

# Spirit of service begins early at Holy Angels

“Created for Good Works” is the theme for 2018-19, the year of service in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

That is an ethos that students at Catholic schools embrace long before they enter high school.

By the time Mika Baldwin graduated from Holy Angels Catholic School, she was on a first-name basis with some of her “grand-friends” across Caton Avenue, on the Jenkins Senior Living Campus sponsored by Catholic Charities of Baltimore.

She mentioned one woman, who had been married several times, but never had any children of her own.

“I love her, she’s funny,” Baldwin said. “She’s been great.”

The partnership between Holy Angels and The Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center involves arts and crafts, fellowship and performance, all with the goal of lifting the spirits of elderly residents.

For Jordan Pennick, an incoming freshman at Archbishop Spalding High School in Severn, his lone year at Holy Angels re-instilled some of the lessons he learned during six years at the former John Paul Regional School in Woodlawn, which shared a campus with St. Gabriel Parish.

“Father Tom taught the eighth-graders, and they told the seventh, sixth, fifth and on down,” Pennick said, of Monsignor Thomas Phillips, the St. Gabriel pastor.

Of his time spent on the Jenkins campus, Pennick said, “I’m glad we came here. I learned a lot, like, don’t take life for granted.”

Baldwin, a parishioner of St. Ambrose in Park Heights who is entering St. Frances Academy, said the outreach helps break down stereotypes.

“Growing up in Baltimore, seeing people hurt each other, I want to make myself better than people expect me to be,” she said. “Seeing how they help each other here, it’s inspiring. We’re all different, but we can be nice to each other.”

The outreach includes visits from every grade at Holy Angels.

Pam Poland’s first-graders make the short trek once every eight weeks. They have led the elderly in exercise and song, and at the end of the school year, share their reading ability.

“The kids love going over, and the residents seem to enjoy having them around,” said Poland, who began her teaching career at St. Rose of Lima in Brooklyn in 1973. “We prepare them by asking them about their own grandparents, although some of them are younger than me.

“Our students might be the only visitors some of the residents see all week. We try to give our students the experience of the joy of helping others, of being compassionate, and generous with our time. That’s what we do as Catholics, and Christians.”

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