



# GESU

Fall  
2023

## Alumni and Friends Newsletter

### Gesu Grad DeLois Cooke Spryszak Takes Helm as Principal

By M.B. Dillon

For the second time in Gesu School's 99-year history, a Gesu graduate has taken the helm as principal. DeLois Cooke Spryszak '82 succeeds Brian O'Rourke who stepped down last spring. John Champion '63 is the only other graduate to fill the top job at Gesu.

Joining a staff that includes five other Gesu alumni makes returning to her alma mater extra special for Mrs. Spryszak. "To come back and to also be able to work with other Gesu alums who are all here together at this time – I think that is a testimony to what Gesu puts out in terms of students, in terms of giving back, and in terms of dedication to education. I think that speaks volumes," she said.

"It has been a homecoming. It's been a discovery, and it's almost like lifting the veil and seeing behind the curtain," added Mrs. Spryszak, who grew up on Warrington, one of four children born to Ella Randolph Cooke, a convert to Catholicism and longtime public-school educator, and Heyward Cooke, a funeral director. "I've gotten to go into areas I only heard whispers about when I was young. They still haven't taken me down in the tunnel, but I think that's coming.

"There was always this mystique about Gesu from my youngest memories," said Mrs. Spryszak, recalling that while stuck at Sugar and Spice Nursery School, she envied her brother Randy, then in kindergarten at Gesu. "The following year, I was old enough to attend school here, and I haven't left," she said. "I remember being fascinated with the school, fascinated with being here.

"As parishioners, our family have been regular attendees at 5 p.m. Mass on Saturdays for over two decades now," said Mrs. Spryszak. "My husband Joe and I both serve as ushers in the church. Our children were educated here. My son Andrew was Class of 2009 and my daughter Mina was Class of 2013. They are off doing their own things, but they still have connections with their friends from Gesu, which is pretty awesome." Mrs. Spryszak's sister Carretta Cooke still lives in the neighborhood and sings in the Gesu choir.

Mrs. Spryszak took the "solid academic foundation" she gained at Gesu, and at home where education was prized, and ran with it. After graduating from the Academy of the Sacred Heart, she earned a bachelor's degree in English and a teaching certificate at Michigan State University. "My intention was to work as a substitute teacher while pursuing law school in the evening," she said. "The week after I finished my degree in December I started working as a substitute teacher in Detroit and never looked back. I never took the L.S.A.T. I felt like I was where I needed to be, and I became a French and English teacher at Osborn High School," she said. "I loved the interaction with the students. You can mold them, so it was wonderful to work there."



Principal DeLois Cooke Spryszak

After 9 years in the classroom, Mrs. Spryszak became a staff development specialist with Detroit Public Schools, a job she held for 8 years. "I was assigned to many schools to present professional development for teachers, administrators and parents. I then became assistant principal at Western International High School in southwest Detroit in 2008," Ms. Spryszak said. "I stayed at Western until 2011, then held the same position at Detroit School of Arts in Midtown from 2011-2014.

"Then in 2014, I became the principal. There were about 450 students from all over the city, giving their heart and soul to learn their craft in music, drama and dance.

"In 2018, I had an opportunity to work in the Birmingham Public School District as assistant principal at Groves High School. I stayed until 2020, then went to Seaholm High School in the Fall of 2020 as assistant principal and remained there 'til I left this past July."

## FAWN DAY WOULDN'T BE ANYWHERE ELSE

By M.B. Dillon

Ask Gesu preschool director Fawn Haney Day, '76, if she ever envisioned herself returning to her alma mater and you get an interesting answer.

"Miss Horgan was my third-grade teacher. She was just fantastic," said Mrs. Day. "I always said, 'I want to be a teacher just like her.' That's the way she made me feel. In fact, in the journal I kept when I was going here I wrote, 'I want to be a teacher.' You're a kid and you say you want to teach...I never saw myself being back here, but it was almost like a natural progression.

"We grew up on Oak Drive; my parents still live on Oak Drive," said Mrs. Day, the eldest of Tess and Dr. James Haney's



Preschool Director Fawn Haney Day

six children, all of whom attended Gesu. "A lot of the people I went to school with were on Oak Drive. It was that family feel that we all had. It was why I came back here.

"High school? I remember bits and pieces," said Mrs. Day of her Immaculata years. "But Gesu is what I really, really remember. I loved Gesu.

The quality of education here was top tier. Our parents took us to Gesu Church every week. That foundation was set

at Gesu. So now, being able to talk to the children about God and having that freedom I couldn't have at a public school – laying that foundation in their lives is very important and I don't take that lightly.

"It was at the University of Detroit where I really got into education," she said. "I started off as a social-work major at Oakland University because then I wanted to be a school counselor. I always knew I wanted to work with children. I ended up back at U of D where my parents met and graduated from, and I loved U of D."

The family tradition at Gesu carries on. "All four of my

children and their best friends all graduated from Gesu," said Mrs. Day, who started at the preschool in 1995. "Brianna graduated in 2004, Scott in 2006, Jordan in 2009 and Taylor in 2011. My son Jordan has a little girl who will be in preschool with me next year.

"My children had my teachers," she continued. "You can say they were too old, but it's what drew me; that stability. I've been here so long now I'm actually seeing another generation. These kids I watched grow up are now bringing their children back. It's those ties. Where can you go and get that? I'm saying, 'I'm going to be 90 here, and you all are never going to let me retire.'"

"I love my job. I'm director of the preschool, but I'm a preschool teacher," Mrs. Day said. "We are a team. There are five of us, and I couldn't do it without them. We have fun in the classrooms. We laugh, we joke, we play. I want my students to be excited about learning. I tell them, 'This is just the beginning. You could be a doctor, a lawyer, an astronaut; now you can be president of the United States. You can be anything you want to be.' My prayer is that they stay here and they get what I had and my children had. It's what brought me back.

"What I want is for my students to say, 'This was the best experience I had in school,'" Mrs. Day said. "I hope they look back at preschool and remember things that they did."

"Mrs. Day is amused practically every year by her preschoolers and their malaprop. "I'm in the Lord's Prayer," she said. "I'm telling you it's so funny. I have parents who say, 'We were praying, and listening to my child, I realize he or she is saying, 'Give us Miss Day, our daily bread...'" Where can you go and make it into prayers like that? It's those little things that just inspire me to keep going on.

"The fact that now we're going to be Jesuit-run I'm really excited about," Mrs. Day said. "I asked Father, 'What does that mean for us?' What Father Snow said to me excited me even more. He said it's about God being the center. At the end of the day, what we should want for these children is for them to know who God is, and to have an experience of who Jesus Christ is. It really is about God and His Son. Now being Jesuit-run, we can really emphasize that within our teaching."



Sean James, former Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Gesu Teacher and Fr. Joe Carey '54, visited Gesu School from Notre Dame University to evaluate a current ACE middle school teacher.



Students find time to read wherever they are.



Gesu 2nd graders drop off their donations for the holiday food drive.

Mrs. Spryszak's oldest sister, the late Hon. Marcia G. Cooke, a federal judge in Florida, had a hand in filling Gesu's vacancy. "She was very connected to her alumni association at Georgetown University," said Mrs. Spryszak. "She had befriended several Jesuit priests, and some of them were affiliated with various Jesuit schools or private schools around the country. She asked me, 'Have you ever considered working for a private school or Catholic school? They are always looking for talented educators. This is something you should think about.' I said I'd give it some thought.

"Then my sister became ill with cancer and I became her caregiver. When she was at her sickest, she just looked at me one day and said, 'I really want you to be principal of Gesu School.' I said, 'Ok, I don't think the job is open, but I'll try.' It was something we had talked about off and on. We had such a strong connection to Gesu over the years. We really want the school to grow and to prosper, and we both knew that sometimes you have to take someone who has that deep, deep connection to foster everything that made it great.

"That was in January of this year. And so, the job did become available later in the year. I applied, and they picked me. My sister passed January 27, 2023 and I signed my official contract to begin the job on July 27, 6 months from the day she died. I'm sure there was some divine intervention," said Mrs. Spryszak.

"I have vivid memories of reading competitions, time in the library, and having story time when we were good. I think about that very fondly. I definitely attribute my love of and ability to write to Gesu. I have my conversations with the middle school students – they groan and roll their eyes because they're pre-teens – and I tell them, 'This is information you are going to need. You are going to learn this well. I know you feel that it's boring or overwhelming, but you really need to focus on having solid reading and writing skills to move on to the next level and be successful.'

"We start every day with prayer. We have our weekly liturgy, and students have religion classes," Mrs. Spryszak said. "I want students to know that even though they may not be Catholic in the official sense of the word that we honor them and we want to help them develop their relationship with God and their faith journey in whatever form it takes."

Gesu is thriving, Mrs. Spryszak added. "I think people understand we are serious about our mission of education. We truly are here for the children to learn. The other thing I hear from parents, and I sense it, is they know we care for the students. We genuinely have their best interests at heart as they learn, grow and develop. In addition to the teachers, we have dedicated staff members – our maintenance crew, our clerical crew and staff – who work at the parish center. They all love Gesu for their own reasons and it shows in their dedication to their work here.

"I am excited by our growing connection to being a Jesuit school," she said. "We will be in a network of other Jesuit schools nationwide with similar goals. These are historic Catholic schools with the mission to continue the Catholic education for people in those communities. I'm also excited by the opportunity of sharing what goes on at Gesu with people who don't know about us, people who may have heard about us and thought we may have closed. I'm eager to let them know we are here and we are growing.

"I would like alumni to know Gesu will always be home to them. I encourage them to reach out in whatever ways they can to make a connection with their school to honor and celebrate what Gesu has been to them. And I want them to please feel free to help us on our mission with a financial contribution. We try to make a little bit go a long way.

"Our school centennial is next summer," said the principal. "I am excited by the celebration we are going to have around this, and I am excited to be a part of the

school as it starts its next 100 years."



## Gesu to become Jesuit School

*The Midwest Jesuit province has given Gesu School permission to join the Jesuit network of schools (JSN). Gesu will become the 73rd school in the United States and the only Jesuit elementary school in Michigan. Gesu will collaborate with other Jesuit schools around the country and our staff and students will be immersed in the Jesuit pedagogy. Pray for Gesu as we make this transition.*

**For enrollment information at Gesu School, go to <https://www.school.gesudetroit.org/inquiry-form> And join us at Gesu's Open House for perspective families on March 3, 2024.**

## ACE BYERLEIN: A GESU GEM

In 1949, first-year football coach Donald “Ace” Byerlein and his buddy Bill Leoni led the Gesu Giants to a Detroit city championship. Given Byerlein’s sharp recall of his players and their winning season you’d think the 97-year-old was talking about a current team; not a squad that lit up the gridiron 74 years ago.

“Bill Leoni and I had Eddie Piesik, Terry Nagle, Mike Higgins, Terry Roberts and Tony Ruggirello, who was one heck of a running back,” said Byerlein, who played football himself for Gesu, Catholic Central and the University of Detroit. That was a fun year for Bill and I. Many of our players turned out to be wonderful young men who were quite successful.”

The family moved to Detroit and “I entered Gesu in 3rd or 4th grade. Everything was really good at Gesu. I liked the school and everything about it. I had Mrs. Roy for 8th grade; she was a good teacher,” Byerlein said. “My twin brother and I were both on patrol. We were in charge of making sure children were able to cross the street safely at Oak, Warrington and Quincy.”

Byerlein describes his late twin John, a former U.S. Coast Guard captain, as “the brainy one.” Speaking of himself as a grade-schooler, Byerlein said, “I was



Ace Byerlein with his wife of 70 years Phyllis

able to graduate and get out of there in 1939. We moved from Gesu parish down to Trowbridge in Blessed Sacrament,” two blocks from Catholic Central.

Byerlein was drafted into the service during World War II after graduating in 1943 from CC. “I had a

blind spot all my life in my left eye, so I really could only see 100 percent out of the right eye,” he said. “I got an honorable discharge from the Great Lakes Naval Station in Chicago. “

While studying business at U of D on a baseball and football scholarship, Byerlein landed a job at the race track and met the love of his life, Phyllis Lyons, also a U of D student. We met and thought we’d make a good couple.”

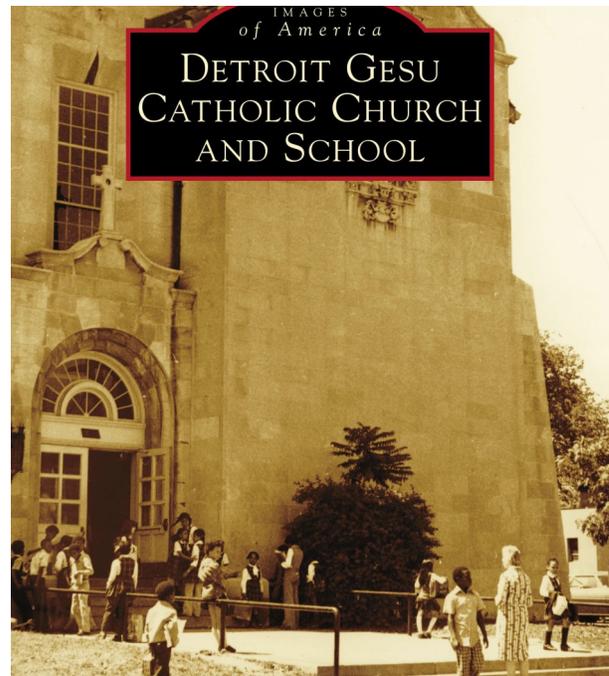
Ace and Phyllis, who celebrated their 70th anniversary in June, are the parents of Nancy, Ellen, Anne, Peter and Bob, grandparents of six, and great-grandparents of three. For 65 years, they’ve been active parishioners at Holy Name in Birmingham where they reside.

After working for 18 years in insurance, Byerlein was hired by Gesu’s T. John Lesinski as court administrator for the state Court of Appeals, a position he held from 1969 until his retirement in 1997. He did such a superb job that in 1998, then-Chief Judge Maura Corrigan established the “Ace Award,” bestowed annually to an exemplary court staffer.

Byerlein also was active with the U of D alumni club and served on the alumni board. “I was president when Dave DeBusschere was playing for us and we got invited to the NIT tournament in Madison Square Garden,” he said. “We hosted a reception for alumni in the New York area before the game. We got beat by Dayton, but at least I got that trip out of it.

“Faith, marriage and family have been my life,” said Byerlein. “My Catholic faith has been guiding me through all my years.” It gladdens his heart knowing Gesu continues to make the same thing possible for others. “Gesu has good teachers, good participation in athletics, and a very fine reputation. It says an awful lot that almost 12,000 students have graduated from Gesu over the years,” he said. “Catholic education is very, very important. It’s great that alumni and donors contribute to scholarships so that families can afford to send their children to Gesu today.”

*To read the complete interview, please go to [school.gesudetroit.org/alumni](http://school.gesudetroit.org/alumni)*



To learn more about Gesu history, go to  
<https://www.school.gesudetroit.org/>  
to order this book

## KATERI HANEY CRISWELL BACK HOME at GESU

In the morning when teacher's aide Kateri Criswell arrives at Gesu with her 8th-grade daughter Layla and heads to the preschool classroom, she has a feeling probably no other staffer experiences – aside from her sister, fellow teacher Fawn Day.

"It's funny because walking in, I almost feel like my mom," said Ms. Criswell. "My mother (Tess Haney) worked here when I went here. She did bus committee, she worked the lunch hour and in the finance office. She did that for years. If my classmates don't remember me, they will remember my mom. She was a disciplinarian, and she was always around. Now I'm here while my kids are here. In essence, I've kind of turned into my mom.

"My mom and dad lived a block-and-a-half down the street on Oak Drive, they still do today. We were actually parishioners as well. I live in the neighborhood, down from U of D High School, so I've always been in the neighborhood," said Mrs. Criswell, whose 5 siblings also attended Gesu.



Mrs. Kateri Haney Criswell

After graduating in '84, Ms. Criswell attended Shrine High School and studied architecture at Lawrence Technological University. She transferred to the University of Detroit and then to Wayne State University where she earned her degree in graphic design.

Ms. Criswell used her talents doing print work at a Southfield ad agency for 11 years before giving birth to two

children and becoming a stay-at-home mom. "When my son was ready to go to school, I wanted to do something where I could work around the kids' schedule. My sister Fawn Day was Gesu's preschool director and I asked if I could work here. That was 11 years ago," she said.

Never was there a question where the Criswell children would go to school. "When I get together with my Gesu classmates, we all say the same thing: Gesu was our best school experience," Ms. Criswell said. "I wanted my kids to have the same experience I had. The quality of my education here was excellent. I was fully prepared for Shrine and everywhere I went.

"I think there were 166 kids in my graduating class," she added. "Gesu was jam-packed; four classes per grade. But there was order. The nuns were working here. I can't explain it. It was great. It really was. "What I love most about Gesu is the Christian environment; the spirit of community and family," added Ms. Criswell. "I think it's the same for our parents. They bring their children here because they like the Christian environment."

Coming to work each day is a joy, she said. "I love my job. I love this age group because they are big boys and big girls, but still babies," Ms. Criswell said. "We can give them hugs and high fives. We expect them to do the work, but we can still baby them sometimes. When they say, 'Ms. Kateri, I love you!' – and they mean it – I can say I love you too. It's so rewarding to be able to help make their first school experience a good one and to help make them love going to school."

## BRIANA BROWN BRINGS WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE to KINDERGARTNERS at her ALMA MATER

Gesu School could not have asked for a kindergarten teacher with better credentials than those of Briana Charleston Brown '05. Mrs. Brown, whose son Cassidy is a Gesu preschooler, is elated. "For me, this feels like coming full circle; being able to return and give back to a place that's given me just so much. I love being here," she said.

Mrs. Brown grew up in Detroit's New Center area and attended Gesu from first-eighth grade. "My mom really liked the education and curriculum here. She also liked the religious aspect of the school. That was one of her main reasons for sending me here, and one of my main reasons for coming back," said Mrs. Brown, who often walked to and from Gesu with her grandmother who lives near Seven Mile and Curtis.

"My parents (Dorthea and Darrel) loved to hear that I loved all my teachers," Mrs. Brown said. "They were all very kind and knowledgeable and always warm and welcoming. I feel like they went the extra mile for me all the time. I actually still talk to one of them. She still checks in."

As a Henry Ford Academy 9th-grader, "I felt prepared. I did very well in my classes there," she said. Mrs. Brown earned a veterinary-technician degree and a sign-language certificate from Wayne County Community College. "Then I went to Madonna University and got my bachelor's degree in childhood development. I also got a sign-language studies degree. One of my main things I really wanted to do is teach children about animals and how to care for animals, and expose them to different animals they may not normally see."

Mrs. Brown taught swimming and lifeguarding at the downtown Detroit YMCA and worked at preschools before teaching kindergarten at Bradford Academy in Southfield.

"I have two boys, and we have always taught them about God," said Mrs. Brown. "We are Baptist and attend church. That is a very big part of our lives. When I was teaching at other schools, I had this whole internal struggle going on. We couldn't just take a moment to stop and pray for something that was going on, because it's not allowed in public schools. To be able to be in a place and a space where I'm able to do that is amazing.

"The whole aura here is totally different," said Mrs. Brown. "I feel like here, the teachers, staff, everyone – they go above and beyond. In other places, sometimes there's just this minimalistic type of vibe, for lack of a better word, where people do only what they're paid to do."

For Mrs. Brown, to have landed a position at Gesu where job openings are rare and to be on staff with legendary teachers is a dream come true. "Ms. Schick and Mrs. Day were here when I was a student here," she said. "Everyone raved about them, so to be able to work with them – I've just been in awe. To this day, parents give them so much credit for how their students have progressed. I say, 'Wow, can I measure up to what they do?'"



Mrs. Briana Brown

If student progress and parental involvement are indicators, Mrs. Brown needn't worry. "My students are absolutely brilliant. That's the first thing. They are so kind and so respectful. They have compassion for living things, animals, creatures and people," said Mrs. Brown, smiling. "They are caring. Just the conversations in the classroom and the willingness to help each other...they are reading sentences and eager to learn. It makes a teacher, like, 'What I'm do-

## KIRSTEN DOUGLAS-COOKE NAMED STUDENT SUPPORT COORDINATOR

For 1978 Gesu graduate Kirsten Douglas-Cooke, life has come full circle – and she couldn't be happier. After distinguishing herself in the fields of public-school education and professional counseling, Ms. Douglas-Cooke returned to Gesu last year as an assistant preschool teacher and quickly found her niche.

While she greatly enjoys working with preschoolers, she realized she could fill an additional role. "I love working with the students," said Ms. Douglas-Cooke, whose children attended Gesu and whose grandson is a current preschooler. "Last year, I found another need. Because there is so much going on here, and because of my background in education and in counseling, I went to the principal and told him we really needed a person like a dean of students, a support coordinator to work with the children and some of the issues they were having personally and academically. Over this past summer, I was offered the position of student support coordinator.

"I love the fact that UDJ and UDMercy students come here and work with students. It's a great thing for our kids," added Ms. Douglas-Cooke, who previously worked for Oak Park schools and in corporate counseling.

For Ms. Douglas-Cooke, who grew up in Palmer Woods, Gesu's halls echo with wonderful memories. "Education-wise and family-wise, it's a great experience coming here," she said. "I just wish more students would have experienced having the I.H.M. nuns, especially our principal Sr. Stella. Back in the day, there were almost 1,000 kids here. We were full to capacity. Sr. Stella knew everybody's name. Amazing. That was a testimony in itself; you could tell she really cared about her students, the school and the community.



Mrs. Kirsten Douglas-Cooke

"If you ask me what I love about Gesu, it's the community," Ms. Douglas-Cooke said. "My daughter Lauren is still very close to friends she started with here in preschool. So is my son Eric. Eric is on the Detroit Police force, and his partner is actually his classmate from here. I am still close to some of the parents of children my kids went to school with. A lot of them come back. Their children are here and their grandchildren are here.

"I also love the commitment students have to being here, the commitment teachers have to the students and also the community's commitment," said Ms. Douglas-Cooke. "I tell the kids, 'This is an experience that will help you grow and that will last a lifetime.' We still have people who come back and contribute, who donate large sums of money all the way down to small sums. People are really invested in the school.

"Part of being a member of the Gesu family is giving back," Ms. Douglas-Cooke said. "That is so important. It was installed in us when we were here – it's important to give back."

## ALUMNUS TERRY EDWARDS CAN'T BELIEVE HIS GOOD FORTUNE

If she could see him now, the late Renee Edwards would be proud of her son Terry. "It's because of her I ended up coming here," said Edwards, who graduated from Gesu in 1990 and hired on as custodian in April at his alma mater. "Mom wanted me to go to a Catholic school, and she chose this one. I started at Gesu in first grade and stayed all the way to eighth grade. Mom worked at Seven Mile and Livernois at what used to be Farmer Jack's," Edwards said.



Terry Edwards

Edwards sang too. "I was in the children's choir pretty much the whole time I was here. I enjoyed it. It was kind of cool to be around my fellow classmates doing something with them outside of class. At Gesu, you were always singing something, always singing a song in some class," said Edwards, lighting up the room with his infectious smile.

Gesu introduced Edwards to athletics. "It was the first time I played on a baseball team or ran track. That was always fun. I still think I'm the fastest person in this school today," he said. "Gesu was where I really got into sports programs."

Family members followed the Edwards to Gesu. "My niece and nephew went here. My cousin went here because of me. We were like brothers," he said.

"I went to St. Martin de Porres High School. I ran track and played football there," Edwards continued. "I ended up getting a track scholarship to Siena Heights University in Adrian, MI. I got my bachelor's in sculpture and woodworking.

"This is a tough old building. You try to drill holes in some of these bricks and the drill bits break. One thing about having an older building is sometimes you have to plan for the worst, just in case. I'm learning something all the time," said Edwards, who works with Gesu's director of operations, building engineer and I.T. specialist. "I've been crawling in tunnels under classrooms people don't even know about.

"Coming back here is like *deja vu*. The building is pretty much the same as when I was here, part of it is different. But you still have that same atmosphere of being loved," said Edwards.

"I like working with everybody. That's why I'm always coming in, trying to put a smile on their faces because I have no idea what they're going through with the kids. It always makes me smile to see the teachers getting children ready for the same journey I went through. I was baptized here, confirmed here... everything I did, it was here. It makes me happy that it's still going on. Kids are respectful and they appreciate the learning they're getting.

"I've been in Catholic schools my whole life. I've loved it," said Edwards. "It's because of Gesu I learned how to respect people, be disciplined, have respect for elders and have respect for others. I realized when I got older everybody had good things to say about me because of the way I treat people. That goes all the way back to how I grew up. And I was here.

"My mom died, but when I told my family I was coming to work here, they were ecstatic. My family knows she is definitely smiling. People say I look just like her and have her smile," he said, beaming. "Every day I come into work, that little Terry still comes out when I walk around. I still can't believe I'm working here. I love it."

ing is working.’

“I can’t say enough about their parents,” Mrs. Brown added. “They are working with me as a team. They are always so willing to help, and so responsive.

“My thing is, the school is still here, and they have a very strong base for education and religion. Everyone I’ve encountered who works here loves what they do,” said Mrs. Brown. “They honestly care about each one of the students as their own. They create their own bonds.” She’s seeing it through the eyes of her son, Cassidy. “He loves school. He tells everyone, ‘I go to Gesu Pre-school.’ We live 7 minutes away from here and take the Lodge. The other day, our ramp was closed down. He is so used to us going a specific way, he thought I was taking him to another school. He was so upset. He said, ‘I don’t want to go to another school! You have to take me to see Mrs. Day!’

“It’s like a big family. Not only do you make connections with your co-workers, but you also have a lot of different families who come because they are invested in what we are doing here,” Mrs. Brown said. “They continue to bring themselves, family and others to Gesu. People really believe in what we’re doing here.

“I feel like you can only believe in it if you’ve seen that the people teaching here and the students actually believe in what they are doing, which is believing in our mission statement: Educating Detroit’s future by building a culture of success for the greater glory of God.”



## Gesu Adopts Jesuit Grad at Grad

*As an independent Jesuit school, our students will work to master these Ignatian principles:*

*Growing      Learning      Seeking God*  
*Loving      Seeking Justice*

# Alumni Notes

**Pauline Brennan '43:** Congratulations on the 98th anniversary of Gesu Catholic School! Long may it continue into future generations of Catholic education! With prayers and good wishes.

**Daniel Burress '47:** I enjoyed seeing the 1963 graduating class picture on your last mailing. It brought back memories. Graduated from Gesu in 1947, High School 1951, served a couple of years in the Army, worked for General Motors, was admitted to the Bar and started practicing law in January of 1963, appointed to the Livingston County Circuit Court in 1986, forced into retirement in 2005, married 65 years, and still working. I was the last of the Burress boys to attend Gesu, and am the last one still standing. My oldest brother Jim was an attorney in California. A lot of water over the dam since then. Glad to see that Gesu is still active and educating children with moral values and the skills to survive in this world. Keep up the good work.

**Joanne Thompson O'Hara '49:** Wonderful education and great memories.

**Walter Kelly '51:** Keep up the great work you are doing.

**Ronald Beadle '55:** Retired for 20 years after teaching 34 years in Richmond, MI. Many fond memories from my time at Gesu.

**Jerome Nadolski '57: Richard Nadolski '60** sold his business in Baltimore and recovering from cancer, **Jerry '57** retired from DTE and recovering from Agent Orange, **David '65** re-

tired from the FBI, **Patricia** retired and residing in South Carolina and **Mark '55** alive and well.

**Michael Cooney '60:** I moved back to Michigan in 2022.

**Bruce Angel '66:** Happily retired (2 years) after 40 years of nursing.

**Thomas Zink '66:** Hello Gesu, where I learned to write...A shout out to Sr. Agnes Terese, (K), Sr. Mary Magdalen (1), Sr. Edward Marie, (2), Miss O'Keefe (3), Sr. Mary Ferdinan (4), Mr. Robert Polard (5), Sr. Ann Miriam (6), Sr. Clare Marie (7), Mr. Thomas Findley (7), Mrs. McLain (8). 10 years at Gesu.

**Patrick Duggan '67:** The 100-year celebration was a profoundly moving event in the lives of so many alumni, including me. Fantastic job!

**Paul Janisse '67:** AMDG!

**William Patrick Colombo '70:** John D. Colombo lived in Gesu Parish from 1934-1978. John was a major in the USAF in WWII. He is listed on the Gesu Church Honor Roll along with his brother William and cousin Paul.

**William Girardot '82:** Mrs. Lynn Barrett: an exceptional teacher and an even more exceptional human being. Rest in peace. Thanks for instilling in us a love for the English language. Bill and Nancy Girardot

*We love hearing from alumni! Go to <https://www.school.gesudetroit.org/alumni> or call Anita Sevier 313-863-4677.*

***Please consider Gesu School for your end of year contributions.***

***Thank you***

## **Zero Waste Project**



Gesu share table



Students sorting the lunch waste



Students stacking trays

Gesu students are protecting the planet, looking out for their classmates, and creating new school resources with a few simple changes in the cafeteria. The school is working toward a goal of creating zero waste, and a large component of this challenge is looking into reducing cafeteria food waste.

At the end of last year, Gesu tossed about fifteen bags of cafeteria waste each day. This year, we have cut that amount back by a whopping 87%. Now, the custodial person can make one trip to the dumpster per day—with just one bag in each hand. In trash bags alone, the school saves \$150 every four weeks.

The school set up a share table where students can place unopened and unwanted lunch items. Other students can pick any items they like from the table, and any leftovers go to the afterschool program for students to snack on or take home. The share table alone prevents about 40%

of what was getting tossed in the previous year. In addition to saving a lot of food from the dumpster, it helps students who might not have enough to eat at lunchtime. Another change to the cafeteria setup is in trash collection. Where the school used to have five trash bins, there's now only one. In place of those extra trash bins, the school has added four five-gallon buckets: one for meat scraps, one for fruit and vegetable scraps, one for milk, and one for recycling.

Students as young as kindergarten easily sort the remains of their lunch into the buckets and stack their trays, which will soon be replaced with reusable trays.

After the last lunch period of the day, student volunteers take the five-gallon buckets of food to the Earthcube compost-er which handles all the cafeteria's food waste, including dairy and meat. With the addition of leaves and wood shavings that help create the right balance for decomposition, the day's food scraps get a new life as compost for the school grounds.