

GRACE

Grace Lutheran School

7300 Division Street

River Forest, Illinois 60305

708-366-6900

alumni@gracriverforest.org

www.gracriverforest.org

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.”

I Peter 4:10 NRSV

New Faces Around Grace!

by Gwen Gotsch

Alyssa Van Heukelem, Grace School Class of 2002, is working at Grace this year as a teaching assistant in the Early Childhood program. She also coached the Grace girls’ volleyball team this fall. One of her players, excited to learn that Ms. Van Heukelem had attended Grace School, asked her what Mr. Schultz was like when she had him as a teacher. That’s Brian Schultz, Grace’s seventh grade teacher, who graduated from high school the year Alyssa graduated from eighth grade!

Kids think that nothing ever changes at their grade schools. They know that they will move on to high school and college some day, but teachers, like parents, are all “old” and exist only at school.

But things change, even at Grace. There are new faces in Grace’s classrooms this school year—and not just student faces. Meet the new teachers!



Look for **Sandy Schommer** in the pre-kindergarten classroom, the room close to the sanctuary that once was the church nursery, and before that, the church office. Sandy loves that she can hear organ music from her classroom. Recently she observed that her three-year-old students continued to play happily while there was a funeral in church. It’s “the full circle of life,” she says, part of the “strong spiritual atmosphere” at Grace.

Sandy holds a degree in elementary education from Trinity Christian College and an early childhood degree from the Erikson

Things change, even at Grace!

Institute in Chicago. She taught kindergarten and first grade full-time at Timothy Christian School in Elmhurst, but now that she is the mother of an eight-month-old son, part-time teaching is ideal for her. Sandy loves working with active three- and four-year-olds. “Everything you do is a learning experience at the preschool level. I don’t ever walk out at the end of the morning thinking they learned nothing—even if what they learned isn’t always what I planned.”

Pre-kindergarten at Grace is about simple

New Faces, Continued on page 2



GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
& SCHOOL



“Everything you do is a learning experience at the preschool level.”

—Sandy Schommer,
Pre-kindergarten teacher

A M A Z I N G GRACE

Amazing Grace is published twice each year by Grace Lutheran School and distributed to alumni, students and friends of Grace. All material included in *Amazing Grace* is the property of Grace Lutheran School and may not be reproduced without permission.

Copyright © 2010 Grace Lutheran School.

Grace Lutheran School

7300 W. Division Street
River Forest, IL 60305-1499
Phone: 708-366-6900

Website: www.graceriverforest.org
Email: alumni@graceriverforest.org

Principal: Kendall Grigg

Editor and Designer:
Kathryn (Hillert) Brewer '76

Contributing Writers and Editors:

Lisa Files
Gwen Gotsch
Claudia Wood

Photos: Lyle Mortensen, Kathryn Brewer

New Faces, continued from page 1

pleasures. “We get our hands dirty. There doesn’t have to be a rigid routine.” The curriculum builds on her young students’ interest. For example, recently “the kids were drawn to the toy tools. Some had construction projects or renovation projects going on at home, so we did a unit on construction.” A poster on Sandy’s classroom wall shows students pounding nails into plastic foam and using boxes, graham crackers and frosting to build with “bricks and mortar.”

Kathy Brooks is another new teacher in Grace’s Early Childhood program. Last year she was a teaching assistant in Benjamin Chandler’s Junior Kindergarten class. This year the JK program has expanded to two morning classes, with Kathy teaching four-year-olds in the former Senior Kindergarten space. (SK has a brand-new classroom on the lower level of the 1999 building addition.) Kathy also holds degrees in both early childhood and elementary education. She taught fourth grade before taking time off to raise a family, but she is delighted now to be teaching young children, which is what she has always wanted to do. “I love seeing the light bulb go on, seeing the wheels turn” as they discover things or think something over. And she experiences “so much joy” with her students. “I am patient,” she says, “and small children require patience,” but she also reports that “four years old is the most joyful time of life.” She laughs a lot with her students. Some mornings last year, she kept count with a clicker in her hand and found she would laugh 27-45 times in a single morning. Kathy is also grateful for the opportunity to incorporate her love of Jesus into her teaching, especially when students and teachers pray together or use props and illustrations to make Bible stories come alive.

Ben Chandler and Kathy Brooks are a uniquely creative team. Mr. Chandler



“I love seeing the light bulb go on, seeing the wheels turn” as they discover things or think something over.

—Kathy Brooks,
Junior kindergarten teacher

often draws pictures for JK students; Mrs. Brooks’ one-of-a-kind quilts hang on the walls of her classroom. One of the highlights of junior kindergarten is the regular puppet shows that the two JK teachers improvise together to teach social skills and other lessons. Mrs. Brooks’ small brown rat Timothy seeks advice from Garglefratz, a bigger rat, street-wise but kind, played by Mr. Chandler.

Ruth Massman teaches language arts in fifth grade first thing every morning, so that fifth-grade classroom teacher Bill Thompson can work with junior-high math groups. Ruth’s three daughters attend Grace School, which makes this an ideal part-time job for her after several years of being a full-time mom. “This is a great way to start the day, and a perfect way to get my toe back in the water.” She is as enthusiastic about fifth graders as Kathy Brooks is about four-year-olds. “It’s a perfect age,” she says. “They like you and like each other. They’re creative thinkers.” The class spent October reading, writing, and learning about short stories. They wrote their own Halloween stories and read them to their second-grade



“Second graders are so curious about learning. They’re excited about reading and they love the hands-on projects we do.”

—Julie McGhan,
Second grade teacher

Julie McGhan’s radiant smile greets second graders every morning. “Second graders are so curious about learning. They’re excited about reading and they’re beginning to read with expression. They love the hands-on projects we do.”

Before moving to the Chicago area with her husband, Jayme, who teaches at Concordia University next door to Grace, Julie taught in Costa Rica, Thailand, Argentina and Minnesota. Here at Grace she appreciates being able to talk about God throughout the school day, in Bible stories, in science lessons about amphibians and frogs, or in social studies discussions of people living together in communities and being kind to one another. She feels she has a call to ministry and missions and enjoys the diversity she sees within her classroom. “We are trying to make that a strength,” she says. The children in her classroom have “so many different needs. And everyone has their strengths.” Mrs. McGhan’s seating arrangement partners them up, so they can help each other out and practice kindness while working together.

Alyssa Van Heukelem is a 2010 graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She majored in education, with plans to teach physical education and English at the middle school or high school level. She’ll be getting married next summer and moving to Washington state. Until then she’s working at Grace. She says, “I’m a little outside of my comfort zone being with small children all day. But it’s comforting to be working with Mrs. Schnack, who was my kindergarten teacher.”

chapel buddies. Working in groups, they created rap songs about the elements that make up a short story. Some children prefer group learning, some like to work alone. Mrs. Massman incorporates both styles in her teaching.

Ruth describes herself as “the proud product of Lutheran education.” She went to elementary school at Immanuel Lutheran School, Elmhurst, attended Walther Lutheran High School, and graduated from Concordia University Irvine with degrees in social work and elementary education. She and her husband, Andy, joined Grace after moving to Oak Park. He currently serves as the chairman of Grace’s Stewardship Committee.

“It’s a perfect age. They like you and like each other. They’re creative thinkers.”

—Ruth Massmann,
Fifth grade language arts teacher



Grace Church and School CALENDAR

December 12, 2010, 4:00 p.m.
Advent/Christmas Concert
Includes Bach’s *Magnificat in D Major*

December 24, 2010
Children’s Christmas Eve services,
4:15 and 6:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve communion service,
11:00 p.m.

December 25, 2010, 10:00 a.m.
Christmas Day worship service

December 26, 2010, 10:00 a.m.
Sunday morning worship service,
includes Cantata #40, “For this the Son
of God is manifest”

January 30, 2011, 3:45 p.m. prelude
Bach Cantata Vespers, “Step upon the
path of faith”

February 27, 2011, 3:45 p.m. prelude
Bach Cantata Vespers, “Lord, keep us
steadfast in your word”

March 1, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
All-School Choral Festival

March 4, 2011, 6:30 p.m.
“A Graceful Evening” dinner and live
auction benefiting Grace School at Elm
Crest Banquets, 7370 West Grand
Avenue, Elmwood Park.

March 27, 2011, 3:45 p.m. prelude
Bach Cantata Vespers, “King of heaven
welcome”



Grace School selected for Wellness Study

By Claudia Wood

Grace Lutheran School is one of three sites participating in a project sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association (ELEA) to develop, implement and evaluate a model wellness curriculum for religious schools and early childhood centers. Wheat Ridge Ministries is supporting the project with a three-year seed-money grant.

The term wellness refers to six aspects of well-being: **emotional, physical, financial, vocational, intellectual, and social/interpersonal.** To these parameters the ELEA projects adds another dimension: **spiritual well-being.** Hugh Kress, the former principal

“By faith we are made a new creation in Christ, which means spiritual well-being undergirds all the other aspects of wellness.”

of Grace School and the project director, puts it this way: “By faith we are made a new creation in Christ, which means spiritual well-being undergirds all the other aspects of wellness.”

Principal Kendall Grigg is excited about the opportunities that this study provides for the staff, students, and community of Grace Lutheran Church and School. “Right now,” she says, “we are setting goals and gathering baseline data. It’s very affirming to look at all we do now to promote wellness.” She looks forward to collaborating with others involved in the project who will bring new ideas to Grace. “Is there an opportunity to build on what we already do well or is there a new area to explore?” she asks. “We will be trying new things in the years ahead.”

Hugh Kress, who retired as principal in June, 2009, became aware of children’s increasing need for services out-

WELLNESS:

**emotional
physical
financial
vocational
intellectual
social/interpersonal
and
spiritual
well-being**

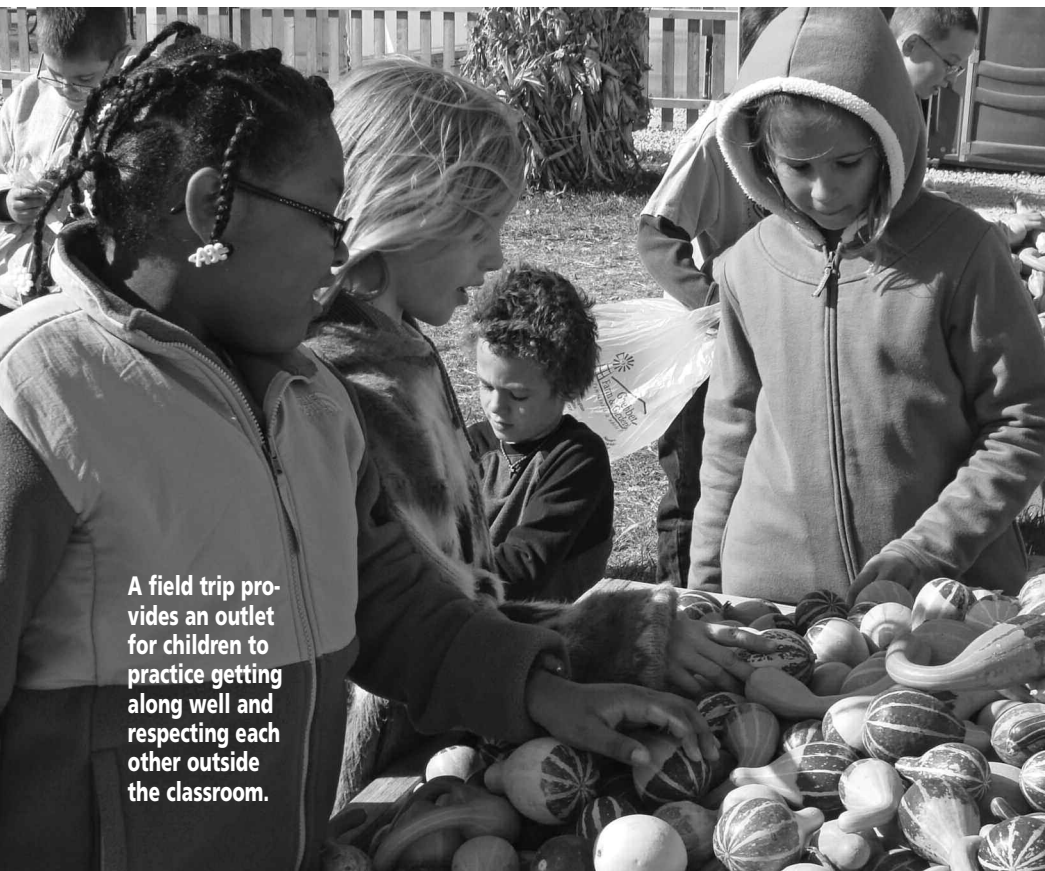
side of the usual intellectual realm during his years as a teacher and administrator. Faculty members often commented that they were spending a great deal of time addressing issues such as emotional stress, poor nutrition and health, decreasing fitness, and even questions about spiritual and moral foundations. This project will

explore ways to meet those needs within school communities, with a focus not just on students, but also on faculty, staff, parents and congregation.

The two other schools involved in the pilot project are Mt. Olive Lutheran Child Development Center in Hickory, North Carolina, and Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Rock Point, Arizona. “Each school’s coordinators and even the students will have exciting ways to connect with faculty and children at the other schools in the study. We’ll be using technology to make this possible,” says Dr. Grigg. The schools will learn from one another’s creative ideas and adaptations.

The program will be evaluated at regular intervals during the study period. Each school is paired with a university for help in gathering and interpreting data. The staff at Grace is working with Professor Bill Duey of the Department of Human Performance at Concordia University. Grace students will be weighed and measured and will complete a fitness evaluation in the fall and spring of the three school years included in the study. The information gathered will be used to set goals and to evaluate student learning and behavior changes.

Mr. Kress hopes that the wellness model will be useful in addressing the problem of childhood obesity. Statistics from the U. S. Centers for Disease



A field trip provides an outlet for children to practice getting along well and respecting each other outside the classroom.

Continued on page 8

Making Science Matter

Grace Graduate Teaches Chemistry at OPRF

By Lisa Files

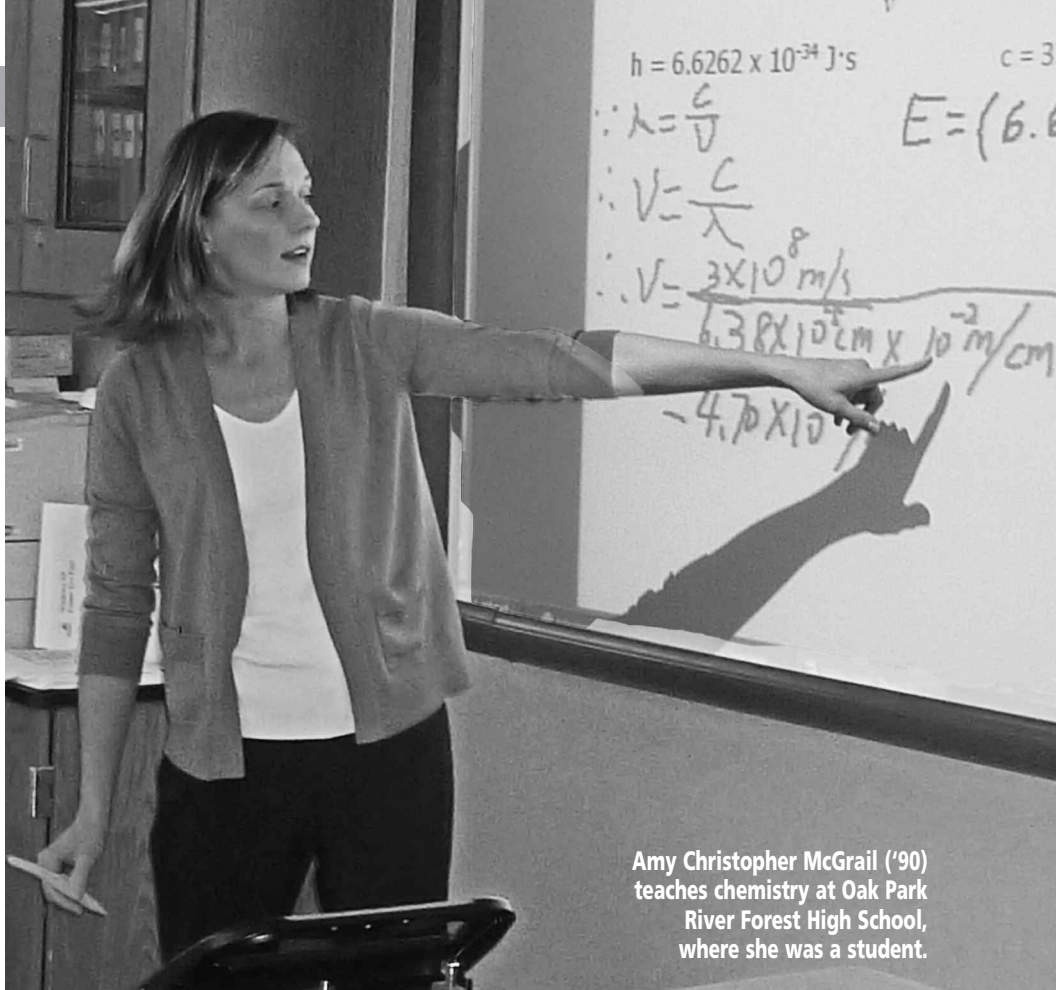
Amy Christopher McGrail ('90) didn't think about becoming a teacher when she ran cross country under coach Jeff Glock in grade school. She still didn't consider becoming a teacher while tackling probability in Margaret Kruse's fifth-grade math enrichment group. Even after watching test tubes bubble over in Dale Heidloff's eighth-grade science class, becoming a teacher was the farthest thing from Amy's mind.

But she was deeply inspired by all these teachers, at a more fundamental level, with a curiosity about how things work. Today, Amy similarly inspires others as a chemistry teacher at Oak Park River Forest High School, a position she came to in a round-about fashion.

On a national level, teachers are encouraged to nurture science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills in students in order to give our country a competitive edge in the 21st century. Amy naturally gravitated to these areas right from the start, but chemistry became her passion and major at the University of Illinois-Urbana. She graduated in 1998.

"Chemistry is really the basis for all science," she says. "It's about understanding matter and why it's organized the way it is. I've always enjoyed taking things apart and putting them back together, to see if I can put them back the right way or maybe even a better way."

After graduating from college, Amy landed a position with Cole-Parmer, a distributor of scientific instruments. "Most of the work I did for them was training colleagues," she remembers.



Amy Christopher McGrail ('90) teaches chemistry at Oak Park River Forest High School, where she was a student.

“Mr. Glock got me interested in running when I was young. He was influential in all subject areas by making everything so much fun.”

"Then one day someone said, 'You're such a good teacher.' I had never thought about teaching before, but when I thought more about it, it just made sense."

In 2001, she started teaching chemistry at OPRF while attending Dominican University, where she completed a master's degree in teaching in 2002.

Now her goal is to pass along that same curiosity about how things work to others. She explains, "If someone finishes my class and wants to be a chemist, great! But I like to think I'm instilling an appreciation for science and how it applies outside the classroom—how it fits into their lives."

Amy stopped teaching for three years

(2007-2010) to care for her children, Anna (age 5) and Patrick (age 3), born after she married James in 2002. He is also an OPRF and University of Illinois graduate, though he majored in finance.

Now, Amy is back in a newly renovated OPRF lab space where she reinforces concepts such as bonding, reaction, equilibrium, energy, and entropy. "It's fabulous to be back *doing* science. I think that's why I like it so much," she effuses. "You can't really experience science unless you get your hands wet."

Another passion is running. Amy ran track in high school and college and then started coaching cross country and track at OPRF while she attended graduate school. After having children, she stopped coaching, but this summer she participated in the St. Jude Run, a 30-hour relay from Chicago to Peoria to raise money for St. Jude Children's Hospital.

This, too, blossomed at Grace. "Mr. Glock got me interested in running when I was young. He was influential in all subject areas by making everything so much fun. Now I'm inspired to do that too."

STACCATO NOTES

Cross Country Team Goes to State

Congratulations to Grace's cross country team, which made its first trip ever to the Lutheran Sports Association state meet and finished sixth out of 22 teams. Eighth-grader Paul Christian led the Vikings with an eighth-place finish and a time of 12:21.63 minutes. Seven Viking runners qualified for the state meet, including one seventh-grader, three sixth-graders, and two fifth-graders. The team is coached by third grade teacher Jeff Glock and long-time parent volunteer Bob O'Connor. The Grace boys' volleyball team also went to the state tournament this fall and finished in fourth place!



Senior Kindergarten students have a big bright new room after summer renovations.

Summer 2010 Building Renovations

Classrooms in the older parts of the Grace building are now air-conditioned, thanks to renovations completed during the summer of 2010 and paid for by the Building on the Vision capital campaign. Ceilings were lowered to make space for new ductwork, and improved lighting now brightens these classrooms. Permanent risers were added to the music rehearsal room, and the space at the north end of the second floor was reconfigured to create a rehearsal space for handbells and improved storage and office space for Grace's musicians. The school computer lab was moved to the Grade 3-4 common room to make the computers more accessible and part of the immediate learning environment. Down on the lower level of the 1999 building, several walls were eliminated to turn office space on the west side of the atrium into a bright and spacious senior kindergarten classroom. Grace students and teachers are grateful for the faithful gifts of Grace members that made these improvements possible.

Grace Open House Dates

Parents and children interested in enrolling in Grace School are invited to meet teachers and tour the facility at open house events early in 2011. Early childhood students and their parents can visit the classrooms, play, and chat with teachers on Friday afternoon, January 21, Noon-1:00 p.m. The all-school open house, for parents and children from preschool through eighth grade, takes place on Tuesday, February 8, 6:30-8:00 p.m. For more information about visiting the school or enrolling, please contact Eileen Maggio in the school office (708-366-6900 ext. 205; office@gracriverforest.org).



Morning Glories

Morning Glories, a new program for children ages one to three and their parents, began meeting two mornings a week this fall in the church nursery. Under the leadership of Grace School alums Jennifer Hoffman Brayton and Tara Hoffman Greig, both of whom are early childhood teachers, parents and children share songs, games, crafts and snacks and learn about Jesus.

School Magazine Sale

Support Grace School by ordering or renewing magazine subscriptions online at www.qsp.com. The Grace Lutheran School code number is 425005342.

Spring Gala!

Save the date! Grace Lutheran Church and School is sponsoring "A Graceful Evening," a benefit for Grace School, on Friday evening, March 4, 6:30 p.m. at Elm Crest Banquets, 7370 West Grand Avenue, Elmwood Park. The evening is a fundraiser for Grace School programs. Enjoy a special evening with Grace friends, including dinner and live and silent auctions. Look for more information in the new year!

CLASSNOTES

1958 Georgene Phillips enjoys reading, music (especially jazz), dining out, playing the piano, drawing and spending lots of time with her grandson and granddaughter.

Valerie Law Stodden is a superintendent of Wunder's Cemetery, the oldest Lutheran cemetery in the city of Chicago.

1959 Ellen Pure was a guest lecturer for one of Pastor Costellos' seminars. She recently celebrated her 41st wedding anniversary.

1978 We mourn the death of **Lynda Nielsen**, daughter of Irene and the late George Nielsen.

Top ten donor opportunities

- 1 Volleyball uniforms, \$500
- 2 Classroom reading sets, \$250
- 3 Sponsor a student at Grace, \$6,300
- 4 Document camera for classroom use, \$500
- 5 Music stands, \$35 each
- 6 Table covers for the junior high bell choir, \$500
- 7 Science Resource Kits, \$500
- 8 Classroom set of ActivWands for whiteboards, \$1,600
- 9 Sponsor an issue of *Amazing Grace*, \$2,000
- 10 ActiveSlates for whiteboards, \$400

THANK YOU!

We gratefully acknowledge and thank alumni who have given gifts to Grace (March 2010 through October 2010):

Georgene Phillips, class of 1958

Valerie Law Stodden, class of 1958

Helene Zarcone, class of 1958

Sharon Minarik, class of 1959

Robert W. Meyer, class of 1962

Deedra Fay Bejarano, class of 1989

Lee and Cynthia Kleidon, parents of alumni **Krista** (1987) and **Jonathan** (1991)

Captain William A. Kopper, grandparent of Grace students, **Max** and **Ella Kopper**

Constance Schwab, Grace church member

Bill and Marion Brown, in honor of the wedding of former Grace School principal Gerald Koenig and LaNel Mahler.

FACULTY NOTES

Principal Emeritus **Gerald Koenig** was married this past summer to LaNel Mahler, a longtime friend. Jerry and LaNel have known each other since college and kept in touch throughout the years at the frequent reunions of Jerry's housemates. They are living in Minnesota for part of the year, where one of LaNel's three grown children has her family, and part of the year in Jerry's home in Oak Park, near his three grown children and their families.

"It's a blessing that they are able to share wonderful memories and build a future together," says his daughter, Karla Koehne.

Carolyn Douma, resource teacher at Grace for many years, was diagnosed with cancer early in October. In her eighteen years at Grace, she has touched the lives of many students, helping them keep pace in their regular classroom work.

Please keep her and her family in your prayers. For updates on how she is doing, go to www.caringbridge.org and enter carolyndouma in the "Visit a Website" box.

College choices

Grace's Class of 2006 graduated from high school last spring. Their college choices include:

Belmont University, Nashville
Butler University
Chabot College
Davidson College
Emerson College
Indianapolis University
Knox College (3)
Loyola University, New Orleans (2)
Marian University
Marquette University
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Skidmore College
St. Olaf College
University of Iowa
Valencia Community College, Orlando, Fla.
Valparaiso University

In addition, one graduate is living in Jordan, studying Arabic.

CLASS REUNION

The **Class of 1971** is planning a Class Reunion for the weekend of June 26, 2011. Plans include a casual happy hour and dinner on a Saturday evening.

On Sunday classmates will attend the worship service together, followed by brunch in Fellowship Hall and a tour of the much-changed school. The class invites all teachers and staff from their graduation year as well!

The Class of 1971 had many friends who graduated in other years, so the reunion is also open to other Grace alumni.

Please contact Kevin Cronin at ezsign4u@hotmail.com for more information or if you would like to help plan the event!

**Have you earned an advanced degree?
Gotten a new job? Reached a goal?
Achieved a significant milestone?**

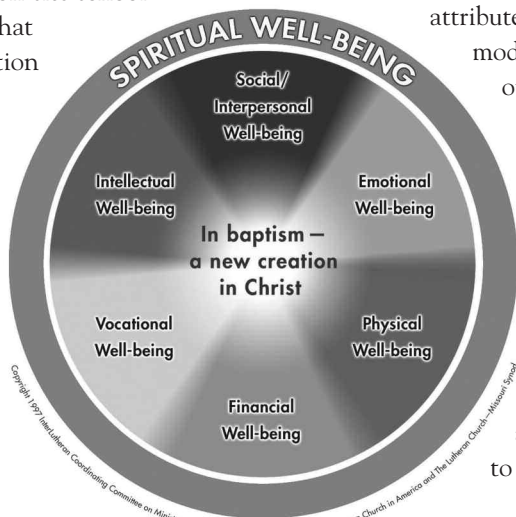
Tell us! Please take a moment to update us! Send email to alumni@graceriverforest.org or write to 7300 Division Street, River Forest, IL 60305.

Grace School selected for Wellness Study: *Story begins on page 4*

Control indicate that an estimated 16.9 percent of children and adolescents aged 2 to 19 years are obese and that significantly more children are obese now than 30 years ago. The wellness model can help schools address this issue by giving children and families tools for healthy eating and exercise, and by reinforcing those practices during the school day.

Grace's curriculum already includes nutrition education, and the school has eliminated soda machines and selected healthy food for concession stands at athletic events. Staff and students have identified additional areas in which the school could improve its support of healthy eating. One idea that is being studied by the staff and interested parents is the feasibility of an on-site school lunch program that adheres to nutrition guidelines. The school is also examining specific ways to improve individual fitness as another way of combating obesity.

As Grace faculty members evaluated the



Third-grader Miriam Clapp presents her challenge project, "The Constellations," to the class.

"Students frequently work in groups and speak in front of others. They have a comfortable, safe environment to express their thoughts."

school's standing in other areas of wellness, social/interpersonal relations emerged as a strength for Grace students. Dr. Grigg attributes this to the educational model that is woven throughout the school. "Students frequently work in groups and speak in front of others. They have a comfortable, safe environment to express their thoughts."

In the emotional well-being area of the model, Grace teachers are developing new ways to educate children about

bullying. There is a clear connection between our shared faith and learning how to stop bullying. Faith-based discussions of these questions and others can help shape students' understanding of their own emotional and spiritual well-being and of the role that they play in a community of believers and in the world.

Ultimately, the schools involved in this study will assist in creating learning standards for wellness education that will become part of the accreditation criteria used by the ELEA. Participating in this project is a way for Grace School to let its light shine for students at religious schools across the United States.

It is "very affirming to look at all that we do... is there an opportunity to build on what we already do well or is there a new area to explore?"

—Dr. Kendall Grigg

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Oak Park, IL
Permit No. 28

Address Service Requested

GRACE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
& SCHOOL
7300 Division Street
River Forest, Illinois 60305
708-366-6900