



← Mrs. Jo Culnane, set to retire at the end of this school year, is pictured with Blessed Trinity's Class of 2013.

## CELEBRATE THE CAREER OF MRS. JO CULNANE

*Calling all alumni, supporters, parents, friends & family*

Countless students, families and colleagues have been touched by the life and work of Mrs. Jo Culnane throughout her 44 years of dedicated work in Richfield Catholic Schools. We are grateful for all she has selflessly given to those she inspired along the way.

Sadly, Mrs. Culnane has announced her retirement from teaching at the end of this school year.

You can help celebrate her career by joining her on Sunday, May 19th, when she directs her last school performance. A special showing of *Pied Piper: The Musical* will be performed by Blessed Trinity's Class of 2013 at the Academy of Holy Angels Theater. This encore performance is for those who wish to commemorate Mrs. Culnane's love for theater. After the play, an Open House will be hosted at neighboring St. Peter's Church from 2:00-5:00pm. Plan to wish Mrs. Culnane well as she begins a brand new chapter of her remarkable life.

In the meantime, we have a special request. Please visit [www.btcsmn.org](http://www.btcsmn.org) to upload photos or share memories about Mrs. Culnane. Or mail photos to either school office. A memory book will be given to Mrs. Culnane on May 19th and we'd love your contribution in it!

## SUNDAY, MAY 19TH

Mrs. Jo Culnane Directs  
*Pied Piper: The Musical*  
1:00pm

Academy of Holy Angels' Theater  
6600 Nicollet Ave S, Richfield

Mrs. Jo Culnane's Open House  
2:00-5:00pm  
St. Peter's Church  
6730 Nicollet Ave S, Richfield

Visit [WWW.BTCSMN.ORG](http://WWW.BTCSMN.ORG) & Click:  
"Celebrate Mrs. JO Culnane!"



*Please join us to thank and honor a colleague, leader, educator, friend, a visionary, a*

## IN HER OWN WORDS

From Mrs. Jo Culnane



Mrs. Culnane, 1974

### Why did you decide to be a teacher?

My mother and my father met as teachers in Foley, Minnesota. My mother's nine sisters and one brother were teachers. I always had plays in our basement from the time I was about eleven years old. I was the director and I loved being in charge and having the plays was such a treat for the parents and the kids. I felt a certain "magic" when my dreams came through in our basement.

### What do you like best about teaching?

Seeing the eagerness of the students transformed into knowledge. It almost seems like a miracle to me. I love the look on their faces when they realize what the lesson will mean to them in the future.



### Why do you think Catholic education is an important and essential option for families today?

All my sisters and I went to Academy of Holy Angels. All my daughters went to Holy Angels and my son went to St. Thomas Academy. All of them were eminently successful in college and graduate school; but, most importantly, they learned the value of love, helpfulness, hard work, and dedication of one's talents to the betterment of the world.

### Can you choose one play that you directed that you enjoyed most?

I can't really select one play. I loved them all. For many years I would just write the plays. Then I moved on to finding one I liked. I recall one where we took the record and used the music to write the play. I enjoyed all of them. Perhaps the look on the parents' and families' faces are what inspire me to find plays appropriate to the talents of the students in the class.

### What aspect of the way you teach and connect with your students would you best like to be remembered?

The way I teach is to expect order since God created order out of chaos. Next, I impress on all students that no one is a **PRIVILEGED CHARACTER**. Everyone is beautiful in his/her own way so they are not permitted to break the order which we need to learn.

*(continued on page 4)*

## St. Peter's School Eighth Grade Class of 1959



mentor, a TEACHER. Mrs. Jo Culnane is retiring after forty-four years of selfless service to our students

## BLESSED TRINITY BELIEVERS

*Interviews featuring Sara Warner & Kevin Curry along with a special testimonial from Lesley Blanco*

Blessed Trinity enjoys solid support from alumni as well as many stakeholders who hail from all three Richfield parishes plus a variety of other faith communities. Many support Blessed Trinity because of our commitment to being clearly Catholic, intentionally inclusive and academically excellent. Sometimes it is one of those tenets that holds the most meaning; while other times it is the combination of those efforts that makes Blessed Trinity special to our supporters.

This edition of *Spirited Perspectives* is graced with input from two wonderful Blessed Trinity supporters. Sara (Hammer) Warner graduated from St. Peter's School in 1981. She is married to Mike Warner. They have three sons, one of whom has already graduated from Blessed Trinity, one who will graduate this year and one who will graduate in 2015. Kevin Curry is a volunteer tutor at Blessed Trinity. He also substitute teaches. He was recruited by the Catholic Tutor Corps from his home parish, St. Edward's in Bloomington. Kevin works with first and third graders for three mornings per week and has been volunteering at Blessed Trinity for the past five years.

### CLEARLY CATHOLIC

Kevin tells us that he is witness to Blessed Trinity's mission to be clearly Catholic in a variety of ways. In addition to daily prayers, frequent Mass attendance, and observance of Catholic seasons, Catholic values are taught in the classroom. At Blessed Trinity, there is an emphasis on good behavior and self discipline, proper manners, kindness and respect for one another and a focus on two great Commandments: Love God and Love Your Neighbor. Sara observed that Blessed Trinity's faculty and staff routinely reinforce Christian values in students' school day. She attests that students are subsequently able to incorporate those lessons into their daily personal and family lives. Blessed Trinity's curriculum includes daily religion classes at all

grade levels. Students truly learn what it means to be Catholic at Blessed Trinity.

### INTENTIONALLY INCLUSIVE

While Kevin describes Blessed Trinity as a "mini-United Nations" Sara has seen, through her sons' eyes, how Blessed Trinity's inclusivity plays out in the classroom and hallways. "The Blessed Trinity community is made up of a diverse group of students, families and cultures. This diversity gives all students an opportunity to learn how others around them live while exposing students firsthand, rather than from a book, to differences that make up our world." Kevin added, "And the beauty of it all is that each child is absolutely accepted as an individual, without thought to ethnicity, culture or economic background."

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### ACADEMICALLY EXCELLENT

A common refrain we often hear about Blessed Trinity that was also echoed by Kevin and Sara is that Blessed Trinity teachers and staff **REALLY CARE**, while striving to make learning and the school day enjoyable. Blessed Trinity students work hard, do their best and are not complacent. They want to make the

Honor Roll, participate in school events and compete at science fairs and quiz bowls. Sara's son, Alex, was well prepared for the academic rigors at Academy of Holy Angels and she credits Blessed Trinity with his strong foundation for success in high school and beyond.

### FIRST BELIEVERS MEETING

One year ago, Blessed Trinity invited parents and stakeholders to a casual get-together. We promised that if given just one hour of their time, self-described BT Believers would leave inspired and motivated. What fun we had! Middle school students proudly testified to a myriad of exciting and noteworthy academic achievements. Experts like

*(continued on page 4)*



## BLESSED TRINITY BELIEVERS

*(continued from page 3)*

our very own, home-grown Development Director, Terry Braun (St. Peter's class of 1992), and the multi-talented and highly personable Academy of Holy Angels Admissions Director, Jesse Foley (who is also a Blessed Trinity parent), empowered our Believers to talk to any interested party about what makes Blessed Trinity the right educational choice for so many families. Believers left with yard signs, t-shirts, magnets, bumper stickers, testimonial cards—you name it and we sent it home! Sara was in the crowded room that night. She told us, "Mike and I are BT Believers!"

### GRAND GALA THEME: I BELIEVE

Our Grand Gala in December 2012 had as its central theme "I Believe." Sara is a founding member of the Grand Gala Committee and Kevin attended this year's event. He told us, "I was impressed with the parental involvement, participation, and support of Blessed Trinity, both financially and as volunteers. You could **FEEL** the BT spirit in that room! I am happy to call myself a BT Believer!"

### THOUGHTS FROM A YOUNG BT BELIEVER

The following testimonial was written by Lesley Blanco, from Blessed Trinity's Class of 2012. Lesley appeared at our first BT Believers meeting. Her words truly capture the spirit of being a BT Believer while also showing admiration for a teacher many of us will never forget.

"I am in eighth grade and I've been at Blessed Trinity since kindergarten. I want to tell you about someone who has been an extraordinary role model. She is my homeroom teacher, my religion teacher, and one of my play directors. She is Mrs. Culnane. Mrs. Culnane teaches religion with all her heart. Instead of using a teacher's reference book, she uses the Bible. Her love for teaching is something unexplainable. She tells us stories about angels and miracles but she doesn't realize that her love, faith and trust in God and in her students is a miracle itself. Many times she has told us that we are a class full of potential and that she knows we are going to be great. Those words mean so much coming from someone who lives her faith everyday. She has told us stories from her life, things very personal, and that makes her more than a teacher, it makes her a friend. I thank Mrs. Culnane for being such a great friend to all her students. I also thank all my other teachers. I thank my parents and all BT staff for giving me an amazing adventure from K-8. I might not be enrolled as a student in Blessed Trinity next year, but I will always be a BT Believer!"



## IN HER OWN WORDS

*(continued from page 2)*

In conclusion, my philosophy of teaching is predicated on the belief that:

- \* All children can learn in a caring, ordered environment.
- \* All children want to be successful.
- \* Communication is the key. That communication must be positive, thoughtful and helpful in building students' self-esteem.
- \* Students always say that they learn "life lessons" in this kind of environment. After all, that is our aim—to teach them to have a philosophy that will ultimately lead to a successful, caring life for themselves and all those with whom they come in contact.

*Musical, at 1:00pm followed by an open house from 2:00-5:00pm in St. Peter's Social Hall.*



# Thank You

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- Ann Hagen (in memory of June Groebner)
- In memory of Judy Peterson
- Rick & Ann Garland (in memory of Michael Warner, Sr.)
- Joe & Kathy Bartish (in memory of Fern Hartwick)

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Make an on-line donation at:  
[www.btcsmn.org](http://www.btcsmn.org)



**Blessed Trinity's QR Code:**  
Use an iPhone or Android to scan  
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donation to Blessed Trinity!

## GIFT FOR THE NEXT 44 YEARS

A couple years ago, a fund was setup in honor of Mrs. Culnane to further the legacy of high standards and quality Catholic education championed by her and others. These funds are used to purchase religious materials for students at Blessed Trinity.

In lieu of gifts for her retirement celebration, Mrs. Culnane has asked that donations be made to the Jo Culnane Catholic Studies Fund.

To make a donation on-line, go to [www.btcsmn.org](http://www.btcsmn.org) and click the **Donate Now** tab.



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### Mail To:

Blessed Trinity Catholic School; Attention: Terry Braun; 6720 Nicollet Avenue South; Richfield, MN 55423



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