Assumption Catholic School celebrates 100 years

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

Assumption Catholic School celebrated its 100th year in January, making it one of the oldest parochial schools in Jacksonville. Alumni members and students' parents along with former and current staff members gathered on the Atlantic Boulevard campus for food, drinks and fellowship to celebrate the milestone.

The more than 200 attendees included 150 alumni. Among them were Carol Attenvaugh and Juliette Howard from the class of '55 and Dr. Richard Sollee from the class of '59. Also present, from the class of '88, was Father Jason Trull, who is in his 18th year serving as Assumption's pastor and was recently elected vicar general of the Diocese of St. Augustine. Father Trull is one of 14 alumni who work at Assumption.

Principal Maryann Jimenez was there, too. She attended Assumption Catholic School during her early years, began teaching 3rd grade there in 2010, became assistant principal in 2013. She moved into her current role two years later.

The festivities included tours of the school. A celebratory Mass was held at Assumption Catholic Church, as the community remains forever united in the Eucharist. Along with praise and worship, prayers of thanksgiving were offered for God's blessings bestowed. And there have been many.

HISTORY
Assumption Catholic School has a long, successful history from its 1923 beginnings at the corner of Gary Street and Naldo Avenue in a building that accommodated only 110 students.

In 1948, the land was purchased on Atlantic Boulevard, and the shipyard administration building that existed on the site was converted into a school that opened in September of the following year.

In 1955, the present Assumption Catholic Church was built on property adjacent to the school, followed by construction of the convent in 1958 as growth of the parish and the school continued.

The year 1965 found Monsignor Harold Jordan leading construction of what has since been named Jordan Hall as well as classroom space now dubbed Barry Hall, allowing for the old auditorium to be converted into a library and media center.

The current Kohls Hall was erected in 1977, freeing Jordan Hall for school use. A preschool was formed and, in 1996, the original school building was completely renovated.

The "Heritage & Horizons" building campaign began in 2002 and allowed the 2008 opening of the Parish Family Center, which includes a gym and classrooms for music and art. Construction of the Early Childhood Learning Center and middle school addition followed soon after and were open by 2016.

The Assumption campus continues to grow. Renovations of four classrooms in 2022 allowed for an expansive STREAM wing. Plans are underway to renovate the playground in the coming summer. Outdoor spaces will be elevated over the long term.

Assumption's faculty and administration have evolved over time as well. In the early years, the principal and teachers were primarily nuns. But since 1977, the principal and most of the faculty and staff have been lay Catholics. Students learn weekly now from the Sisters of the Home of the Mother during liturgical events and in school retreats. Father Trull has led the development and growth of Assumption's Youth Ministry Program.

LOOKING FORWARD
With 100 years behind them, the Assumption community looks forward to the future, knowing that the school has been built on a solid foundation with Catholic principles and values that remain unchanged in an ever-changing society.

Kelly Nance, 2nd Grade Teacher, Ann Fletcher, 1st Grade Teacher, Karen Plemons, 3rd Grade Teacher, Wendy Nelms, 8th Grade Teacher, Alicia Alligood, 3rd Grade Teacher, Jennifer Jardine, 1st Grade Teacher, Jennifer Churchill, Assistant Principal, Susanna Elliott, 3rd Grade Teacher and Kristin Spears, 1st Grade Teacher

Academic Administrator Kelli Waterman and Principal Maryann Jimenez

Sister Kelly, Julian Valbuena (former Assumption staff member for 15 years as PE teacher, athletic director, and assistant principal), Shirley Valbuena (2nd grade teacher who has been with ACS for 37 years), Sister Paulette and Sister Anna