

March 14, 2020 | Issue 2020.6

In This Issue

- A message from the PTO regarding closure impacts
- Fundraising update
- Hot lunch--instructions regarding April orders
- How to talk to your children about COVID-19

Update from the PTO Board

Dear Saint Michael School community,

At our PTO meetings this week, we had a chance to discuss our response and our concerns relative to the impact of COVID 19. All of us recognized that the decision to close is in the best interest of our community, locally and globally! We also talked about the real and potential impacts to learning and to our PTO events.

Mrs. Messina addressed our response plan relative to learning in her letter on Friday morning. Here is a [copy of the letter](#) for your reference. Monday was already scheduled to be a day off from school, and the teachers will be using that day to confirm their distance learning plans. If you haven't heard from your students' teachers yet, assume the communication will come on Monday.

With regard to our fundraisers and events:

RAFFLE -- It will be drawn on Friday afternoon! You must TURN IN YOUR TICKETS to the school office by Thursday morning. Mrs. Messina and Mrs. Lawrence will be working at the school during morning hours over the next week and can accept raffle stubs and unsold tickets between the hours of 9 a.m. to noon. **If you have tickets, sold and unsold, we do need them back by Thursday.**

Trivia Night-- Trivia Night is postponed. Given the fluid nature of this reality, the committee will reconvene over spring break to evaluate whether or not to hold the event this school year, or push it to Fall. We will hold the reservations for those who have already purchased tables. In the event attendees can not make the new date, or we determine that the event will be pushed to Fall, we will issue refunds. All of the gift baskets and donated wine will be held for the rescheduled event. If we don't reschedule for this year, the baskets will be used for the golf tournament.

Golf tournament: We are proceeding with planning as if the event will be taking place on its regularly scheduled date, May 18th. However, as part of our planning process, we will include a risk management plan in the event that we need to cancel or postpone this event as well.

For many families, school closures do not mean work closures! We are fortunate to have many first responders and health care workers in our parent/guardian community, some of whom have been warned that they may need to be away from their families for extended periods of

time. Now is the time for us to rise up and support one another whenever we can! Some of us may be in need of child care or other support. I have seen a number of babysitters, teachers, tutors, and aides post their availability to help with child care needs on the Stonington Community forum on Facebook. We also have a Parents of St. Michael School Facebook page, and if you need assistance, or if you can offer assistance, you can use it to ask for help! Mrs. Messina stated that any middle school babysitter who offers to babysit free of charge will earn service hours!

If you are looking for ways to help the community at large:

Consider a donation to the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center. Many area children rely on school for access to meals, and while the town is responding to that need, it's likely the PNC will see an increase in need as well.

Donate blood! There is a regular shortage during cold and flu season, and this new virus is further decreasing the number of donations received.

Call a friend! If you know your friends can not work from home or if someone is sick, they may need your help running an errand, getting meals etc.

Pray. Archbishop Perez in Philadelphia asked congregants to pray the rosary interceding for an end to the pandemic, every night at 8 p.m. Even though you are home and doing so on your own, there is something powerful and calming about knowing that many others are praying the same prayer, at the same time.

Stay home when you can, most definitely if you are sick, and wash your hands. And I would add, smile. It really does help boost your mood and adapt to the changes!

Sincerely,
Rachel Wolgemuth
PTO President

Upcoming Events

**March 19th
ALL RAFFLE
TICKETS DUE**

Important Links

[2019/2020 Calendar](#)

[March Calendar](#)

[Boonli Log in](#)

[Teacher Wish List](#)

[School Handbook](#)

[Honeywell
Emergency Alert](#)

Fundraising Update

The extent of the impact on our annual fundraising goal remains to be seen. We do know that we are already slightly behind schedule when it comes to hitting our \$70K target for the year. The difference can be made up if everyone sells and returns their raffle tickets. This will also provide us with a little buffer if we do have to cancel all public fundraising events!

Our fundraising is a key line item in our school's operating budget. Canceling events will require us to be creative and step up our efforts in other areas.

How can you help?

- 1. Buy up or sell your raffle tickets. And make sure you turn them in by Thursday, noon!**
- 2. Use Scrip!!** If you are shopping online, set up an account and buy a gift card first. You can use that gift card INSTANTLY to pay for the items in your cart. Amazon, Walmart, Target, CVS, Walgreens, and hundreds more stores participate. If we all use SCRIP, we can make up the impact of cancelled events.

We will do the best we can to meet our target, with whatever resources are available to us for the remainder of this year.

[System](#)

[Scrip Website](#)

[Scrip Order Form](#)

[Scrip Online Account
Set-up Instructions](#)

Our priority as a PTO is our community well-being-- both at school and at large. Regardless of the impact to our numbers, our present focus is to do our part in the response to COVID 19, follow the guidance of the CDC and our local health departments, adopt social distancing efforts, and support one another whenever we can.

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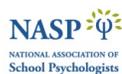
2020 Order Dates for Physical gift cards
(Place your order or submit paper order form before the date listed)

Tuesday, January 21	Tuesday, March 31
Tuesday, February 4	Tuesday, April 28
Wednesday, February 19	Wednesday, May 12
Tuesday, March 3	Tuesday, May 26
Tuesday, March 17	

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Talking to Your Children about Coronavirus

The flyer below was issued by the Society of School Psychologists. It is important our children get their information from us! Here are some helpful guidelines to make challenging conversations easier.



February 29, 2020

Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus) A Parent Resource

A new type of coronavirus, abbreviated COVID-19, is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. It was first detected in China and has now been detected internationally. While the immediate health risk in the United States is low, it is important to plan for any possible outbreaks if the risk level increases in the future.

Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. While we don't know where and to what extent the disease may spread here in the United States, we do know that it is contagious, that the severity of illness can vary from individual to individual, and that there are steps we can take to prevent the spread of infection. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

Specific Guidelines

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
- What you say and do about COVID-19, current prevention efforts, and related events can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

Make yourself available.

- Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
- It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.
- Tell them you love them and give them plenty of affection.



Important Notice Regarding Hot Lunch Ordering

Just in case you didn't see Mrs. Lawrence's email yesterday, I'm kindly asking that parents **please do not order lunches for April.**

I will do my best to have an uninterrupted system once I know more but for now **if you have ordered for April already, please go into your calendar for those days and select Edit or Cancel.** Much like ordering it works the opposite way, so remove items and save each day. When you "checkout" at the end it will issue a credit.

I can take care of this remotely for you so email athavenet@gmail.com if you are struggling.

I have contacted all the restaurants and "banked" our orders for the rest of March. My goal is to use those once we are allowed back to school.

Many Thanks,
Alexandra Thavenet
860-405-5355

Notes from the Editor

Creating a Daily Schedule for Remote Learning

There are many resources online to help families transition to remote learning during the extended school closures. I came across a post from the Neuropsychology & Education Services for Children and Adolescents which suggested families create a daily schedule to provide structure to their days and help lower stress for children. I found their blog post to have helpful suggestions on how to make the most of school closures while practicing social distancing. Please note this is not an official recommendation from school! Just something I thought you might find helpful.

Sincerely, Rachel Wolgemuth

[NESCA blog on making the most of school closures](#)

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