

# St. Mary Elementary in Lancaster, STREAM success

LANCASTER – St. Mary’s Elementary School began integrating the STREAM program into their curriculum during the 2015-16 school year.

“Through planning, organization and professional development for the teachers, we now are able to fully integrate STREAM in all classes every day,” said Becky Hoag, STREAM coordinator for St. Mary’s.

In the classrooms, teachers engage students in project-based learning experiences, which allow for cross-curricular integration of topics and themes to be learned. These experiences are designed around engaging topics and challenging questions that compel students to dig deep during the process of inquiry, and to think critically about issues and big ideas. In the fall, the middle school students participated in a project-based learning experience, which was led by Chelsea Trulin, the Spanish teacher. Through this experience, students in sixth grade research a famous person, seventh grade researched saints and students in the eighth grade researched historical figures from the Civil War era.

Their research and learning culminated with the students designing and making an Ofrenda out of a shoebox. The Ofrendas the students created honored the individuals they learned about.

This past year, St. Mary Elementary School was awarded funds from Upon This Rock, which was a result from a grant proposal written by the middle school science teachers, Sarah Chudyk and Hoag to upgrade the school’s science lab. Due to this upgrade, St. Mary Elementary School now offers the Regents Living Environment course to eighth-grade students. Additionally, middle school students are engaged in hands-on learning through participation in science lab activities daily. Lower grades visit the science lab monthly and teachers are able to use the resources the lab offers to enhance science lessons within their classrooms.

In addition to engaging

students, the school offers STREAM Academies to all students during the school day on Friday afternoons. During the fall of 2017, elementary students participated in Kitchen Chemistry, Primary Engineering Adventures Program, Lego U, Structures, Architecture using the Darwin Martin House, and Science



Scrimmage. STREAM Academy options for middle school students include Science Olympiad, Robotics, Newspaper Club, Arcade Academy, Creative Coding, Kitchen Chem, You’re the Balm and Forensic Science.

“We are blessed to have creative teachers that support our STREAM integration,” Hoag said. “Through their creativity, new academies have been developed and are presently in place. These academies include a Mock Stock Market, Creative Writing Club, and Sewing and Design.”

St. Mary Elementary School sent two robotics teams, led by technology teacher Jeremy Kroll and AIS teacher Heather Gasiecki, to the diocesan X-STREAM Games and Expo competition at St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute in Kenmore last December. Thirty-eight robotics teams competed at the event, as one St. Mary’s team finished in second place overall and another finished fifth place. Students also displayed their Arcade Academy games and You’re the Balm students showcased their businesses and sold out of their lip balm product.

Being a STREAM school provides St. Mary’s students with many new opportunities. Students have participated in Shea’s school outreach programs, trips to the Buffalo Science Museum, a monthlong Buffalo Zoo educational experience, Junior Achievement, UNYTS educational outreach programming and visits to the Tiff Nature Preserve, and a trip to the Theodore Roosevelt Museum,



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In Invention Convention Academy, Cameron Corcoran creates a device to help solve problems for someone who use crutches.

among others.

During Catholic Schools Week, King Arthur Flour came and presented a bread-making workshop to students in grades 4-7. The Learn, Bake, Share program teaches students the science of bread-making while teaching them the importance of helping those who are less fortunate. King Arthur Flour donated bread-making kits to all participants and students were given the task to go home and bake two loaves of bread – one to keep and one to share. St. Mary Elementary School proudly donated 80 loaves of bread to the Tri-Community Food Pantry in Depew.

Another aspect of St. Mary’s

STREAM initiative is to reach out to the community to inform students about the 21st century job force. During Catholic Schools Week, 12 parents and community members came for Career Day to speak about their careers to the students.

STREAM integration at St. Mary Elementary School has been a positive force of learning and creativity for both students and teachers. Students at St. Mary’s will continue to grow and develop the 21st-century skills of problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration through varied fun, hands-on, creative and relevant activities, and learning experiences.