

# Meet Sister Sarah



*Sister Sarah works in her classroom. (Photo by Erik M. Lunsford  
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*Sister Sarah Heger cut through a tray of raw chicken with a knife and let her fifth-grade class of girls squirm for only a second.*

*A science exam loomed, and the petite nun didn't waste time preparing them. She wrangled the meat with her bare hands, pointing to tendons and showing how muscles relax and contract.*

*"Lord, I am traumatized," said Mariah Favell, one of the students. Heger knew it was drama and probed deeper. "What's this white rubbery stuff between the bones?" she asked about the cartilage.*

*The raw chicken was one of several stations Heger set up around the room to teach about muscles and bones. Even Heger was a walking lesson. She had stickers all over her body indicating specific parts of anatomy: abdominals, sternum, deltoid, phalanges...*

*Like scores of nuns before her, teaching is a passion for Heger.*

*But Heger, 30, is a rarity, especially at a time when the number of nuns in the U.S. has fallen dramatically.*

*She is the only nun teaching at Marian Middle School, a private Catholic school for girls near Tower Grove Park. But visually, she doesn't stand apart from her co-workers. She doesn't wear a traditional habit. On this day, black pants and a pink blouse outlined the same slim physique that she had playing volleyball at Fontbonne University. She wore her blondish-brown hair in a ponytail. Her independent spirit flowed freely.*

*On the inside, however, there is something different. Not long ago, in a paddle*

*boat at Forest Park, she politely turned down a marriage proposal from a friend. That she could have the same teaching job without being a nun also speaks to her faith and goals.*

*“Our bodies are made to give birth, but this was the life I wanted to lead,” Heger said. “It’s bigger.”*

Much more here.