After months of preparation and keeping abreast of the latest guidelines and recommendations, Mount Aviat opened its doors to students once again on September 1, 2020. MAA had been holding classes virtually since the state closure of schools in mid-March due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a very different first week of school at MAA with half of the student body returning on alternating days. Parents and students alike walked eagerly up the sidewalk to Holy Family Hall full of nervous anticipation. Students brightened at seeing friends in person again and looked forward to getting back to what they know best, coming to school.

As you may have read in our summer issue, the summer months were spent in eager anticipation of the school’s reopening. Classrooms were decluttered, new desks were brought in and measured for appropriate distancing, barriers were made, spaces were reimagined, cameras were added to classrooms, sanitizer was brought in by the gallons, and the list goes on and on. All the planning paid off as Mount Aviat experienced a successful reopening.

So what has school looked like so far this year? The opening of school focused on getting back to basics, getting the students back in the classroom to focus on religion, math, reading, social studies, and science. Some students opted for essential day instruction, which included these core subject areas, while others opted for the full day and were fortunate to have classes like STREAM, PE, and music in the afternoon. And about 10% of the student population opted to become virtual learners, joining classes via Google Meet.

Continued on page 3.
I want to start my message to you with the same words I left off with from my last message this summer: “God is with us.” The last few months have brought unrelenting challenges but with God’s grace, we have met those challenges and seen our school open again for in-person instruction. God sent many of you to help us out… alumni families who helped us prepare our Preschool building when last-minute changes were required and another who helped us establish a sanitization process for our school; parents who helped clear out classrooms, paint, and assemble new desks; teachers and staff who committed to Catholic education and their students during an unsettling time; and friends who showed their support as they drove through our roast beef dinner and Christmas bazaar to pick up food and wave hello. God has been good because we have filled our classrooms and halls once again with the sound of the laughter of children, and nothing could be a bigger blessing.

As you will read in this issue of the Aviat Link, we had to pivot quickly to ensure we could still run several of our biggest fundraisers, in a modified fashion. I want to thank the Friends for their unwavering support and willingness to try new things. Our fall events were not only successful but helped us to stay in contact with lifelong friends. In addition, I’d like to thank our school family businesses—La Casa Pasta and Woody’s Tacos and Tequila—as well as Mario’s restaurant for teaming up with us to offer family dinners as another means of fundraising and supporting one another during challenging times.

Sadly, this Fall we lost a dear friend whom many of you know being part of the MAA community, Mr. Harry Hammond. Mr. Hammond served on the Board of Trustees for 29 years, helped pilot numerous capital projects at school, and was the school’s strongest advocate (see page 7 to learn more Mr. Hammond’s history at MAA). We will miss his presence dearly but are grateful for all of his contributions.

The Oblate Sisters continue to keep you all in prayer. We embrace the words of St. Francis de Sales, “Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day.”

Yours in Christ,

Sister John Elizabeth Callaghan, OSFS
Students who used to long for more outdoor classes got exactly what they hoped for this school year! Classes headed outside often for mask breaks and some even lunch every day. Students enjoyed recess daily and rediscovered old-fashioned games or created new ones that allowed for more social distancing. Students jumped in the leaves, went on nature hunts, and oohed and ahhed over interesting insects. In other words, they were just being kids. And grateful kids. As 5th grader Maddie recently wrote to Principal Sr. John Elizabeth in a thank-you note: “Thank you for letting us come to school in person, letting us wear sneakers instead of school shoes, letting us have mask breaks, and giving us the choice to go full day or half day. I am thankful that we get to come to school!”

MAA’s resourceful teachers continue to find new ways to deliver lessons to reach students at home and in class, and they are finding ways to get students excited about learning in different ways where social distancing can be followed. They are reminding students to follow all of the guidelines set forth, they are sporting their face shields and masks, and they are doing it all because this is their calling. Once the initial transition back to school was successfully accomplished even more focus was placed on new ways of learning. Teachers participated in endless educational webinars and experimented with new apps. With persistence, they found ways to effectively deliver instruction, increase engagement, and support struggling learners. The results of these efforts include increased differentiation and, in some cases, new strategies that will endure long after masks are packed away.

More than at any other time in the history of our school, the home-school connection took on a whole new meaning. Both teachers and parents had virtual views into the world of the other. The success of teaching was dependent on the support of the “domestic teachers.” The Salesian spirit of Living Jesus was reflected in the appreciation expressed by teachers and parents for the efforts of one another.

During this time, Mount Aviat also pursued all available funding for private schools. Gratefully, a PPP loan was procured (and forgiven!) that assured all staff members would stay on payroll. The CARES funding provided much needed PPE, three classroom interactive boards, iPads for 1st and 2nd graders, chromebooks for teachers, and other critical items. Through donations from former school families and friends, technology and software better suited to our new learning environment was purchased.

Mount Aviat came into this pandemic with a firm foundation built by many of you and we are confident to come through it better equipped to offer an Oblate education to 21st century learners for many years to come.
MAA FALL EVENTS PIVOT TO DRIVE THRU

For anyone who knows Mount Aviat, there are a couple of special events that our community looks forward to each Fall. On a late Sunday each September we anticipate a delicious roast beef dinner and on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, we look forward to scrumptious cream puffs, warm apple pies, and tasty stuffed cabbage. However, more than just looking forward to good food, we look forward to the cherished few opportunities we have to visit with old friends and catch up on where our life paths have taken us since our days at Mount Aviat. This year put a damper on any large gatherings for us to reconnect but as always, the Oblate Sisters know how to adapt and be flexible! For the first time ever, MAA hosted drive-through style events for both the roast beef dinner and the Christmas bazaar! As parents, alumni, and friends of MAA pulled up to St. Joseph Hall on September 27th, they were greeted by the Sisters and the Friends who were masked up and ready to roll out family size meals of our traditional roast beef dinner. And in a year unlike any other, friends showed up in record-breaking numbers to support MAA and the Sisters. A dinner that normally served 300 guests, this year served 700! The drive through flowed well, though most drivers were happy to wait a few minutes for their deliveries if it meant a few extra minutes to talk with the Sisters.

Following on the success of the first drive-through event, the Sisters decided they could make the 58th annual Christmas bazaar work—it would be a drive through, too! Food orders were taken in advance and online (for the first time ever!) and the kitchen ramped up its preparations for pies, pumpkin rolls, and cream puffs. And why not incorporate the auction baskets and raffles into the online portion of the event? School families contributed to the purchase of great raffle items including a camping themed basket, old-fashioned sports fun basket featuring a ping pong table, a patio heater, New Year’s basket, and more. As friends ordered food, they could order tickets for the baskets, too! Ticket sales went well with many supporters interested in winning the wreath of lotto tickets donated by the MAA staff! A virtual silent auction was also incorporated into the event with traditional favorites on which to bid like dinner by the Oblate Sisters and a wooden manger scene as well as new, exciting items like a Traeger wood pellet grill. Special thanks to Pax True Value Hardware, American Home & Hardware, Vlamis Liquors, and State Line Liquors for their gracious donations to the silent auction and raffle.

But no Christmas bazaar at MAA would be complete without one very special person—Santa, of course! Santa was able to visit atop a farm wagon and children could leave him their letters in his mailbox. We are grateful for those who have supported us this year during these extremely challenging times. We look forward to welcoming you all back next year in person and seeing your smiling faces!

THE FUND FOR MOUNT AVIAT

The 2020-2021 Fund for Mount Aviat has received over $82,500 in gifts as of mid-January. We are grateful for the support and generosity of our loyal community, especially during this extraordinary time. If you have not had an opportunity to send your gift, there is still time to do so. The Fund for Mount Aviat closes on June 30, 2021. With your help, we can reach our goal of $90,000. Gifts may be mailed to Mount Aviat Academy, 399 Childs Road, Childs, MD 21916, or given online by visiting www.mountaviat.org. For questions or information, please contact Joan Fassano at jfassano@mountaviat.org or 410-398-2206, ext. 239. Following are giving totals as of mid-January 2021:

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: JAMIE GLEBER ’00

In 1991, I followed my older brothers to MAA and entered kindergarten. I made new friends, some of whom I am blessed to call “best friends” even today, 30 years later. I didn’t realize it at the time, but the extraordinary Oblate Sisters of Saint Francis de Sales as well as the lay teachers at MAA had a profound effect on me. Their quiet, competent grace and immense care for each student helped shape me into the salty sailor I have become today. Mount Aviat cultivated in me the empathetic heart and diligent work ethic my parents strove to foster at home. I was encouraged to find my passion and emboldened to chase my dream. I witnessed the patience of Sr. Mary Vincent, Sr. John Elizabeth, and Sr. Joseph Margaret with the younger students, and the encouraging voices of Sr. Frances Carol, Sr. Mary Paul, Sr. Christine Elisabeth, Sr. Alice Therese, Mr. Vari, Mr. Hendron, and Mrs. Symonds with the older students, and of course Sr. John Marie’s stern—but loving—presence as Principal, which showed me as a little girl that being strong and smart, being quietly called to lead and love others, was a gift from God. Although no one would call me “quietly graceful,” I certainly learned that strength, grace, and love go a long way, and those are some of the character traits I am most proud of as the second in command of a U.S. Navy resupply ship with DoD Military Sealift Command.

After continuing my spiritual and pragmatic education at Padua Academy, I attended The State University of New York Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, Bronx, NY, earning a B.S. in Meteorology and Oceanography (I want to be a storm chaser when I grow up, but for now I’m a merchant mariner and a 3rd Mates license). The license allowed me to work on almost every kind of ship, in any ocean on the planet. I chose cruise ships! After sailing for several years with Celebrity cruises, I advanced my license to 2nd mate, then returned to SUNY as a professor on their Summer sea term. Returning to the commercial side, I then worked on oil drilling platforms in the Gulf of Mexico and in 2014 advanced my license to Chief Mate, returning to Fort Schuyler for another Summer sea term. Are you seeing a pattern? I have grown to love teaching! In 2016 I began working for the Department of Defense as a 1st officer and have earned my Unlimited Master Mariners license (Captain).

I firmly believe my success comes back to the immeasurable blessings bestowed upon me and my family by those Sisters, teachers, friends, and the awe-inspiringly supportive parents in the MAA extended family (you know who you are!).

Note: Jamie recently joined our 6th Grade Classroom via Google Meet and gave students a 360 degree tour of her ship and showed them the instruments that help to pilot and run the ship. She explained to them the process of refueling a ship in the middle of the ocean, airlifting supplies via a line attached between two ships, and even receiving helicopters that are dropping off items for transport.

Congrats to the following 8th graders who earned scholarships to Catholic high schools:

Padua Academy: Victoria Mather, Sienna Trumbull, Sarah Voigt
St. Mark’s High School: Academic-Emma Fausnaugh, Charley Fockler, David Kimura, Ashley Strohmeier, Sienna Trumbull, Aidan Venters, Sarah Voigt Merit- Jack Dymowski (Leadership), Ava Poch (Art, Community Service), Erica Poch (Art, Community Service), Sienna Trumbull (Art), Jeremy Niles Ugarte (Technology), Aidan Venters (Music), Sarah Voigt (Performing Arts), Peyton Wikes (Art)
Salesianum: Michael Besancon, Nicholas Giannetta, David Kimura, Eugene Klein, Aidan Venters
Ursuline Academy: Victoria Mather
Mr. Harry Hammond, one of the most instrumental supporters of Mount Aviat Academy, passed away on November 13, 2020. Mr. Hammond had a long history with MAA. He enrolled his oldest daughter in 1965, but he served as a volunteer with his wife long after his three girls graduated from kindergarten. During the 29 years that Mr. Hammond served on the Board of Trustees, he played a key role in numerous projects such as adding an elevator and handicap facilities to the convent, renovating the chapel in 1997, establishing Brisson Field in 2000, purchasing and renovating the preschool in 2002, building the addition to St. Joseph Hall three years later in 2005, adding an elevator to the main school building in 2010, moving to a digital sign on route 213 in 2016, and developing the Oblate Sisters’ Cemetery.

Much can be said about Mr. Hammond’s character. As Principal Sr. John Elizabeth noted, Mr. Hammond had a positive attitude that was contagious. He said many times, “We have never attempted anything at Mount Aviat and not been successful.” He had an integrity that was non-negotiable and treated people with fairness. He put the mission of Mount Aviat before everything. Finally, Mr. Hammond was a man of faith, who recognized his blessings.

On May 31, 2019, Sr. John Elizabeth proudly awarded the inaugural Saint Leonie Aviat Commitment to Catholic Education Award to Mr. Harry Hammond at the annual reception for the Aviat Foundation. This award was established to recognize and honor an individual whose exemplary leadership, commitment, and spirit have had a significant positive impact on the Mount Aviat Academy community and the future of Oblate education. There was no doubt who would receive this award and no one could be more deserving.

During his lifetime, it was exceedingly evident that Mr. Hammond was making Mount Aviat “no more and no less than it’s best.” Times and people changed, but Mr. Hammond’s leadership, commitment, and spirit did not. We will greatly miss Mr. Hammond’s spirit, but his legacy will live on at MAA. We look forward to sharing details with you about how the school will extend Mr. Hammond’s impact through a special project this spring.
In some ways our lives as Oblate Sisters are similar to yours during this COVID containment. We have no visitors, and we are careful when we venture off our property. However, unlike most of our readers, we are blessed to have Mass celebrated in our convent Chapel and honored to have the Blessed Sacrament where we remember your intentions.

In the Spring, we remained in contact via social media, sharing how we passed our days and assuring every one of our renewed commitment to prayer. Now that school is open, we wake to the challenges each day offers. In keeping with our commitment to our students here at MAA, a vision to create an outdoor learning space has taken hold. Because we are limited in what we can do, we decided to put our culinary talents to work to raise some funds. Guided by the expertise of our 8th grade teacher Mrs. Teri Hanby, we baked, wrapped, and sold over 100 cheesecakes, along with dozens of our Sisters’ special whiskey cakes. It was an ambitious, creative, and fun-filled fundraiser.

Our outreach efforts have taken on a new look. Thanks to the generosity of so many of you, we provided meals and treats for over 60 families. Our “special friends,” the young children from Shorehaven school as well as the physically and mentally challenged adults of our county, were able to enjoy a feast—cooked, packaged, and delivered to each home on Thanksgiving Day and again during the Christmas season. We missed sharing time with our friends but sent them a sign of our love and care.

Mission work has changed, too. Oblate Sisters in Ecuador continue to rebuild following the earthquake that destroyed several of our schools; however, their focus at this time is on the immediate spiritual, physical, and medical needs of their people. Our Sisters in Africa, who are not able to teach face to face, have no available technology to keep the children and teens engaged academically. In order to keep them safe and active, they built a playground. The children helped to paint and decorate the equipment they are now able to use. Our MAA Class of 2021 hosted a fall fest involving our students in outdoor, COVID-safe activities to help raise funds for the playground. Their commitment to our missions is a reflection of their wonderful class spirit. Their efforts allow our Sisters to offer the children an alternative to “hanging out with nothing to do.” What a blessing for both the students of MAA and the children and families of Africa.

We are grateful for the opportunities to serve and help others during these challenging times.
MAA’s Class of 2021 Shows Off New Tradition

A perk of the pandemic for students has been a somewhat relaxed dress code and for 8th graders, class hoodies!

Now Accepting Preschool Applications for 2021-2022 School Year