

# St. Coletta News

St. Coletta Day School of Milwaukee—A Nonprofit Program  
Educating Boys and Girls with Cognitive Disabilities Age 8 to 18

**SUMMER 2011**

## COLETTASCOPE 2011

**SATURDAY,  
OCTOBER 8  
6:00-9:00 P.M.**

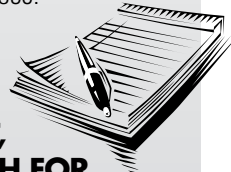
**Milwaukee Youth  
Arts Center  
325 West Walnut Street  
Downtown Milwaukee**

**W**e will once again hold the event at the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center.

Watch your mail for details.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the event, please call Bill Koehn at (414) 453-1850.

**PLEASE  
MAKE A  
NOTE OF IT,  
AND WATCH FOR  
YOUR INVITATION!**



**SAVE THE  
DATE FOR  
THIS YEAR'S  
AUCTION!**



## MISSION STATEMENT

**T**o provide an academic and social/functional curriculum to meet the needs of students with special needs that will prepare them to realize their full learning potential and become productive and contributing citizens as adults.

## THE BRIGHTEST SMILE

*By Patty Higgins, St. Sebastian Parishioner*

I see it every day, some times more than once a day and it always, always makes me smile. I have a job at St. Sebastian School that I have been told by many people they could never do. I am the playground supervisor for the lunch recesses. From eleven to one o'clock I tie shoes and stop tattlers, open doors for delivery people and for students to get a band-aid. I retrieve balls from the street and make sure the students are safe and following the rules. I especially try to help when the students from St. Coletta come out for recess. They come out with their moods and their untied shoes and their stories. They join the St. Sebastian students and get mixed in with the coats and hats, and that is what makes me smile.

It's the blending of the students when one of the supervisors says, "Go play," and they do, that makes me smile. The basketball game picks up another player. The girls walking and talking are able to "fool" another girl

with the same jokes she told yesterday. And the Frisbee flies a little farther.

The process has not always been easy but the results have been good for both schools. The Seb's kids know that we are all different and we all have our issues big and small. They know that being kind to another person means the basketball game might not

have even sides or the girls might have to slow their pace and getting the "little farther" for the Frisbee means getting it from the street.

For the St. Coletta students I see the small steps towards doing the things that make them

blend in and get mixed in with the other coats. I see the hugs given when the bell rings and the kids go their separate ways. And I see the smiles when I get told the final score or which joke was the funniest. The student's file back into the building and the day goes on. I pick up the dropped hat and smile because I know tomorrow there will be a kid without their hat chasing a Frisbee.



**WILLIAM A. KOEHN—Administrator/Teacher**  
**UMENIA WHITE—Teacher**  
**RACHEL LUSTIG—Paraprofessional**

**OFFICERS** President: Dan Sisel • Vice-President: Brian Remington • Secretary: Maggie Blaha  
Treasurer: Mike Burzynski

**MEMBERS** Melissa Opad • Toni Roschtscha • Jeffrey Ruidl • Charisse Seky  
Sandy Siira • Sandi Tunis

## THE ST. COLETTA "EXTENDED" FAMILY

*Submitted by Mr. Bill*

I have often used the term family to describe our St. Coletta community. Our students sometimes act like siblings. I'll let you interpret that any way you would like! Our parent group is becoming more and more involved with activities and events outside of school. One thing is certain—our family is growing.

I recently attended a wedding of the sibling of one of our alumni. The family remains close to the school even now. Like family, we have maintained a history with each other. Joy was actually the Maid of Honor at her sister's wedding. She appeared poised and proud as she walked down the aisle and was all smiles during the ceremony (the wedding took place at St. Sebastian Church).

She also delivered a heart-felt toast at the reception. There were tears of joy which turned into laughter of gratitude for all that had taken place on the special day. It was an event much like celebrations I have experienced with my own family.

It wasn't until the dancing had begun that the sibling of another alumni approached me. In our brief conversation, she made it very clear to me with her kind words. "You don't just teach the kids at St. Coletta, you help the families, too". It was one of those "Ah-ha" moments for me. It gave me a chance to reflect on the work that goes on at St. Coletta Day School. It is much more than the academics and the gains that our students make. It is about making friends and about really becoming family.

The three alumni who attended the wedding all attended St. Coletta at the same time. Coincidentally, they all left at the same time as well. Their families became close and remain close to this day. And here they were, standing before me, at a family celebration, dancing and having fun. And I could clearly see the genuine love and caring that they extended to everyone they meet . . . just like some families I know.

## UNITED WAY AND EMPLOYER GIVING CAMPAIGNS DONATION

As parents of four daughters, one with special needs, our family has worked very hard to give back to many organizations and clubs. We focus on time, talent, and treasure. As busy as we are, we all find time to volunteer our time and talent, especially at St. Coletta Day School.

Treasure, that is the hard one to do. Money is tight for everyone. The water heater, the transmission, the heating bill, the list goes on and on. Those expenses will always be there. Trying to find the funds for the donation amount in a lump sum always seems impossible. United Way and Employer Giving Campaigns are a much more convenient, and easy way, to give without feeling the sting of an annual donation. This year, as a family, we donated 1 % of our income from our Employer Giving Campaign and designated St. Coletta Day School as the recipient. Although 1 % seems small, it truly adds up

and makes a huge difference to this incredible school. This donation from our paycheck allows us to give in a way that we essentially do not miss and allows St. Coletta Day School to receive a much needed donation. Think about 1%, or more, and then think about St.

Coletta Day School. We can think of no other organization that will truly understand your sacrifice and use this gift to better the education and lives of these terrific students.

Please consider donating to St. Coletta Day School

through paycheck funding of the United Way or Employer Giving Campaigns. Simply call for St. Coletta Day School's code. There are not enough words to explain how this school has allowed our daughter to exceed educationally and bloom socially.

Sincerely,  
Joe and Katie Plachinski



My older sister Bethany is currently a student at St. Coletta. At 18 years old, Bethany is two years older than I am. Bethany is without question a phenomenal sister, and above all, a fantastic friend. She has attended every basketball game and track meet- although she often cheers for other team! - and she is always the first audience member to stand after I give a violin performance. Needless to say, she has always supported me.

When Bethany transitioned to St. Coletta in the spring of 2008, I was worried. Bethany's previous school had taken an emotional toll on every member of our family, especially Bethany; she retreated into herself and became introverted. When my parents told me that Bethany was going to attend St. Coletta, I didn't know what to expect.

St. Coletta has been nothing short of a miracle; with the teachers' help, Bethany has blossomed into a gregarious young adult.

Just three years ago it was difficult to persuade Bethany to talk- now it is difficult to convince her to stop! As her sister, I want Bethany to have as many opportunities, both social and academic, as I have, and St. Coletta has provided Bethany with a myriad of opportunities in both areas. The Bethany I know has returned, and she is as ebullient as ever.

Most importantly, St. Coletta has restored Bethany's confidence. St. Coletta has provided Bethany with wings and given her the courage to fly. For this, I will always thank you.

Leah Plachinski



We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals and companies for their financial and in-kind support:

# THANK YOU!

Abbott Laboratories	Kevin Edwards and Steven Singleman	Paul and Kathleen Hohl	Barb and Chuck Lund	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Pauly	Ann Terwilliger
Frank Allen Gallery	John Eisenhauer	Jo Ann Hughes	Manders Framing Service	Payne & Dolan, Inc.	Sandi and Ron Tunis
Alverno College	Elser Enterprises, Inc.	Joan Jacobson	Daniel McCarthy	Picture Perfect	United Way Donor Choice
John Ambrose	Frances Fabian	Bettye Johnson	Rita McCauley	Katie and Joe Plachinski	Margaret and Russell Vogt
Anonymous donors	Patrick Farrell	Dan Jones	Ellen McElwee	Marie and Charles Poehlmann	Helen Walther
ArtLine, Ltd.	Carole Fought	Diane Kachelmeier	Pat McMenamini	Preferred Electrical Contractors	Kevin Walzak
Carrie and Dave Ausloos	Carol and Joseph Faust	Dan Katt, J.F. Findorff & Son, Inc.	Ann and Larry Meehan	Matthew Radish	Kyle Weatherly, Solaris, Inc.
Dan Austin	Suzanne Fedie	Judi and Jim Kearney	Ruth Ann Messer	William Radler	We Energy Foundation
Mike and Ellen Bartel	Joyce Fox	Pat and Jack Kelly	Laurel Mikolajczyk	Stephen and Sam Ragatz	Marina and Dick Wellenstein
Bay View Garden And Yard Society	The Framing Gallery	Linda and Tom Kenney	Milwaukee Center for Independence	Jeffrey Remsik, Bottom Line Marketing & Public Relations	Peg Williams
Maggie and Tom Blaha	Mary Frieseke	Jack Klimowicz,PFA, Inc.	Michelle Millard, PieperPower	Jeannette Mintz	Women's Club of Wisconsin
Scott Bova	Felicia Frye	Knights of Columbus Councils:	Mortensen Co.	John A. and Evelyn Monahan Memorial Trust	A.D. Zavis
Box Tops for Education	Christine Geisler	Leo J. Brust	Milwaukee Moulding and Frame Corp.	John A. and Evelyn Monahan Memorial Trust	Marie and Geoffrey Zeidler
Bresler-Eitel	The Gilded Edge	Immaculate Conception	John A. and Evelyn Monahan Memorial Trust	Pat and Lee Schlitz	Mary Zimmerman
Anne Breitenbach	Frames & Gallery	Pope John XXIII	Evelyn Murphy	Pat and Lee Schlitz	
Elizabeth A. Brinn Foundation	Katharine Glaser	Pere Marquette	Leif Nesheim, Berghammer Corp.	Joan and James Schwai	<b>Guest Artists</b>
Bruce Bultman	Mary Gosa	Our Lady of Guadalupe	Nicholas Family Foundation	Elizabeth and Artie Soderfelt	Thom Gravelle
Therese and Mark Burazin	Mary Pat and James Grafwallner	St. Leonard	"PJ" and Sam Nishi	South Shore Gallery	Natalie Haefele
Spiro Burgner	Grava Gallery	Trinity	Northwestern Mutual Foundation	Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stein	Madeline Huston
John Burgan	Sarah Goeden	Dolores Knoernschild	Julie Novotny	St. Sebastian Parish	Bill Koehn
Komisar Brady & Co.	Sue and Ron Goeden	William and Sylvia Koehn	Janet Olson	John Stocking	Nina Koenig
Janet Carr	Thom Gravelle	Maria and Monte Koerner	Trudi Opad, Jemmco LLC	Jeff Strehlow, WFA Staffing Group	Rachel Lustig
The Center For Autism Treatment Inc.	Shirl Greeb	Herb Kohl Charities, Inc.	Robert Ornst Jr., Selzer and Ornst	Jeff Stuck, Stuck Woodworks, Inc.	Casey Madden
Christ Child Society	The Great Frame Up—Mequon	Kohl's Corporation	Sina Paradise	Target® Take Charge of Education	Todd Mrozinski
Combined Federal Campaign	The Great Frame Up—Whitefish Bay	Jeanne Koster		Tartan Designs Framing Service	Katy Richter
Gretta Comiskey	Brian and Maggie Haddock	Jean and Henry Kranendonk			Ginger Smith
Shelly Culea	Lynn and Don Hauser	Shila and Joe Kuenzli			Ginger Smith
Eileen Delaney	Dee Hayden	Landmarks Gallery, Inc.			James Steeno
Don Dreske, CliniCare Corp.	Brian Hoefs	Larkspur Galleries			Susan Tolonen
		Robin Leenhouts			Marcy Weinsheim
		Marcella Lemberger			

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

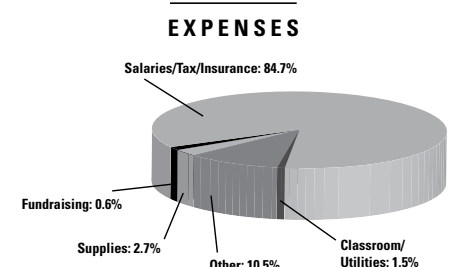
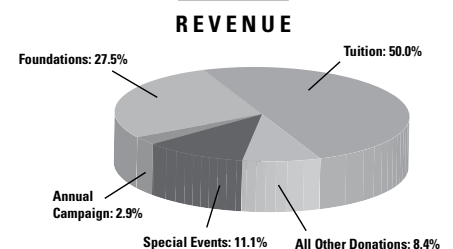
In late 2010 the board of directors approved a long range plan for St Coletta Day School. It was quickly discovered that this document will need to remain fluid to best serve the program. Over the past 8+ months there has been significant progress toward goals and adjustments made to the way goals are being approached. We have 24 goals we started with and have made measurable progress toward achieving 12 of them with one of those being achieved already. Each of the goals fall into one of the following categories: Finance, Governance, Community Engagement, Educational Programming, Fund Development & Marketing, Human Resources and Organizational Culture. A few examples of progress made include:

- **Develop the St. Coletta Brand**—An entirely new website is expected to be live by Q3 2011. It will focus on providing information that's valuable to both the families of currently enrolled students and families that are searching for a program like St Coletta Day School.
- **Ensure an appropriate relationship and communication vehicle between the parent group, the staff and the board**—A parent liaison has been formally appointed and in atten-

dance at both board of directors meetings and the parent group meetings. This has improved communication tremendously between the advisory body and the parents of students.

- **Meet standards for accreditation**—Documentation was submitted in Q3 2010 and the final site visit and program audit by the accreditation officials is scheduled for November 2011. All of the feedback we've received thus far leads us to believe we will be an accredited school by Christmas of 2011.

## WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM



## VISIT OUR WEB SITE!

[www.scdsmke.org](http://www.scdsmke.org)

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## LITTLE BOY LOST

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### **T**he best I advice I can give you is that they (children) are all different.

This is what my Dad—a father of seven—told us when we were expecting Matthew. Matt must have heard Grandpa because he made sure we knew he was going to be someone special even before he was born—only we didn't see it then. He continued to remind us how extraordinary he was over the next few years—only we didn't see it then. Of course we thought he was special, amazing, a genius, etc. . . he was our miracle and we loved him with all of our hearts—doesn't every parent think those things when they gaze upon their child's beautiful face—and imagine what their future will be like? But, something wasn't quite right. . .

Over the next few years Matt grew, and for the most part was a happy little guy. We encountered many challenges along the road with him and we found ways to teach him what he needed to know to survive. Many times we altered our lives to adapt to him, like arriving early to events so that he would be the first person in a room—Matt was terrified to walk into a room full of people. A quirk we thought, something he'll grow out of we thought. We played games like, "Don't Lose Daddy"—it was Matt's job to hold on tight to Daddy and make sure he didn't walk into the road or wander off in the store—Of course Daddy hammed it up so it was great fun, but for us it was an essential part of keeping Matt safe after one too many close calls.

We sent him to school when he was old enough and for the first few years things went fairly well. We chalked his behavior problems up to being immature. He excelled in Math, but struggled with reading to the point of tears. That's when I guess the light went on for us—we started to see it then. All these little things that we thought were, "just Matt"—could there be more to it? He continued to have behavior problems, sometimes quite severe. We stayed home more often, we made polite excuses to avoid family events, or just one of us would attend, because it was too hard on Matt, and so frustrating for us.

Then about a year a half ago things really started to change, he was sad, and withdrawn. He was having more and more problems at school. He couldn't understand why the other kids treated him like they did, and he

reacted violently to the teasing. The bully's targeted him like sharks circling a piece of fresh meat, and tormented him daily. He was having more and more difficulty socializing. He started to spend his recesses alone wandering the playground, talking only to his sister when their recesses overlapped for a few minutes. Going into 3rd grade he was reading almost at grade level, now going into 4th he had dropped to a 2nd grade level. At home, things weren't much better—the frustration and tears weren't only Matt's. Something had to change! We were losing out little boy.

You'd think the decision would have been an easy one but we agonized over it, and wondered what the future repercussions would be. Our decision was questioned by family, and close friends—"why did you put Matt there", "Matt doesn't need to be there, it's just a phase.", "Are you sure he's Autistic? He's seems normal to me."—But, they didn't see what was happening to Matt, and to our family. Mostly, because we had sheltered him from critical eyes and judgmental comments, perhaps if we had talked more openly about it. . . but a change had to be made and looking back at our journey, we have no regrets!

I had met Ms. Rachel when Matt was four or five years old. She instinctively connected with him and calmed him. He felt safe with her and she was the first person to get him to participate with other children in a music class. She often spoke of St. Coletta's when she and I talked—telling me about the wonderful kids she worked with and listening to my frustrations and concerns with great patience—this was our first connection and our new beginning.

We met Mr. Bill in the summer of 2010, he had calmness about him. I remember how he patiently stood and listened for what seemed like an eternity as Matt struggle to get his thoughts together and explain a new video game he was playing. As amazing as that was, even more so was the fact that Matt was talking to a stranger, and not hiding behind his Dad—it was as if Matt knew this man with the gentle eyes and the kind smile wasn't going to tease or make him feel bad. It was a brief, unplanned visit, but as we were leaving Matt told us that he "wanted to go to that school—I feel good there!" he said.

It was about a month later when we met

Ms. Maureen. Her passion and dedication to the kids was more than apparent. I remember how excited she was when she saw how gifted Matt was in Math. It was like she could see all the possibilities and opportunities for him—the ones we had lost site of over the past 18 months—and she gave us renewed hope.

We have been a St Coletta's family for a year now, and our family has been changed forever. Our daughter doesn't feel that she has to be her brother's protector any more, and is moving on to being a teenager with great style and a flair that's all her own. Jim and I are smiling more and can see a brighter future for both of our children. But, more importantly Matt is a totally different boy. It hasn't been the easiest journey but, in the past year Matt has learned patience not only with himself but with others as well. He has learned coping skills and how to calm himself. He has made many new friends and had his first sleep-over at a friend's house. He made his acting debut this past Christmas in "Happy Birthday Baby Jesus". He has made great strides in reading and is now reading slightly above grade level. And, although he still has a ways to go—his self confidence is stronger than ever. I see a familiar gentleness in him when he talks about his classmate Maya, and we shared in his excitement for her when she said "Girl" for the first time. He talks about his feelings and we hear "I don't understand why. . . can you explain it to me?" more often. He's learned that Autism isn't an excuse! He can do anything! Things will sometimes be more difficult for him, but he knows that his teachers at St Coletta's won't let him slide through life on excuses because they know he is capable of so much, and want him to succeed. In one year the change had been dramatic and we know that there will continue to be ups and downs in life—that's part of growing up.

We will be forever indebted to St. Coletta—the staff, the Board, and all the families of these wonderful children. I tell my kids that everyone is here on this earth for a reason and can teach us something. It may be to remind us to stop and share in the simple joy that a child finds in brightly colored balloon, or to enjoy that hug and cherish those little arms wrapped so tightly around your neck just a little bit longer. For me—I will never again take my son's smile for granted.

## THE SPECIAL MOTHER

by Erma Bombeck

Most women become mothers by accident, some by choice, a few by social pressure and a couple by habit. This year nearly 100,000 women will become mothers of children with special needs.

Did you ever wonder how these mothers are chosen?

Somehow I visualize God hovering over Earth selecting his instruments for propagation with great care and deliberation. As he observes, he instructs his angels to take notes in a giant ledger.

"Armstrong, Beth, son. Patron Saint, Matthew."

"Forrest, Marjorie, daughter. Patron Saint, Celia."

"Rutledge, Carrie, twins. Patron Saint . . . give her Gerard. He's used to profanity."

Finally he passes a name to an angel and smiles. "Give her a child with special needs."

The angel is curious. "Why this one, God? She's so happy."

"Exactly," smiles God. "Could I give a child with special needs to a mother who knows no laughter? That would be cruel."

"But does she have the patience?" asks the angel.

"I don't want her to have too much patience, or she'll drown in a sea of self-pity and despair. Once the shock and resentment wear off she'll handle it." "I watched her today. She has that sense of self and indepen-

dence so rare and so necessary in a mother. You see, the child I'm going to give her has a world of it's own. She has to make it live in her world, and that's not going to be easy."

"But Lord, I don't think she even believes in you."

God smiles. "No matter, I can fix that. This one is perfect. She has just enough selfishness."

The angel gasps, "Selfishness? Is that a virtue?"

God nods. "If she can't separate herself from the child occasionally, she will never survive. Yes, here is a woman whom I will bless with a child less than perfect. She doesn't know it yet, but she is to be envied. She will never take for granted a spoken word. She will never consider a step ordinary. When her child says momma for the first time, she will be witness to a miracle and know it. I will permit her to see clearly the things I see—ignorance, cruelty, prejudice—and allow her to rise above them. She will never be alone. I will be at her side every minute of every day of her life because she is doing my work as surely as she is here by my side."

"And what about her Patron Saint?" asks the angel, his pen poised in the air. God smiles.

"A mirror will suffice."

## ST. COLETTA DAY SCHOOL OF MILWAUKEE AWARDED OVER \$30,000 IN GRANTS

St. Coletta Day School (SCDS) has recently been awarded two grants to help support the organization's operating expenses. The first grant of \$1,000 was awarded by the Woman's Club of Wisconsin. SCDS was eligible for this grant through the sponsorship of Shemagne O'Keefe, Woman's Club member. The organization accepted the award on April 7, 2011 at the annual Woman's Club of Wisconsin Foundation luncheon.

St. Coletta Day School was also selected to be the Real Estate Alliance for Charity's (REACH) 2011 Charitable Giving Program Recipient. As the selected organization, SCDS will receive \$10,000 annually for three years, beginning in 2011. REACH raises funds for their Charitable Giving program through interactive and engaging events in the Commercial Real Estate community.

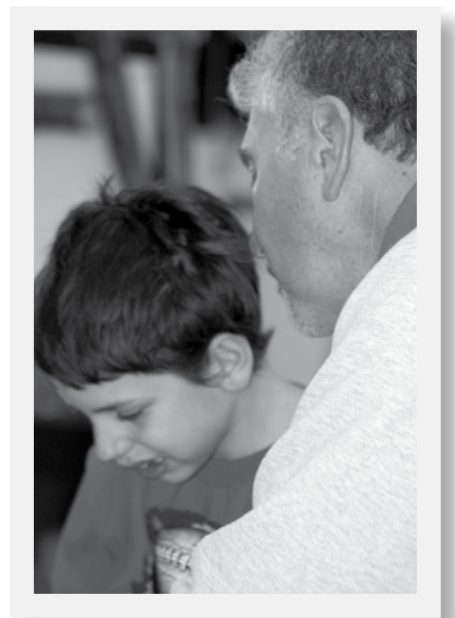
For more information on these grants or other funding opportunities, please contact Bill Koehn at (414) 453-1850.

## DONATE BY EATING!

Did you know that St. Coletta Day School participates in the Box Tops for Education program? You can help the school to earn money and "points." All you need to do is buy products that display the Box Tops for Education logo like the one printed here. Send those Box Tops to school and we will take care of the rest. It's that simple!



This school year alone, we raised over \$300! Not bad for our small school. Imagine what we could raise with your help. So, ask your friends and family to start saving Box Tops for St. Coletta Day School. Now . . . go check your kitchen shelves and don't forget the pantry, too.



# St. Coletta News



**ST. COLETTA DAY SCHOOL  
OF MILWAUKEE**

1740 North 55th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53208

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**Every day**, students at St. Coletta Day School of Milwaukee discover their unique abilities by being challenged to achieve their best in a safe environment of respect.

► **Please help support  
St. Coletta Day School.**

## CALLING ALL iPADS

I know that you've been waiting for the newest generation of Apple iPads to arrive. After you purchase one, what will you do with your old iPad? We hope that you would donate it to St. Coletta! Since we don't buy textbooks like other conventional schools, we are always challenged to find new and exciting ways to help our students learn. This amazing tool will assist us in doing just that. The opportunities with an iPad will enhance our students' skills and give many of them the necessary tool they need for effective communication. Let us know if you have an iPad to donate.



### CLASS-A MOTTO

Today is a new day.

Today *I will try* to get along with everyone.

Today *I will try* to follow the rules.

Today *I will try* to do my best.

Today *I will try* to make better choices.

**T**he St. Coletta Day School of Milwaukee Inc. admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.



## A New Standard of Education

*For Students with  
Cognitive Disabilities*

- Ages 8 to 18
- Full Academic, Social/  
Functional Program

### FALL 2011 ENROLLMENT

We are currently accepting applications for fall enrollment. Please have anyone you know who may be interested in learning more about the program contact administrator/teacher Bill Koehn at (414) 453-1850.