spirit pep rally on Dec. 20. The Schools of St. Mary hopes

everyone had a very merry and blessed Christmas.

see ST. MARY PHOTOS on page 10

New Leadership For Manhasset CASA

BY ELIZABETH JOHNSON

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The new year marks a transition in leadership for the Manhasset Community Coalition Against Substance Abuse (CASA) as it continues its mission to reduce youth substance use in Manhasset.

Jennifer DeSena recently joined Manhasset CASA's board as its

executive director with past executive director, Dr. Caryn Sawyer, remaining on the board and returning to her career as a clinical psychologist. In addition, Lori S. Rowan and Kim McConville Kuester, Esq., have also joined CASA's Board of Directors. Michelle Selby joined CASA's board in May 2016.

see CASA on page 8

SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE: VACATION & TRAVEL

USPS Identification Statement on Page 2A of Weekend Section

MANHASSET NY 11030-2320
200 MEMORIAL PL
MANHASSET HIGH SCHOOL
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Manhasset Moms Make The Holidays Merry

BY MANHASSET PRESS STAFF

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The Manhasset Mothers' Group (MGM) kicked off the holiday season with a cookie exchange on Dec. 1, where the local ladies mixed and mingled over mouth-watering treats and cookie tins, generously donated by Iavarone Brothers Catering. The fun continued on Dec. 10 when MGM brought families together at Harbor Links Golf Course in Port Washington to celebrate the season during their annual holiday party.

Event chairs Amy Martella and Andriana McMahon worked together to create the holiday magic for the party, where old friends reunited and many new friends were made during the fun-filled brunch. The children enjoyed creating festive crafts and participated in games such as freeze dance on the dance floor, while the DJ filled the room with holiday music. The highlight of the morning was a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus, who took the time to hear every child's Christmas list and pose for family photographs.



"The children and adults seemed to be having a very merry time!" exclaimed Amy Martella, who "looks forward to continuing to make this event a yearly holiday tradition."

Participating families generously donated gift cards to the SCA's Project Share Gift Program, which assists families

in need within Manhasset. The MGM is a member-based organization that holds a number of regular events throughout the year. For more information about the Mothers' Group of Manhasset, including membership, visit www.manhassetmothersgroup.com. All are welcome to join the MGM and participate in exciting couples' ladies' and children's events throughout the school calendar year. MGM is looking forward to an exciting and wonderful 2017.



CASA from page 1

"Manhasset CASA is so excited Jen DeSena has accepted the position of executive director. Her knowledge of the Manhasset community and dedication to our residents will help to transition CASA from its federal Drug Free Communities (DFC) Support Program Grant funding," stated Gene Petracca, CASA board president. "We are also so fortunate to have worked with Dr. Caryn Sawyer for the past two years, as her expertise in the field of psychology has furthered CASA's relationships and programs in the field of substance abuse prevention," added Petracca.

"I look forward to working with the entire CASA board and community to help our youth grow up healthy and safe. I have always been interested in causes to support children and education. Manhasset CASA will allow me to channel my passion and make a difference in the lives of Manhasset families," explained Jen DeSena, the new executive director.

DeSena, a Manhasset resident since 2000, is an attorney and graduate of St. John's School of Law. She is active across the Manhasset community as a board member of the Manhasset Women's Coalition Against Breast Cancer and current president of the Women's Club of the



Standing from left: Andrew Lunetta, Esq., vice president, Lori S. Rowan, board member; Robert J. Aiello, Esq., board member; Kim McConville Kuester, Esq., board member; Lisa Varela, treasurer and Eugene A. Petracca, Jr., P.E., president; Shown from left: sitting: Caryn Sawyer, Psy. D., board member; Jennifer DeSena, executive director; Zari Ginsburg, MS, RDN, secretary and Beth Miller, board member. Absent from photo: Michelle Selby, board member.

North Strathmore Civic Association. She will lead CASA's sustainability planning as its DFC Grant funding expires in September 2018. The DFC Program has provided Manhasset

CASA with staff, training and programs to advance substance abuse prevention across the Manhasset community.

In January, CASA continues its

DFC Coalition Sector meetings and parent/student/community prevention education programs; see the Manhasset calendar on page 19A.

Manhasset CASA has been in existence since 2001 as a 501(c)(3) corporation and is registered with the New York State Charities Bureau. It was honored to receive its second five-year Drug Free Communities Support Grant (DFC) by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) in 2013. Its goals are to reduce substance use among youth and to establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, private nonprofit agencies and federal, state and local governments to support the efforts of its community coalition to prevent and reduce substance use among youth. Working to reach Manhasset youth before they are in trouble, CASA connects parents, school, youth and the community as partners in this common goal. CASA engages its members to view substance use as a public health problem and distributes its efforts utilizing specific strategies that address why and where substance use is prevalent in the Manhasset community and how to change the environment whereby it exists.

For more information about Manhasset CASA and its mission to reduce youth substance abuse, go to www.manhassetcasa.org.