New club sparks up kindness in students

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Staff Writer

Senior Mary Tran has recently started the Acts of Kindness Club promoting others to be kind to one another. The club's goal is to help students feel confident in spreading good in their community.

Ambassador of love Katie Thompson has taken on the responsibility of sponsoring this club.

"I was so honored and delighted for Mary to ask me to be the sponsor of her club," Thompson said. "I think it is a really big compliment that they asked me to be a part of their club."

Although they have only had two meetings, Tran pushes the group members to make a difference in somebody's day in the small things they do.

As the club started close to Thanksgiving season, the Acts of Kindness Club had a focus on trying to be thankful for the little things in life.

"It is easy to be kind and make others' days easier for them," Tran said. "Especially with Thanksgiving being around, I think it's important to not take the things we have for granted and to show thanks to God for everything that we do."

At the meetings, attendees had the opportunity to make cards for Teacher Appreciation Week. Students were asked to write their teachers a note expressing their gratitude for what they do.

"We wrote notes for people that we loved, and then we were able to give them away," senior Katelyn Tran said. "It is in little ways that we get to spread happiness at Pius."

> "It is easy to be kind and make others' days easier for them."
> -Mary Tran, senior

This was their first act of kindness to the community of Pius X. In the future, they are hoping to be able to organize even more events.

"Since we just started, we are more localized, but we are applying for a grant soon to help us start more projects to benefit the Pius community," Thompson said. "Hopefully in the future we can expand."

This club is held bi-weekly on Fridays in Sr. Catarina's room (1323). Acts of Kindness Club offers snacks and drinks to all who come and a warm welcome.

"The environment is very welcoming and warm," Katelyn Tran said. "Everybody there is kind or wants to be a kind person and that is what's important."

Members of the acts of kindness club create thank you cards. "I really liked doing that with all my friends," senior Katelyn Tran said. "It gave me an opportunity to be grateful for things I might overlook." Students enjoyed spending time with each other while doing something good for the community. Photo by M. Tran

Senior Thien-An Pham delivers a completed thank you note. "I am impressed with the kids that come in and how joyful they are," staff sponsor Katie Thompson said. "They seem to really love their teachers." Photo by M. Tran

Seniors step up to help kids with needs at Villa Marie

GRETCHEN BRODERSEN
Staff Writer

A handful of Pius X seniors volunteer at Villa Marie School every week. They help shape the young minds of children with disabilities who need additional support.

Villa Marie is a Catholic school that teaches kids ages 6 to 18 with special needs. It provides a living space and opportunities for the students to grow spiritually and develop as individuals despite their differences.

"Not only is it important for kids with special needs to learn, but it's also important because they learn about the faith," senior Jacky Diaz de Leon Sanchez said. "It's a better environment for them and they are treated well."

Senior Makenzie Backman saw an ad for a Villa Marie summer camp last year and decided to start volunteering.

"I feel like it's made me grow better as a person," Backman said. "Before, I didn't really have much experience with volunteering or getting to know people with special needs. Ever since volunteering I feel a lot better about myself and it's easier for me to have conversations with people."

Since becoming close with many of the kids and faculty of Villa Marie, Backman wants to pursue special education in college.

"Going back there makes me feel really connected to the kids, and I have created so many bonds with them and the sisters too," Backman said.

Theology IV teacher Sr. Maria Meza explained that before Villa Marie was formed, the superintendent of Catholic schools, Monsignor James Dawson, noticed there was no special ed program for kids with disabilities in the Catholic school system.

"His idea was to provide a place, a school, that would address the educational, emotional, spiritual, and social needs of these children that have special needs," Meza said. "It seemed like if they did go to public schools, they just kind of fell through the cracks, and they definitely didn't get any kind of spiritual formation."

Villa Marie provides housing, all necessary meals, education, recreational facilities and much more. Beyond that, they care for each student and allow them to learn in a safe, loving environment.

"For many of them, it's the first time they've ever had real friends," Meza said. "They find a sense of belonging, community and affirmation, which causes them to grow in their confidence."

Even on tough days the seniors know the kids will cheer them up and will always give them something to smile about.

"I like being there because they are always so happy and energetic, despite their disabilities," Diaz de Leon Sanchez said. "It has helped me see all the ways that God comes into play in other people. It proves that no matter how hard my day is, I should always be thankful because some people have it worse and they can still find something to be grateful for."

Graphic by T. Ninh

Senior Makenzie Backman volunteers at Villa Marie. "Going back there makes me feel really connected to the kids," Backman said. She volunteers every Tuesday after school. Photo by M. Backman

Lincoln Pius X

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