

TMI Report to Council, Feb. 2015 (script)

As always, I'm proud to be here representing TMI to you, who are all stakeholders in our only diocesan high school. You have supported TMI in many ways, and some of you have entrusted the education of your own children to us. Thank you for your confidence in what we have to offer to the youth of this diocese and their families.

I am especially proud that TMI was given the honor of hosting last fall's election of our bishop coadjutor, Bishop David Reed. It was a solemn yet joyous occasion, and I can't resist taking some satisfaction – quite a bit of satisfaction – in seeing one former TMI parent get ready to succeed another as Bishop of West Texas and chairman of the TMI Board of Governors.

The words on the screen are TMI's mission statement, and I remind you of them because this statement is what we use as a guiding principle for every decision we make on behalf of the school and its students. Since I last stood before you, TMI was once again, by every worldly measure, successful in our mission "to provide an excellent educational community."

As you know, TMI has been since its beginnings, a college-preparatory school, giving young people from San Antonio, South Texas and far-flung places a safe and thoughtful place to prepare for the next step in their education. Last May, one hundred percent of the 74 members of the class of 2014 were admitted to colleges and universities, including some of the finest in our nation and our state. Currently, there are TMI alumni enrolled at Harvard, West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy, Princeton, the University of Southern California, the University of Texas at Austin, Duke, Rice, Northwestern, Texas A&M, Notre Dame and Vanderbilt.

Besides our high-achieving seniors, other TMI students won the right to compete at the ultimate, international level of youth robotics competitions; they scored top honors in national language exams, and they met all the academic and character requirements for induction into the National Honor Society and National Junior Honor Society.

Our Athletic and Military pillars also are strong with TMI athletes earning 17 district, area and city team championships and four state championships, enrollment up in the Corps, and two 2014 graduates joining other young alumni at federal service academies.

While all these accomplishments are undeniably occasion for giving thanks, for our founder, Bishop James Steptoe Johnston, character counted most. There, too, we are striving to live up to our mission of educating servant leaders, as he envisioned for his school. As we consider the theme of this year's Council, "Called to Serve," I'd like to give you an idea of what TMI students have done to live up to that ideal during the past year.

As many of you know, all TMI students are required to perform community service hours. Last year, they exceeded the required number by about four times what was expected of them – posting more than

12,000 hours at a host of projects – through their home churches, through Camp Capers, through Scouting and most often, through TMI’s chapter of Interact, the Rotary-sponsored youth service organization. Every student is automatically a member of this student-led group, and most take part in some of the monthly activities. We offer many different opportunities for school-based service, with a variety of settings, time commitments and ways to help others.

I’d like to share with you a sampling of some of the outreach projects TMI students have taken on during the past year.

Through our annual Adopt a Family drive, a TMI tradition going back more than a decade, our students were able to bring holiday cheer to 47 needy families who have children at Mead Elementary. Volunteers wrapped and sorted gifts, including toys and gift cards as well as household necessities. We collected 408 rolls of paper towels, 251 combs, 208 children’s toothbrushes, 65 bottles of hand soap, 55 containers of laundry detergent and many other items most of us take for granted. With “Santa and Mrs. Claus,” also known as our TMI librarian and her husband, TMI students, parents and faculty delivered the gifts Dec. 6. Response to our appeal – in chapel and through our electronic newsletter to parents -- was so great that we were able to donate extra items to the school’s pantry.

Also last September, members of our Interact club joined a project of the Threads of Love needlework ministry to make simple dolls for parents of babies in neonatal intensive care units of local hospital. Parents hold the dolls close to transfer their scent to the materials, and the dolls are then placed next to the infants, beginning the bonding process. One of our students, senior Elise Notzon, took the project a step further when she led members of our Interact club’s sponsoring chapter in making more of the dolls to present to Threads of Love for distribution.

Over the summer, a group of students went on a mission trip – what we call a Servant Leader Adventure – to Toronto, where they helped in the community garden at St. Stephen’s-in-the-Fields church, served lunch to the homeless at a Christian Resource Center and made beds at Good Shepherd Ministries, a men’s shelter for those most difficult to house. At the end of their physical and faith journey, our students “passed the candle” and spoke of the ways they saw God working through their group during this challenging week outside their comfort zone.

Although for safety reasons, students didn’t take the Ice Bucket Challenge to benefit ALS awareness, we invited them to watch as faculty and staff set an example. More than 40 TMI adults took the challenge at the end of the first full school week. Funds were donated, and we passed on the challenge to St. George, raising awareness and funds to donate toward research and family support.

Each year in early September, our Upper School classes go on a daylong retreat, where a service project is always part of the bonding experience. Last fall, our seniors chose to stay on campus, where they painted and refurbished.....and packed.....for the needy. Juniors went to the San Antonio Food Bank to sort and put away donations, sophomores went to Southside Lions Park to paint picnic tables, plant new

trees and put down a fresh layer of mulch, and our freshmen headed to Camp Capers to spruce up facilities there.

Last spring, some of our students volunteered to help run children's games at Leon Springs Night, an annual fundraiser in our neighboring community of Leon Springs. The proceeds go to charities sponsored by the Leon Springs Business Association, including Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries, Morgan's Wonderland, and the Project Stuff the Bus school supplies drive.

We were pleased to welcome the staff of Sea World and some rare and endangered animals in their care for a special chapel focusing on God's glory in the natural world and our own duty to be good stewards of all His creation. Through advance contributions, students raised more than \$2,000 to donate to Sea World's nonprofit conservation organization.

TMI also has had a long relationship with the Ronald McDonald House in the South Texas Medical Center, a home-away-from-home for families from outside San Antonio whose children are receiving extended treatment in area hospitals. Before Valentine's Day, students took part in a "Share Your Heart" campaign, selling paper hearts to students whose names were then displayed in the windows of our Coates Hall classroom building and contributing to a dress-down day to benefit this worthy organization. Our eighth grade boys basketball team recently made dinner for residents of the Ronald McDonald House in the Medical Center.

One of our seniors, Meg Vassar – a lifelong member of St. Mark's, San Antonio – brought in a new idea this year. Her parents, George and Jill, purchased the Headmaster for a Day auction item at our Stars Over TMI gala, and Meg came up with a special way to exercise her leadership. As a volunteer for the San Antonio Humane Society shelter, Meg is very interested in animal welfare and came up with the idea of holding a dog adoption event at TMI. With my blessing, she brought 10 adoptable puppies and adult dogs at about as many Humane Society staff and volunteers to one of the gyms in Frost Athletic Center, where they were with us for a whole morning as TMI students and their parents came to see the dogs, consider making them members of their families or just to relieve the stress of a busy day by playing with these beautiful, loving animals.

To expand our service to two low-income elementary schools where TMI Middle School students have helped first and second graders through our Reading Buddies program for the past four years, we applied for and received a grant from the National Association of Episcopal Schools. With these funds, we bought books and gave them as Christmas gifts to the children served by this program, including many from refugee families from Africa and Latin America who are learning English as a second language. With a supplement from the Interact outreach budget, we were able to give books to 465 elementary students in 24 classes at two elementary schools, with some extras donated to the school libraries to be used as reading incentives.

Students and faculty also were blessed to participate in a mobile packing event at University Methodist Church for Feed My Starving Children, a Christian nonprofit organization that sends meals specially

formulated for malnourished children to more than 70 countries. One of our students, who is a member of University Methodist, made an announcement in chapel and signed up around 60 students, including many in our boarding community, to pack 79 boxes of meals, totaling 2,844 bags of food assembly-line style with dried vegetables, soy and white rice.

These are just some of the highlights of TMI's year in service. We've also raised funds for breast cancer research through a volleyball "Pink Panther" Night, collected books through our National Honor Society chapter for the San Antonio Reads literacy organization and have completed and are planning many other group and individual projects.

To help us meet our goal of encouraging servant leadership, we are thankful for a growing enrollment and a community with a generous spirit as we resolve to continue to develop what Bishop Johnston envisioned more than a century ago as "the Christian character amongst the rising generation," for in his eyes as in ours, "Character is the only true wealth."