



The Messenger

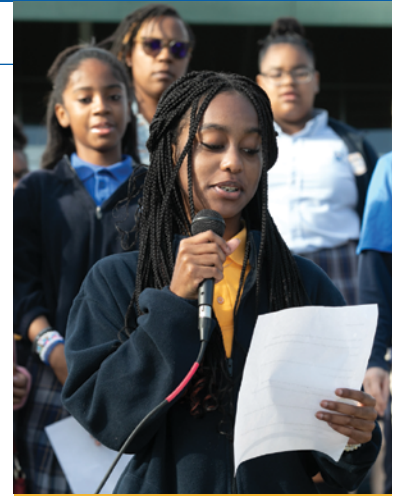
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Pictured Above: (left to right) Jay Demetree, Sister Cynthia, Betty Demetree, Sister Dianne & Lisa Demetree



Open House and Reception

On Tuesday, April 18, 2023, Guardian Catholic School hosted an Open House Showcase honoring Sister Dianne Rumschlag, SND on the occasion of her announced retirement as Head of School. Most Reverend Erik T. Pohlmeier, Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine, Guardian Board members, and major donors attended the celebration to honor Sister Dianne and recognize members of the new Guardian Giving Society.

The Giving Society is open to all friends and donors who support this extraordinary school. Please see the listing of our Society members beginning on page 6. If you are not a member yet, join us today by making your gift to Guardian and 'protect the potential' of countless young people who come ready to

learn and live the values and work ethic that are integral to the school.

At the Open House, guests were escorted around campus by our National Junior Honor Society students to enjoy a showcase of academic and extracurricular activities, including the inaugural performance by the new Guardian Drumline; math and reading experiences in the Learning Commons; the Early Learning Program's new family garden project; and PE exercises in the gymnasium.

The Open House will be an annual event for Giving Society members at the Stewards level and above to provide a firsthand look at the outstanding opportunities at Guardian for every student to excel.

Our mission is to help each student attain their potential through high quality Catholic education in a Christ-centered environment that inspires each of us to think, learn, achieve, pray and serve our communities.

Board member Gregory Redmon, Esq. with two Guardian students at the Open House Showcase



Sr Cynthia Shaffer SND, Sr Beverly DiStefano OP, Sr Dianne Rumschlag SND, Sr Elizabeth Fiorite OP, Sr Maureen Kelley OP, Sr Victoria Will SND, Sr Susan Reineck SND

Guardian student with Jennifer Glock and Michael Ward at the Open House Showcase





July 2023-2024

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Message from Sr. Dianne

Dear Friends, Donors, and Community Partners,

As I prepare to retire this month, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering support of Guardian Catholic School.

Over the past 27 years, I have seen firsthand the transformative impact that Guardian has had on the lives of our students and their families. Thanks to your support, we have been able to provide a safe, nurturing, and academically rigorous environment where our students can thrive and achieve their full potential. Our students are thriving academically, spiritually, and socially, and they are well-prepared to succeed in life.

Your gifts have enabled us to expand our programs, upgrade our facilities, and provide scholarships to students who might not otherwise have access to a high-quality faith-based education. Your generosity has created a ripple effect that has extended beyond the school walls and has positively impacted our students’ families, our staff, and the broader community.

As I reflect on my time at Guardian Catholic School, I am humbled and grateful for the privilege to have served as Head of School. Even as I retire, I know that Guardian will continue to thrive and serve the community thanks to your continued support, which will allow us to build on our successes and ensure that Guardian Catholic School remains a beacon of hope for future generations.

We have a wonderful team of administrators who will begin their new roles next month, and I invite you to read more about them on page 4. Under their leadership, our dedicated faculty and staff, along with the support of our donors and community partners, will continue to ensure that our students receive the best possible education.

Once again, thank you for your unwavering support, which remains a vital part of the success of our inner-city school and the students we serve. May God bless you abundantly.

Sincerely,

Sister Dianne Rumschlag, SND
Head of School



Dear Friends of Guardian,

As you have now probably heard, Sister Dianne Rumschlag, our beloved Head of School, is retiring at the end of the 2023 school year after 27 years of exceptional service and love for the children and families on the Northside of Jacksonville. Sister Dianne’s contributions to our community are immeasurable. She has educated and encouraged thousands of children, and her legacy can be seen in the success our students have achieved in high school, college, and beyond.

Despite the challenges faced by many of our students, including poverty, limited educational opportunities, poor health outcomes, and food insecurity, Guardian’s students have developed a strong sense of self-worth and a work ethic that sustains their dreams.

In recognition of Sister Dianne’s unwavering dedication and tireless work on behalf of our students, the Guardian Board is establishing the **Sister Dianne Rumschlag Fund for Financial Assistance**. This fund will help bridge the gap in state scholarship funding and provide tuition assistance, uniforms, technology, books, and supplies to students who may not otherwise have the means to attend Guardian Catholic School.

In today’s economy, your support is more important than ever before. The rising costs of essential resources such as educational materials, technology, and facility maintenance have put a considerable burden on our school’s budget. Meanwhile, the cost-of-living increases that we all have had to bear weigh even more heavily on those already steeped in the cycle of poverty and the circumstances that hold them there.

However, education remains the surest way to escape the burdens that poverty imposes. With the generous support of donors like you, we can meet these growing financial demands while upholding the quality and integrity of the education we provide to the deserving children who attend Guardian.

A gift of any size will help, and thanks to the Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation, all gifts will be matched up to \$200,000. We pray that you will consider a generous gift from the heart to help us match this amazing challenge gift to the Sister Dianne Rumschlag Fund for Financial Assistance at Guardian Catholic School.

With your help, we can continue to offer a transformative education to our young learners, equipping them with the tools they need to become positive, contributing citizens of tomorrow in Jacksonville.

Sincerely,

Jane R. Lanier, CFRE
Board Chair



Doubling Your Gift

The Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation offers a 1:1-dollar match of all donations up to \$200,000.



This means that if you make a gift of \$250, your gift will provide \$500 of support to Guardian. Or if you make a gift of \$50,000, you will be making a gift of \$100,000. Please help us ensure that no child will be denied the opportunity to receive a high-quality education, especially during this overwhelming time. If you wish to mail in a check donation, please use the envelope provided.

School Leadership Transition

We are very excited to announce the team of administrators who will begin their new roles on July 1. **Sr. Cynthia Shaffer, SND** has ministered as teacher and Principal at Guardian Catholic since 2008. In July she will leave her role as Principal and begin her new ministry as **Head of School**. Sister will focus her ministry on the advancement side of the school, working closely with the Director of Advancement to ensure the longterm sustainability of Guardian into the future. Sister's extensive knowledge and experience in the Guardian Catholic community position her well to take on this new role. We are deeply grateful for her continued leadership.

the Principal of Guardian Catholic through her lived experience and her academic achievements. She holds a master's degree in Educational Leadership and is certified at all levels. Please join us in welcoming her for the 2023-2024 school year.

Mrs. Jennifer Lord will serve as the school's **Assistant Principal**. Mrs. Lord has taught at Guardian Catholic for 11 years and holds a Master's degree in Educational Leadership.



Ms. Diane DeCarlo has been appointed **Director of Early Learning and Assistant Principal**. She has a degree in Elementary/Early Childhood Education and joined the Guardian staff in 2019. Her 16 years of experience as an Early

Learning Director and 9 years of teaching experience position her well for her new responsibilities.

Under the leadership of Sr. Cynthia, Mrs. Churchill and our two new APs, Guardian Catholic has been blessed with a strong team of experienced and dedicated educational leaders. Congratulations to each of them.



Jennifer Churchill will be the new **Principal of Guardian Catholic School**. Mrs. Churchill is a former teacher at Guardian Catholic and is excited to return in a leadership role. She knew Guardian before it merged into the amazing school it is today when she was a teacher and Assistant Principal (AP) of Holy Rosary Catholic School. She has been a Catholic school educator for her entire career, not only at Holy Rosary but also at Assumption Catholic School, with more than 18 years of experience as a teacher and assistant principal. She has gained the knowledge and expertise to take on this new challenge of being



Memories from the
**19TH Annual Ron Townsend
Golf Classic**
February 20, 2023 | Deerwood Country Club



Board Member Spotlight | Kristi Aiello



We are honored to feature Kristi Aiello, one of our exceptional Board members, whose remarkable career and passionate commitment to our cause have greatly benefited Guardian Catholic School. As Florida Blue's Senior Director of Business Development for the Northeast Florida

Region, Kristi is responsible for the growth and strategic planning of Florida Blue's business market across 18 counties. Her extensive experience in leading start-up ventures both domestically and overseas, as well as her financial background, have been an asset to our school.

As a member of the Board, Kristi has played a significant role in Guardian Catholic School's success and has helped to expand Florida Blue's charitable involvement at the school in new and exciting ways. As co-chair of Guardian's biggest ever fundraising event this past November, the Celebrating Carla Harris Book Launch, sponsored by Florida Blue, Kristi helped raise nearly \$1 Million for student scholarships.

Additionally, Kristi was instrumental in bringing the Jaguars' Literacy Locker Room initiative to Guardian this past October. At the event, representatives from Florida Blue, the Jaguars' Official Community Partner, teamed up with a group from the Jaguars to visit classrooms and speak to students on the importance of reading. Mascot Jaxson de Ville, The ROAR, and the Jaguars' 2022 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year nominee,

Tyler Shatley, distributed more than 500 books to students, providing a pathway for them to gain access to free books to take home and continue learning and investing in their futures.

Kristi's ability to make connections and engage with the community has also furthered our mission. Her work on the school-wide food distribution, in which Florida Blue participated, has helped to support families in need, and her leadership on various community boards, such as Catholic Charities, Dreams Come True, Seniors on a Mission and the SeaMark Ranch, exemplifies her commitment to making a positive impact in Jacksonville. Kristi is also very active in her parish, St. John Paul II Catholic Church, sitting on the Finance Committee. Kristi was recently elected to serve as Vice Chair of the Guardian Board for the 2023-2024 school year. We are grateful for Kristi's exceptional leadership, dedication, and advocacy, and we look forward to her continued contributions to Guardian Catholic School.

Alumni Spotlight | Amaria Simmons

Deeply rooted in Guardian Catholic's Guidelines for Success – S.O.A.R. – alumna Amaria Simmons has soared to success as one who is Self-motivated (and hard-working); Optimistic; Acts responsibly; and is Respectful of God, self and others. Amaria graduated from Guardian Catholic (Holy Rosary) in 2015, and from Episcopal High School of Jacksonville in 2019 as a Townsend Scholar. This Spring, Amaria graduated Magna Cum Laude from Spelman College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology Pre-Med.

Her extensive accolades include departmental honors in Psychology and school honors from the Ethel Waddell Githii Honors Program. She is a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta and Psi Chi Honor Societies. In addition to her academic achievements, Amaria balances her life by mentoring with Girls Inc. in Jacksonville, serving as a certified Crisis Text Line counselor, crocheting and baking delicious desserts. Aspiring to earn a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, Amaria will next attend Mercer University College of Health. She dreams of working to minimize and eradicate health disparities and adverse mental and physical health outcomes in minority communities.

Amaria attributes her success to the teachers and opportunities provided at Guardian Catholic, which "prepared me for the rigorous coursework I completed as a student at Episcopal and Spelman."



"I liked how involved the teachers were in ensuring that my classmates and I succeeded. I was well prepared for independent work and learned how to use my resources to succeed."



Our special thanks to those who have given generously.
Thank you for designating your giving to Guardian Catholic School.

Lifetime Giving Society

*Lifetime Giving Society giving levels represent cumulative gifts & pledges to Guardian as of 12/31/2022.

For more information about the Guardian Giving Society, visit www.GuardianCatholic.com/support/givingsociety.

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Pre-K Garden Pilot Program



This year, Guardian was one of seven early learning centers on Jacksonville’s Northside that partnered with the Florida Institute of Education at the University of North Florida on a new pilot program to increase literacy for Early Learning students through the creation and cultivation of a garden. The Family Garden & Engagement Program aims to accelerate children’s development of language comprehension skills, increase their science-related conceptual knowledge, and engage them in hands-on experiential learning coupled with increased opportunities for conversations. Guardian’s Early Learning teachers underwent a professional learning session for each planting cycle – Fall, Winter, and

“The students were so excited to harvest, wash, and enjoy their crops. They even mashed their own home-grown potatoes!”

Spring – to learn how to engage students with weekly indoor classroom-based and outdoor garden-based lessons to increase hands-on, interactive opportunities for learning. Innovative family engagement programming, including a face-to-face Family Gathering during each planting, encouraged parents to extend their children’s learning through conversations at home. At the gatherings, families were able to meet each other, share experiences, and practice asking open-ended questions

and describing things with their children. They were given take-home read-aloud and planting activities to practice these strategies at home. In addition, families received information on a weekly basis about what their children are doing and learning in the garden. Early Learning Director Amanda Rainey described how great it was to hear the students using vocabulary words related to gardening to describe their favorite part of the program – harvest time.

STARS Tutoring

Guardian Catholic School is proud to offer the STARS Tutoring program, a volunteer initiative that provides much-needed academic support to students in elementary and middle school. Every Monday afternoon at 3:00 pm during the school year, our Learning Commons is abuzz with activity as dedicated tutors help students with subjects like reading and math. Thanks to the tireless efforts of our community volunteers, students are able to receive personalized attention and guidance to help them excel academically. While in-person

tutoring had to be suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic, Guardian was able to restart the program during the 2023-2023 school year thanks to volunteer Margaret Moore, who helped to recruit new volunteer tutors and mentors, and Sister Susan Reineck, SND, who oversees the program and ensures that each student receives personalized attention to meet his or her learning needs.. We are grateful for the support of the STARS Tutoring program and the positive impact it has on our students’ education.

If you are interested in volunteering as a tutor, please contact Sister Susan at sreineck@sndusa.org.



Guardian students with volunteer STARS tutors: (left to right) Margaret Moore, Don Barhorst, and Lara Patangan



Guardian Catholic School

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