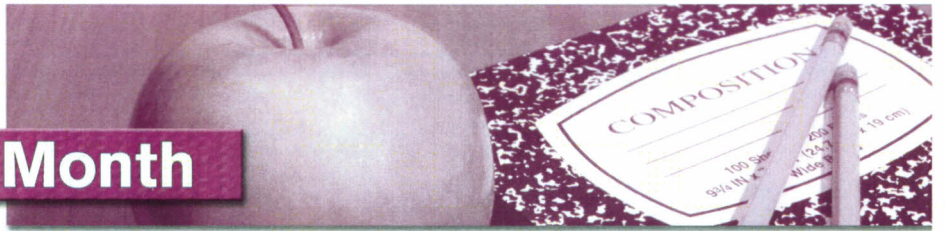


## School of the Month



### St. George School, Hermann, Missouri

RUTH A. MATHENY

**C**onvinced that technology in the classroom is not a luxury but an integral part of learning, St. George School is a beacon of Catholic education in the rolling hills of the Missouri “wine country.”

Located in Hermann, MO, on the south bank of the Missouri River, St. George School first opened its doors in 1879. Until 1993, it was staffed by members of religious communities, at which time lay people took over the administration. The present school, which now serves three parishes, consists of three buildings and includes grades preK through eight.

As graduates continue their education in the local high school, the sound education received at St. George has evidenced itself in producing valedictorians, salutatorians, and other top academic performers.

Julie Clingman, principal for the past 14 years, has been a key mover in St. George’s onward march. She sees Catholic education as a matter of nutrition: spiritual, emotional, and academic.

“Our strong faith community provides for our spiritual nutrition; our strong parental involvement accommodates our emotional nutrition; and my role as principal is to nurture the academic nutrition,” she explains.

Essentially a blue collar region, the area had been hard hit in the economic downturn. Yet Pastor Bill Debo and Principal Clingman are justly proud of the community support of fundraisers vital to the school’s progress.

Fundraisers are varied and well-received. The annual Swing Dance dinner and auction held in the summer draws both residents and tourists, while the annual White Tail dinner and auction each February can raise \$40,000.

Notes Father Bill, “These people work hard in a farm environment heavily affected by the economy, but their faith and support of their God and their church is deeply seeded in their culture.”

Principal Clingman credits Kim Hoemann, who four years ago joined the St. George staff as teacher of fifth- through eighth-grade science classes and seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics, as “the driving force” in implementing more technology into the school’s everyday curriculum.



Such thinking has resulted in the implementation of the *Reading Counts* Program, administrative software, an online grade book, and computer-generated report cards. And in the last school year, the *SkillsTutor* tutorial system became a significant tool for the K-8 enrollment. Notes the principal, “Students are eager to work on basic skills using the lesson, quiz, and test items; and the teachers and I have immediate access to what work has transpired and what gains have been achieved.”

Teachers are better able to focus on strengths and weaknesses individually based on the immediate download of student activities. And because 80 percent of school families are connected to the internet, where they can access *SkillsTutor*, some materials can be assigned as homework, enhancing it as a valuable tool for both teachers and students.

Referring to the management system incorporated into *SkillsTutor*, Kim Hoemann notes, “With this information I can make informed, data-driven decisions regarding curriculum and instruction in my classroom.”

To grade six teacher Carol Hellebusch, “*SkillsTutor* enables students to enhance reading and grammar skills while working at their own pace.”

Through e-mints grants to the local public-school district, St. George has been able to install new desktops in the computer lab and classrooms and to purchase laptops for teachers and students. Those grants have made it possible for the Home & School Association to provide funds for the faculty to have inservice opportunities that enable them to utilize fully their laptops and classroom equipment in integrating technology throughout the curriculum. And thanks to the Missouri-based Pendergast-Weyer Foundation, which gives financial assistance for programs designed to implement classroom technology, St. George was able to purchase its first bank of laptops and to start building a supply of robotic equipment.

While remaining true to its rich German cultural heritage, St. George today is a school where technology has, in the words of Principal Clingman, “made my teachers leave their comfort zone and look for ways to reach their students on the new educational playing field.” ▲