



## SMSA Celebrates 115 Years of Education

Hazen Norton

As the school year begins, a new leaf is turned. For students, this means a fresh start academically, spiritually, and socially; but for the school, this new leaf marks 115 years on the Ledge. Over the course of its time on the Ledge, the school has faced various changes. What initially began as an all-girls Catholic boarding school is now a thriving Catholic community over a century later. To celebrate this progress, the school's administration held a birthday cake supply sale, giving back to the community that has fostered its success.

Throughout the second week of September, all the

different grades on the Ledge were asked to donate various cake and party supplies. The school community joined together to donate products for those who cannot afford to give their children supplies for a birthday celebration. Mrs. Kristin Zitlow led this initiative. "These cake boxes are more than treats," she shared. "They're a chance to forge memories and strengthen bonds."



Thanks to the efforts of dozens of students and families, the SMSA



Ledge community was able to donate supplies for roughly 100 cakes, an astounding display of the school's dedication to the community.

As we students settle into the new school year, the school also enters into a new chapter. A thriving community on the Ledge is only possible with the help of Fond du Lac's local community,

so it's important to recognize and give back to those who support the success of the school's mission. Service, whether it's a school-wide supply drive or an individual

effort, is essential for the prosperity of the school's future on the Ledge. Furthermore, it strengthens the sense of community and Ledge-pride that remains 115 years after the school's founding by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes whose mission to serve still lives on.

## Summer Language Trip Recap

Emmitt Huhn, Savannah Meyer, and Cece Wagner

In June 2024, several students from the German classes flew to Munich, while the Spanish classes flew to Costa Rica. The trips were funded by generous donors and the fundraising efforts of the students.

Nine students and two chaperones (Stephanie Herbst and Jeffery Biessmann) traveled to Munich, Germany, on June 11th. They visited the city of Munich guided by Carola Rüegge (Exploria tour guide) and spent a day in Salzburg, Austria, exploring the Salt Caves. The students got to experience German culture first-hand by exploring the famous Viktualienmarkt, Neuschwanstein Castle, Munich Town Hall, and much more!



German students at Munich's Neues Rathaus

Frau's favorite part of the trip was getting to see her students interacting with the locals and speaking the Germanic language.

Dr. Jeffery Biessman said, "I had a good time. I enjoyed it." Overall, the trip to Germany was very successful and appreciated by all who attended.

Continued on Page Two

## Meet Our Exchange Students

Carson Kaufman and Emmitt Huhn

The community of SMSA has historically been welcoming of foreign exchange students. This year we accepted our newest students from Europe: Martin Ihnat and Daniel Perekz. Martin lived in Slovakia, a beautiful small nation in the heart of Europe, before deciding to take a year studying in the states. He enjoyed sport shooting and going out with friends to see different castles, places, or countries. Coming to Springs was definitely something Martin was not expecting and was a pleasant surprise to him. When he first found out that he would be living in Wisconsin for the next year, he was "incredibly happy," looking forward to the experience. On his

first day, he made friends with his peers and took in all that Springs had to offer. He "got to know a lot of teachers and tried to love [his] classes," which he has grown to enjoy. Cross country and sporting events with his peers are his favorite new activities outside of school.



Exchange students Daniel Perekz and Martin Ihnat

Continued on Page Four



# Welcome Señor Matthias!

Peyton Grafton

Señor Mattias has joined St. Mary's Springs Academy this year as the new Spanish teacher. This is his 18th year teaching Spanish, and he decided to come to SMSA because he had previously taught at two Catholic grade schools and enjoyed it. Teaching high school Spanish interested Sr. Mattias because he wanted to help people and make a positive impact on his students'

lives, just as his Spanish teachers growing up did with him. He also likes Spanish because he enjoys traveling and learning about different cultures.

Sr. Mattias graduated from Grafton High School in 2003 and attended college at Concordia University-Wisconsin. He is the oldest of four children and enjoys



watching sports and loves listening to rock and Irish music.

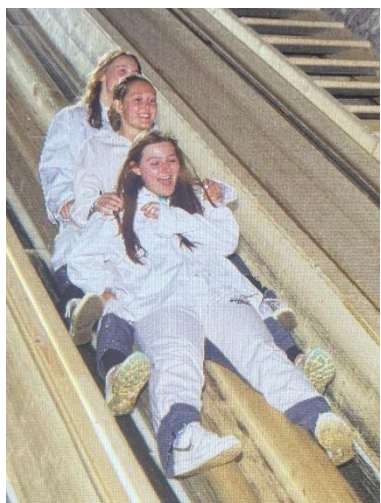
In his free time, he has a double-life as a Taekwondo instructor. Not only does he own his own Taekwondo school in Grafton, but he has also been training for 30 years and is a 7th Degree Black Belt!

Thus far, Sr. Mattias has loved his experience at SMSA and says

that all the people, including staff, students, parents, and administration, have been very welcoming. He attributes this great school culture to the wonderful community that we have and the support we offer each other. Sr. Mattias hopes to teach at SMSA for many years to come, so let's continue to be welcoming and supportive to this amazing teacher.

## Summer Language Trips (Continued from Page One)

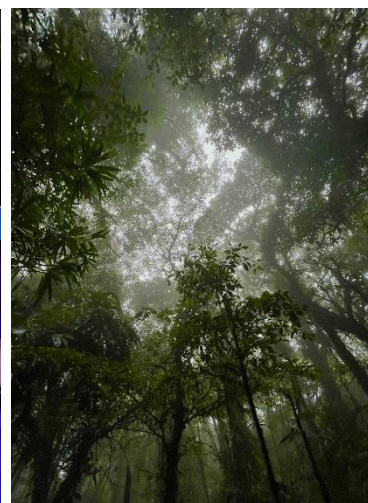
On June 10th, a total of 21 students and 7 chaperones traveled to Central America. After a short layover in Atlanta, the group made it to the tropical country of Costa Rica. Spending time in a variety of weather and landscapes, they were able to tour the entire country in just a week. Their tour took them



German Students explore salt caves in Austria



Students on the Costa Rica Trip



View from the rainforest floor in Costa Rica

through the rainforest, to a volcano, and of course, the beautiful beaches. Favorite activities of the group included ziplining, seeing the wildlife, hiking through the woods, and creating unsuspected bonds with classmates.

## Fall Sports Update

Teresa Brunette

### Volleyball

With 20 freshmen joining the team this year, the volleyball team is going strong. Being undefeated in conference play thus far and receiving second in two tournaments, the volleyball team is becoming an expert team. There are four seniors who are also the captains, Braelyn Lewis, Lexi Coon, Aubrey Hafermann, and Emily Taylor. They earn this title by gaining the respect of their teammates and coaches through their hard work and good sportsmanship. One goal the team has this year is "to make it farther than we did last year and grow as

people and players." Some fun memories so far this year include team dinners and early morning bus rides.



Volleyball Captains (L-R) Lexi Coon, Emily Taylor, Braelyn Lewis, Aubrey Hafermann

### Tennis

The tennis season is off to a strong start this year. Starting



Tennis Seniors Anna Willis and Olivia Kramer

practice mid-August, the team is undefeated in its season. All 20 players put in hard work every practice, building a great team. They are led by head coach Mark "Elder" Redig (Mr. Redig's

father), and assistant coach Mr. Rathke. The team has grown this year, adding five new members, three of whom are freshmen. The team has five seniors: Caroline Adams, Olivia Kremer, Lucile Rathke, Alexandra Welsch, and Anna Willis. Captains Olivia Kremer and Alexandra Welsch help the team toward their goals of improving their abilities and creating a skilled team. The team hopes to make it far in playoffs, extending their season into late October. A fun memory is going to Gilles for some after-practice team bonding.



## High School Clubs List 24 – 25

### Campus Ministry - Mrs. S. Anderson

Campus Ministry on the Ledge animates the SMSA mission through various non-academic programs and initiatives that express its Catholic culture, values, and identity. Campus Ministry members are Catholic leaders who share their love of God and their faith, and actively live out the Gospel teachings at SMSA and in their community.

### Chapter Chats - Mrs. Besson

Chapter Chats is a book club that promotes a healthy habit of reading and broadening one's horizon through books. Participants do not read a common book; rather, they discuss whatever books they are reading at the time or have read since the last meeting.

### Environmental Club - Mr. Zimmer

The Environmental Club involves students identifying environmental issues, choosing service projects, and advocating for a stewardship model of environmental care.

### Ledger Leaders Club (LLC) - Mrs. McCarthy and Mrs. Cauley

The LLC looks for ways to make the school more positive and create a kind environment for all students on campus.

### Investment Club - Ms. Haugen

Investment Club explores investment strategies, including selecting types of securities. Students compete in the Stock Market Game. Club members meet formally once a month to check on the progress of their portfolios and discuss opportunities to educate others on how to prepare for their futures and help those in need.

### Key Club – Ms. Tesky

Key Club promotes student service within the community. \*This club is currently rebooting, so if you're interested, look for more information in the upcoming weeks.

### Math Club - Mrs. C. Anderson

Math Club is for any high school students who enjoy math. We participate in one math meet each month after school. At the math meets, students take five short math tests and receive points for correct answers. Medals are given to high-scoring individual students as well as the overall team (school) with the highest score.

### Music Liturgy - Ms. Pannier

Music Liturgy is open to anyone in grades 9-12. You do not have to be a member of the concert choir class to be a part of the music liturgy ensemble. We prepare the music for the All System Masses and rehearse one time before each All System Mass. Music Liturgy also includes guitar players, drummers, or concert band instruments.

### Newspaper - Mrs. Besson and Mrs. Sales

The Ledger Pick-Axe is a student-led, written, and designed newspaper. Students meet twice monthly to discuss ideas, write and revise articles, design the layout, and distribute the final issue. Anyone interested in being a part of the phenomenal team can simply join a meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month or see Mrs. Besson or Mrs. Sales.

### Roleplay Games (RPG) Club - Mr. Allen

Role Playing Game Club is a place where students, grades 9-12, can test their minds and vanquish dragons, orcs, and other villainous beings while creating friendships and problem-solving along the way.

### Ski/Snowboard Club - Mr. Knepfel and Ms. Pannier

Based on student interest. Inquire with Mr. Knepfel or Ms. Pannier.

### Spanish Club – Señora Theel

Spanish Club is an opportunity for students to expand their knowledge of the Spanish language and culture. You do not need to be enrolled in Spanish classes to join. We organize meetings and events, where students can participate in fun activities from many Spanish-speaking countries.

## What is Environmental Club?

Sophie Norton

Our school offers many cool and interesting clubs, but one that deserves to be highlighted is Environmental Club, which is led by Liv Kristmann. By talking with Liv, I learned about why she started the club and the interesting projects the club members are working on to better the environment.



Liv initiated Environmental Club “to connect with other people who are passionate about the environment, and to start projects that impact the school’s environmental outlook. It’s important to have an Environmental Club to address climate change, as environmental conservation is very prevalent in today’s world.”

During club meetings that are held every Thursday, Liv, “informs the members of recent updates, and crowdsources ideas, as well as getting approval for projects.” Some of the interesting projects include, “a tin can collection to help incentivize recycling, and a secondhand clothing drive to give clothes another chance at life.” Needless to say, Liv, and the members of Environmental Club are working hard to bring awareness to the climate crisis. Anyone interested in joining Environmental Club is welcome to attend meetings every Thursday during lunch in Mr. Zimmer’s room. It’s a fun way to converse and learn more about ways to better impact the environment.



*Club Members worked together to pull tires out of a ravine*

# Meet Father Durand

Annabelle Seel

St. Mary's Springs Academy welcomes our new chaplain, Father Kevin Durand, to Fond du Lac! Father Durand was ordained a priest in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee this past May and began his assignment at Holy Family Catholic Church in June. Celebrating Masses, hearing confessions, giving classroom visits, getting to know students during campus ministry time, and joining elementary school students at recess are just a few of the ways he has been involved in campus life over the past few weeks.

Hailing from Watertown, Wisconsin, some of Father Durand's hobbies include water skiing, playing sports, and being a geography geek. Father bragged that he could name every single country from memory!

According to Father Durand, his discernment to the

priesthood began in college. "When I was a senior in college, I went and prayed in front of the Blessed Sacrament in Adoration, and that was the first time I felt like I needed to take [my vocation] seriously. I didn't want to be a priest, so I ignored it, and I continued on, but I realized I was getting anxious," he revealed. He

recalls wanting to get married and have a career after college but feeling unfulfilled. "Eventually I just started to pray after college. That helped me hear God's voice again and I was able to trust that He was able to make me happy through being a priest. I was thinking a lot about what I was going to have to give up rather

than what He was going to give me, which was way more."

Father Durand also shared the ways in which his relationship with God has changed over the years. "When I would talk to God,

it was very formal growing up.

Everything was a written prayer. In seminary, I found God in the silence much more often. I could rest with Him and not have to say anything. I pray

with the Scriptures and hear Him speaking beautifully. I can see God working in the midst of more things now. Things are less bracketed. I'm trying to let Him into more of the totality of my life and not just the good stuff."

Though he has only been here a few weeks, Father Durand shared that he feels God in our SMSA community in a multitude

of ways. "This is a total bonus for me. I see God working here in the spirit of this place, the community, and the goodness of people. [The high schoolers] are really excited to learn more about God, to know that He is real, and know that He loves them, and to try to do their best to be with Him in the midst of everything." As far as his advice to these energetic young high schoolers in their faith? "Stick with it. God is real and He loves you. There is a battle for your soul, because that's how much you matter. Be not afraid to be with the Lord and be resilient."

We are thankful to have Father Durand join us here at Springs and guide us through the school year. Stop by and see Father Durand in campus ministry or after Friday morning Mass!



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## Welcome Exchange Students! (Continued from Page One)

Daniel's home country, Hungary, is close to Slovakia. Daniel is a junior this year and is a big fan of the Steffes family who was "generous enough to host." He was always interested in spending a year overseas, but his parents were not on board

initially. After some convincing, he was placed here.

The connectedness of the community made it "easier to make friends for sure." These friends have really made an impact on the start of his year abroad. The energy and enthusiasm of the student sections are "such a vibe"

and have been the highlight for him so far.

Every student goes through struggles, though. He still misses the "homemade goulash and stuffed cabbage" he enjoyed in Hungary, but Daniel is no cook so those might have to wait.



*Martin and Daniel enjoying the student section at*

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## 2024- 2025 Ledger Pick-Axe Newspaper Staff

Faculty Moderators: Mrs. Sales and Mrs. Besson

Teresa Brunette  
Peyton Grafton  
Emmitt Huhn  
Carson Kaufman

Braelyn Lewis  
Sophia Loehr  
Savannah Meyer  
Hazen Norton

Sophie Norton  
Annabelle Seel  
Cecilia Wagner

## Interested in joining Newspaper Club?

Google Classroom Code: **hnkryqn**