

This is a new beginning for the Silent Advocate. We hope you enjoy the new look and feel of our publication. We understand that most people are living busy lives and have little time to sit down and read something extra. So we have created a little book of short stories and photographs that should be a quick read for just about anyone. We are proud to say that the Silent Advocate continues to be written and designed by our own PR Department. This new format will save us thousands of dollars each year. Look for a new Silent Advocate in the fall, spring, and summer.



The picture above was taken of me many years ago. I don't recall exactly what I was looking at with this young student, but whatever it was I'm sure we both saw things very differently. With the help of a small magnifying glass in hand, he could see beyond the mere shape and color of anything on the page. He could see details – so much more than I could see with my naked eyes. I was “seeing” but he was “examining”.

In February I received a rare opportunity to do some examining of my own. At our staff appreciation luncheon I was honored by the

February 13th has been proclaimed “Greg Ernst Day” in the City of Evendale, Ohio. Greg Ernst Sr. received the honor from the Mayor of Evendale for dedicating over 42 years of his life to St. Rita School for the Deaf.



Executive Director, Greg Ernst Sr. accepts a photo collage from friend Maryanne Stansfield (Director of Special Services)

city of Evendale for my service to St. Rita School. Knowing how I hate surprises, those closest to me recognized that I was a bit uncomfortable. The success of St. Rita could never be attributed to one person. Over the past 42 years I've had the pleasure of working with many outstanding people who have embraced the mission of educating deaf and hard of hearing students at our school. Dutiful teachers, staff, parents, and supporters have all helped me along the way. For this I am thankful. I am also thankful for those old embarrassing photographs of myself that were ever so kindly projected on a big screen for the entire gym to see. For a few moments my life flashed before me. Those old photos brought back memories that helped many of us take another look at the details of the past. Being honored that day was an opportunity to take out my own magnifying glass and examine the meaning of my life. It was a chance to see the details and hold on to the good...

Gregory Ernst



St. Rita Live

telling the story...

St. Rita recently took over the airwaves when Public Relations representative, Angela Frith co-hosted WMKV's Grandparenting Today show on February 26th. On January 9th St. Rita Master Gardener, Twial Deane was a guest on WAIF's "Diggin In" show. They made our school proud when they informed and inspired listeners with heartfelt stories about the children at St. Rita School.

Other guests with Angela on WMKV: Ms. Cheryl Stratman, grandparent of St. Rita student, Ashlye Stratman & Mr. Gregory Ernst, Executive Director of St. Rita School for the Deaf.

Excerpts from WMKV's "Grandparenting Today" Program

Sue Zimmerman (host for WMKV) : Angela enjoys seeing the children everyday at school and loves to hear all the new things they are accomplishing. Each one of the children at St. Rita School for the Deaf has a story. She loves to hear their stories and share them with others. Welcome Angela, it is wonderful to have you here.

Years ago when I was a girl scout leader and my daughter was in the sixth grade we shared a scout meeting with St. Rita. It was one of the most meaningful days. Sister Bernadette Marie was the scout leader at St. Rita and she brought the scouts to the gym at Lakeside school where we shared that special day. We had cupcakes and a birthday party for one of the girls. She stood on a chair because she was so little and we all sang happy birthday. She signed and voiced and had the other kids do the same if they could. Oh, those kids (*with emotion*). It was really touching how that was. Even years later my daughter and her friends said that was the best scout meeting they ever had.

Angela: Thanks for sharing that story and thanks for inviting us to be here. Kids at St. Rita come from all different backgrounds. We accept kids from different states and countries. This year we have kids from the Bahamas and Africa. It is always interesting because when they walk in our doors they all have a different background and a different language level and that is where our comprehensive communication philosophy comes in to play. We take them where they are and start building their language and communication skills whether it's playing puzzles, dancing on the floor, signing or using pictures to communicate. We'll do whatever it takes to get that child to develop their language.



We have many special programs at St. Rita. One of my favorite programs is our LOFT program. It stands for Language Opportunities for Tots and it started about 12 years ago. We can start children as early as six weeks of age and by the time they are nine months old they should start signing simple signs like more, eat, or milk.

The teachers are really neat because they do more than just your typical activities. Last August the 2-year-olds went down to our learning Gardens and made mud pies, literally. They were all in their bathing suites and little aprons. Twila, our Master Gardener sprayed water on the hillside and turned it into a big mud pit and these 2-year-olds were making mud pies. By the end they were rubbing it all over themselves, throwing mud at each other and spraying each other with water. They were having the time of their life, even

the teachers were getting wet and laughing out loud. It was such a great sensory activity.

Sue: I bet that pulls you in often.

Angela: Oh yes (with laughter). Cheryl, let's talk about Ashlye for a little bit. I know she started at St. Rita 12 years ago and you are her grandmother

and primary guardian. How has Ashlye grown since she started at St. Rita. What kind of things have you seen her accomplish over the years?

Cheryl: Ashlye has learned more spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. She is just such a well-rounded person now. It just makes your heart melt when you see what kind of person she has become. And it is all because of St. Rita School.

Angela: That's great. Greg, do you have any special stories you remember about Ashlye when she first came to St. Rita?

Gregory: I do remember the first time she got up on the stage to perform with the signing choir or as part of a class skit. I really did not expect her to be able to do that. That was an amazing feat to me and I'm sure Cheryl felt the same way. Because we are a small school we are able to provide a lot of opportunities for these students that they would not experience if they were out in the regular mainstream with a large number of kids in a classroom. And I just think having these opportunities available for your child or grandchild is a valuable part of their education.

Sue: We have another caller. Allan, Hello. It's the General Manager of WMKV on the phone.

Allan: I feel like I have a vested interest in this program because my lovely wife works at St. Rita. I've just been at a rotary meeting where they were talking about how we need to talk positively about Cincinnati and the "gems" that we have in the area. I think St. Rita School is one of the most special "gems", not just for this region but for the whole country and I would encourage our listeners who have the resources to consider investing in St. Rita and in the children there. It is a very special program and we are honored to have Greg, Angie and Cheryl as part of today's programming. And we appreciate so much what you are doing for the community and for our children.



Excerpts from WAIF's "Diggin In" Program

Linda (host for WAIF): I'm here today with my guest Twila Deane from St. Rita School for the Deaf. The subject of our discussion today is the gardening program at St. Rita. What are the number of students that work in the garden, pre-school through 8th grade?

Twila: I see approximately 70 children every week. When they come down it tends to be a time when I think of myself as a grandma, welcoming them to the garden. Some see me as a mom, but I think that is being very gracious. So I think of myself as a grandma. It's a wonderful occasion for me, especially when it's warm weather because then I can stand at the top of the garden and see them exit the school building to come out into the garden area. And then I like to wait for them because it just seems more like a welcoming, like "oh, good, you are here. You've come for a visit."

Linda: How long do they get to spend in the garden each day?

Twila: 45 minutes – that's once a week. There are different classes during the day. We have very small classes. There can be about 5 to a class, sometimes a little more. That gives us an opportunity to spend a lot of time with each student. And with the gardening, what I enjoy, it gives them the satisfaction of actually having accomplishments that they can see. They have made

many improvements. I would say that something phenomenal has happened for me: when they came back in the fall, they came down to the garden and I noticed a difference. They had taken ownership of the garden. Now, I've been there since the year 2000 so the garden has been a part of the curriculum for the last three years to where there are more formal classes. I noticed this year that some of the students have been there for 3 or 4 years now and they have a stockpile of memories. They now say, "Oh, look, I planted that one. Oh, look, I did that one. Oh, I remember when I had to carry this bench down and, oh, it was so heavy."



I saw a lot of this and thought, "this is their garden. It's not just a garden for children, it's a garden by children". It made an impact on me. I was so happy that they see it as their garden – their place.

i am deaf
i am a christian
i am a dancer

What are you?



During Deaf Awareness Week, St. Rita Almuni, Father Mike Depcik made a pact with grade school students to help at least one person each day.



The week of March 22nd was Deaf Awareness Week at St. Rita School. For a few days teachers and students veered from their typical schedules for personal reflection, discussions and special activities centered around deaf culture. The week began with a 2-day visit from St. Rita graduate, Father Mike Depcik. He spent hours talking to students about their spirituality and encouraging them to think of simple ways to help others. Grade school students were asked to think of one thing they each could do that day to help someone at school. Father Depcik made sure they all committed themselves to their tasks, including such things as opening doors for teachers and helping someone carry his/her books. Later that week, the high school students took part in a deaf-panel discussion off campus. Deaf professionals from the tri-state area spoke about setting goals and embracing your identity. One of the most memorable activities of the week was the ASL storytelling contest. Students had a chance to get on stage and tell stories to their classmates. Silly facial expressions and body language from several talented storytellers left many in the audience laughing till it hurt. Deaf Awareness Week helped our students make a personal connection to their own identities and to each other. By focusing on spirituality, life goals and self-expression, students of all ages grew in their understanding of who they are and who they want to become.

Do not wish to be anything but what you are . . . and try to be that perfectly. - St. Francis de Sales

ALUMNI

Paul knew at an early age that he wanted to go to college and do something meaningful with his life. He felt that was part of his identity.

When a teacher at his public school told him attending college was an unattainable goal, Paul learned something new about his identity. He learned about his strength and his determination. Paul and his parents were determined to find a new school that would be supportive in preparing for college. Their parish in Cleveland informed them about St. Rita School for the Deaf and in 1996 Paul became a student. He made friends right away and was eager to get involved. It wasn't long before Paul became one of the busiest and well-liked students at school. He immersed himself in numerous activities including the Drama club, soccer team, yearbook staff and Optimist club. His outgoing personality made him a great Student Council President his junior and senior year. Paul was even Homecoming King. But it wasn't his new popularity or being involved in activities that got him to college. Paul says it was wonderful teachers like his role model, Maryanne Barth, who made it possible for him to reach his goals. She and other teachers at St. Rita helped him improve his reading and writing skills, and encouraged

him to learn new things. The most important thing they did for Paul was *believe* in him. They knew he could go to college and be successful.

As Paul began his studies at Gallaudet University, his positive attitude and leadership skills continued to grow. While finishing his bachelor's degree in mathematics, Paul decided to coordinate the first 30 Hour Famine Program on campus. It was a huge success and Paul received the award of "Outstanding Student Volunteer of the Year". By the time Paul graduated in May of 2003 he had accumulated 220 hours of community service. With a strong desire to become a teacher for the deaf, Paul decided to attend RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology). He is working towards his Masters of Sciences degree in Secondary Education for the deaf and hard of hearing. Paul is currently doing his student teaching internship at Austine School for the Deaf in Vermont. He says being a role model for his deaf students is the best thing he could be. Paul is now the teacher telling his students that he *believes* in them.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

"Attending St. Rita was the best experience. It changed my life." - Paul Glaser, Class of 1999

“One needs something to believe in, something for which one can have wholehearted enthusiasm.”

- Hannah Senesh

The spring is such a special time of year – everything comes alive again. One can't help but feel the energy and hope that comes with this season.

Every season is full of energy, hope and new growth for the children that walk through the doors of St. Rita School for the Deaf...because of you.

Whether you are a new friend of St. Rita School for the Deaf or a longtime supporter, we value your interest and involvement. We consider you a partner with us in our mission of educating deaf and hard of hearing children. You are a special part of our family. Together, we share a common commitment to the children who depend on us for their education.

As the children depend upon us, we depend on your faithful giving. Whether an annual gift, or a larger estate gift, the more you give, the more we can do. It's that simple. On the other hand, without you – our supporters, we would not exist.

It is through careful and thoughtful planning that the support you have provided to St. Rita

School for the Deaf during your life can continue beyond your lifetime, by including St. Rita School in your will. By making a bequest, you can choose to leave a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or after your family, friends and other obligations have been taken care of, you may designate that the remaining balance go to St. Rita School for the Deaf.

Charitable giving is an important tradition for many people. Making gifts for the benefit of others offers a wonderful way to affirm your values and priorities.

If you have included St. Rita School for the Deaf in your estate plan, please be sure to let us know. We not only would like to express our appreciation, but also want to make sure you are kept up to date with all the developments and future plans at the school. If you would like to talk about ways in which you can make a gift, please contact me.

Remembering

special times

& the ones we love...

The St. Rita Memorial Program is designed to remember loved ones and friends, whether they are living or deceased, on their birthday, anniversary, death or other occasions. Persons enrolled in the memorial program, as well as the donor, are remembered at a special mass and in prayers at St. Rita School for the Deaf every Sunday, Holy Day, and first Friday throughout the year. The memorial program provides important and continuing financial support for the education of the deaf children attending St. Rita School. If you are interested in participating in the memorial program, please call 513-771-7600.



November

50th Wedding Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Magato
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Heuker

Anniversary of Death

Gerry Klemann
Dick & Jeannette Mather
George Kuehnle
Jerry Ullett
William J. Murphy
Edward & Dolores Engel
Robert Ullett
Jerry Ullett

Birthday Greetings

Daniese Engel
Don & Rita Engel
Rosemary Ernst
Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Ernst
Rita Watkins
Mrs. Mary Wilking

Christmas Remembrance

Rose Coltz
Ms. Mary Coltz
Tony Coltz Jr.
Ms. Mary Coltz
James C. Lyons
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck
Tim Munchenburg
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck
Mary A. Myers
Mr. Clifford R. Myers
Toni Lee Paxson
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck
Lawrence H. Steinbeck
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck
Mr. and Mrs. John T. Van Hart
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck

Get Well Wishes for

Mrs. Mary Alexander
Mr. Donald F Heeb
Kailey Grannan
The Mills Family

In Honor of

Mr. and Mrs. John Holzmacher's wedding
Mr. and Mrs. George Brigger

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Martin on their wedding
Dr. and Mrs. Richard Lamping

Phyllis and Paul Walz's wedding anniversary
Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Ernst

In Memory of

Helen Bauer
Charles & Marian Ostholthoff
Leonel Beauchemin
June and George Gibeau
Theresa Beck
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Beck
Henrietta Beckman
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Beckman
Helen Beoberich
Mr. and Mrs. Len Geiger
George V. Beutel
Mr. and Mrs. William McKinney
Clem Bezold
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rebholz
Ed Bittlinger
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Reichel
Flavia Black
Ms. Vera Riesenberg
Nathan Burin
Ann Hendrigsman
Jimmy Caminiti
Mr. and Mrs. Karl Kleeman
Margie Campbell
TK Engineering Associates, Inc.
Co-Workers of Joe Campbell
at P & G
Madeline Cann
Mrs. Janet C. Rossi
Mrs. Evelyn Chenal
Ms. Marilyn Roberts
Jean Colonna
Mrs. Janet C. Rossi
Mr. Matthew Conerty
Ms. Marilyn Roberts
Jeanne R. Cook
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Beckman
Dr. Cormier
Mrs. Regina Steinbeck
Norman Cox
Mrs. Rosemary Pies
Cecillia De Camp
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Macbeth, Sr.
Leonard Dean
Mrs. Marie Mahoney

Mr. and Mrs. Clancy Muchmore
Lee Deddens
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Dwyer
Mrs. Jackie Deters
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Faris
Warren Dexter
Mr. and Mrs. James Dalrymple
Anna Catherine Dietz
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Geraci
Marjorie Dixon
Ms. Patricia Wood
Dr. Kenneth Donnelly
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Metz
Linnie Dunn
Tom & Shirley Woeste
William F. Ernst
Patricia Dilbert
Edward & Dolores Engel
Don & Rita Engel
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ernst
Mrs. Clara Mae Mueller
Mr. Elmer Fritz
Ms. Marilyn Roberts
Ruth Gillette
Jack & Sylvia Ruthven
John (Jack) Gilligan
Ms. Clara Dehner
Mrs. Marie D.ESSERT
Daniel J Glascock
Mrs. Rosemary Pies
Leo H. Gosink
Mr. and Mrs. John Albrinck
Bill & Betty Blom
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Blom
Mr. Carl Bosse
Mr. and Mrs. George Brigger
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Dickson
Mrs. Lawrence Effler
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ernst
Mr. and Mrs. William Finley
Valley Central Savings Bank
Mr. and Mrs. William Fuersich
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Gardner
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Glassmeyer
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Gropp
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hagedorn
Mrs. Betty Heimert
Mr. & Mrs. David M. Kinninger
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kuhlman
Joe Lohmueller
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Lohmueller
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Martin
Richard Matre Family