

# Catch-Up with the Council

*A publication of the Chester County Advisory Council for Elementary Education*

May 2024 edition

## Celebrating our Catholic Schools Leadership 2023-2024

Our Principals combine to have 320 years of teaching experience with over 150 years in school leadership. All principals hold advanced degrees and certifications. Life-long learners, they attend conferences to learn new ideas to incorporate into their schools. They are national award winners, leading their schools to state & national accreditations and Archdiocesan recognitions.



All of our schools have been recognized by AOP as  
Schools of Distinguished Instruction

### *Fun Facts about our Principals:*

- ◆ Love the Philadelphia Phillies – win or lose!
- ◆ Love to travel. One of our principals has even visited Machu Pichu.
- ◆ Love to read, of course
- ◆ Hobbies include: baking, painting, hiking, and gardening
- ◆ One of our principals has been sky-diving!
- ◆ Every summer, one of our principals bikes 340 miles with her family from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C.



*The Council's mission is the promotion of Catholic Education in Chester County by recommending policies, procedures, and plans to foster a close collaboration between parishes and schools.*

## A Bucket of Summer by Pat McGuire

**Patricia McGuire** was the beloved art teacher at Saints Peter and Paul School in West Chester. Upon retiring, Pat embarked on another profession: published author. It was always Pat's goal to write children's books when she retired, and she recently published book number two.

*A Bucket of Summer*, written and illustrated by Pat McGuire, is a sweet tale of a boy named Max who tires of winter and anxiously looks forward to all the fun activities that summer offers. The beautiful and colorful watercolor illustrations include familiar nods to the southeastern Pennsylvania reader. Max, his interests and many adventures, are modeled after Pat's own grandson.

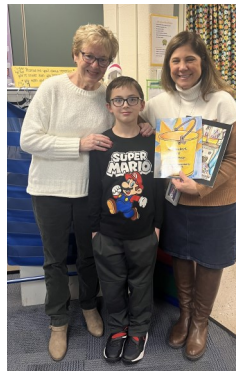
Coming from "a family of books", Pat was influenced by her mother's love of writing and was encouraged in her own talent for writing, especially poetry. Although Pat later became an accomplished illustrator, painter, and quilter, she considers writing the first artistic skill that she developed.

The writing process is as unique as each author, and Pat's process starts with an inspired idea. She follows this with an outline to determine how to present the idea for her young audience and then gets down to writing. Writing is first; the illustrations flow from the story, she says.

Pat is a graduate of St. Agnes grade school, Bishop Shanahan High School and West Chester University. She credits her Catholic education for teaching the tools and techniques needed for good writing. Remember diagramming sentences and brainstorming? Thank you to the IHM sisters for these skills!

Pat attributes her good health and longevity to those many years walking around a classroom. "Teaching is an *active* profession", she says. She based her students' art projects on various books throughout her teaching career. Her own favorite children's books are *The Velveteen Rabbit* and *Where the Wild Things Are* (which wouldn't be as good without its colorful illustrations, in Pat's opinion).

If you're looking to kick-off your summer beach reading with a young person in your life, we highly recommend *A Bucket of Summer* by Pat McGuire, available on Amazon.



## Council Member Spotlight

**Patricia Welsh** is a wife, mother of 5 amazing children and soon to be grandmother times two. Her association with Catholic school began in first grade and continued through college. Patty is a Cabrini graduate with both a BS in Elementary and Special education and MED in Elementary Ed, and a Principals Certification.

Patty began her teaching career working in a private school in Paoli for children with average to above average IQ and learning differences, and then went on to work with children with mixed severe and profound disabilities in a Kindergarten setting. Later, Patty taught at Holy Family School in Phoenixville. In 2011, Patty accepted the position of Principal at Our Lady of the Assumption Preschool and Kindergarten in Strafford. The school enrolled 85 students, ages 3 to 6 years. Under her 14 years of leadership, the school was renamed Assumption Academy, grew to 140 students, opened an outdoor classroom complete with chicken coop, raised gardens, and exploration centers, and implemented a school wide curriculum rooted in conscious discipline. Assumption Academy is now a NAEYC accredited, PA Keystone 4 STAR school that was named Best of the Main Line in 2024!

Patty represents Early Childhood Education on the Elementary School Administrators Association and the Chester County Advisory Council. She continues to help early childhood programs throughout Chester county and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia whenever she is able. Patty believes that young children bring adults back to the Church and is convinced that children learn to either love school or dread school in their preschool years. It is Patty's goal that every child loves going to school each day! The Chester County Advisory Council is privileged to have Patty as a member.



### Chairpersons

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Dr. Angela Rufo

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Sr. Carol Anne Couchara IHM

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### Ex officio

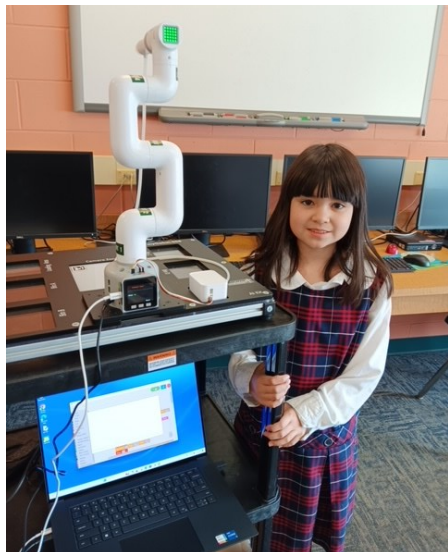
Bernadette Dougherty

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## Robotics Education in our Catholic Schools



This winter, The Foundation for Catholic Education, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Office of Catholic Education, launched a new Robotics initiative. This initiative is part of the Office of Catholic Education's efforts to promote STREAM education throughout the Archdiocesan Elementary Schools. The goal of the program is to introduce coding and robotics to our students, providing them with "real world" skills. Each school is provided with two Cobots, which are robotic arms that can perform a variety of functions such as moving a block from one area to another. Students are instructed on fundamental coding skills on the Blockly platform which will allow them to communicate a set of directions to the Cobot. It is so exciting when the students can then stand back and watch their Cobot move according to directions they programmed! We began with a small pilot group and have grown to 11 schools in just a few months. We are excited to continue this growth as we incorporate additional schools throughout the Archdio-

cese over the next couple of years. If you would like to learn more about this program for your school, please contact :

Anne Marie Fisher at [annemarie.fisher@foundationfce.org](mailto:annemarie.fisher@foundationfce.org).



**Matthew Downing** is a real-life example of a robotics engineer. Matthew is a graduate of Saints Peter and Paul School and Bishop Shanahan High School. He received bachelors and masters degrees in computer and electrical engineering from Northeastern University. Today, Matthew designs surgical robots for a medical device company in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

Matt credits both Saints Peter and Paul and Bishop Shanahan for giving him strong fundamentals in math and science, and for establishing the work ethic required to earn a challenging STEM education at the university level.

"I would have loved a robotics class in elementary school", says Matt. "Getting young kids excited about robots can lead to a great job later in life. Plus, they're fun!"

*Have ideas for our next newsletter?*

*Contact*

*Angela Rufo at:*

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### Join the EITC Program Today!

Learn how to redirect your state tax dollars to benefit students throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and receive a 90% Tax Credit!



**For more information, contact:**

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**484-477-6454**

*The Council works to support the quality, vibrancy and sustainability of our Catholic schools throughout Chester County.*