

faith

WEST TENNESSEE

WWW.CDOM.ORG
SEPTEMBER 2022

the sentient spirit
Negotiating with God?

feature story
Saint Benedict High STEM
Program is a cut above

feature story
Serra Club of Memphis: Fostering
vocations to the religious life



THREE DIFFERENT CULTURES,
ONE COMMUNITY OF FAITH



Saint Benedict High STEM Program is a cut above *One and only Diocesan school prepares students for college*

BY JEFF HULETT | PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF RYAN BEATTY '23 AND KAITLYN STODDARD '10

Saint Benedict at Auburndale High School, the only Diocesan high school in Memphis, has prepared young men and young women for college since 1966. Its STEM Program boasts an introduction to engineering and aerial drone courses and even offers college credit through a partnership with the University of Memphis. In case you were wondering, STEM is an acronym for the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Saint Benedict at Auburndale High School has some pretty impressive alumni, too, including former University of Memphis Tiger receiver Joey Magnifico and Campbell Clinic Sports Medicine Specialist Dr. John Hyden, to name a few.

According to Hyden, a 1993 graduate, Saint Benedict at Auburndale (SBA) has a very special place in his heart. His experiences and successes in high school allowed him to go into life and college with a confidence that was vital to his career path.

“SBA is a great choice for high school students in the Memphis area, and I am looking forward to when my kids attend there in the next few years,” Hyden said. “It provides an excellent Catholic education to a diverse student body and prepares its graduates for life after high school in college and beyond. I am particularly impressed with the faculty and staff at the school and their commitment to providing a great learning environment for the students.”

The numbers don't lie either. Just this past year, BA class of 2022 earned almost \$15 million in merit scholarships, were accepted into 117 colleges and universities, and are attending 42 colleges and universities.

I recently had the chance to sit down with Principal Sondra Morris and chat with her about all the great things taking place at Saint Benedict at Auburndale High School.

JH: Can you tell me about the last couple of years and how you managed the pandemic?



“There’s something for everybody here. I love our STEM Program.”

Sondra: I’m most proud of the kids, they never gave up. For example, the homecoming dance last year, led by the Student Government Association, was quickly and effectively moved to the football field due to COVID concerns and it went off without a hitch. We had to literally kick people out when it was over. The pandemic forced us to do things differently and better. The teachers are the rock stars. They are in it because that is where God wants them to be.

JH: What are you looking forward to this year?

Sondra: Getting back to where we used to be. From athletics to theater and choir concerts, we are back. We will clearly implement temperature checks and offer hand sanitizer as well as other preventative measures like air purifiers.

JH: Can you tell me about your STEM Program?

Sondra: I love our STEM Program. From athletics to robotics, there’s something for everybody. SBA has partnered with Project Lead the Way, a project- and problem-based curriculum, which is available to interested students at SBA. Students participating in these classes, taught by a retired Navy officer, Herman Jorgensen, allows students to use their knowledge to identify a problem and, most importantly, to work towards a solution. Often, a solution is not achieved on the first attempt, but this is another way SBA strives to prepare our student body for their future vocations and careers. The Principles of Engineering course has an honors class option. These courses are being taught in our state-of-the-art STEM lab, which includes 3D printing capability and student work and computer stations. SBA partners with the University of Memphis in offering Engineering classes as Dual Enrollment/ Honors courses. AP Computer Science is offered under the STEM Program and is equivalent to a first-semester, college-level course in computer science. We also offer a very unique course called Introduction to Drones, which is the first class offered by WozU and created by Steve Wozniak of Apple Technology fame. SBA was selected as the only school in the country to offer this class.

JH: How does it feel to be the only Diocesan high school in the city?

Sondra: We are blessed. We have great partnerships with Christian Brothers University and Sacred Heart of Jesus High School in Jackson, Tennessee. We are all willing to help each other. Not to mention the great sports rivalries.

JH: What sets Saint Benedict apart from other high schools in Memphis?

Sondra: I think it’s that we are true to our Catholic mission. It’s something the kids experience every day, and it’s lived out through the day and into their extracurricular activities. We can always be better and learn from each other too.

JH: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

Sondra: I like how we address and support individual needs and meet students and families where they are to enhance their educational experiences. We are also implementing a phone pouch program thanks to Yonder that will help us address issues centered around cell phone use in school. I’m also excited about getting back in the classroom after 26 years to lead the Injury Care Course. It’s an elective in our Wellness Department where we will be teaching first aid guidelines. Lastly, I couldn’t be more thrilled about the life skills support we will be providing our students.

Stay tuned for more articles each month about all the schools in the diocese.

Families wishing to learn more about enrollment at St. Benedict at Auburndale can visit www.sbaeagles.org/admissions to sign up for our upcoming Admissions Events, including Open House on Oct. 22 and Feb. 4 and “Be an Eagle” Shadow Days throughout the fall and spring. †

JEFF HULETT is a freelance writer, musician and PR consultant in Memphis. He lives in the Vollintine Evergreen neighborhood with his wife Annie; two girls, Ella and Beatrice; and dog Chalupa.



SBA has updated the 2022-2023 calendar on its website with an interactive feature to download reminders for your personal calendar. Check it out here.

