

SISTERS CELEBRATE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF ARRIVAL IN US



God writes straight with crooked lines. This quote, attributed to St. Teresa of Avila, sums up the beginnings of the Oblate Sisters' foundation in the United States. On March 12, 1951, five Oblate Sisters gathered in Childs, Maryland, to share the legacy of St. Leonie Aviat and spread Salesian Spirituality. And unique they were: five Sisters from five different countries: Switzerland, France, Hungary, Austria, and England. Sr. Teresa Elizabeth and Sr. Frances Theresa arrived first, in September of 1950, to study at Catholic University. Sr. Bertha Gonzaga, Sr. Jane Stanislaus, and Sr. Mary Bertha set sail and landed a year later in New York Harbor.

Crooked lines? Sr. Jane Stanislaus and Sr. Mary Bertha entered the Oblates to serve as missionaries in South Africa. After completing their nursing formation and fittings for white habits, God invited them to change

directions and go west, not south. But missionaries they were: pilgrims settling into an unknown land, trunks filled with the bare necessities. One difference from early American missionaries: the Oblate Fathers and Brothers welcomed them warmly, offered temporary lodgings, and the Mothers' Guild helped make their home warm and welcoming. These three Sisters lived on the Oblate property in a little house called Villa Maria until a sizable property was given to the Congregation by Mr. Howard Bathon, Sr. The Sisters moved into the main building on the property in December 1952 and, with the Oblate novices at their service who made it feel like home, named it Villa Aviat. Many crooked lines led to this foundation: the first convent of the Oblate Sisters in the United States.

Mount Aviat Academy



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MISSION

The Mission of Mount Aviat Academy is threefold:

- to provide instruction in the message of Christ, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, within the context of the gentle and caring spirit of St. Francis de Sales;
- to offer an educational environment that promotes high academic standards;
- to instill the principles of scholarship, citizenship and service in the minds and hearts of the students.

*Educating students to be
no more and no less
than their best.*



FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK:

For those of you not turning into the carpool lane daily at MAA anymore, I'm excited to share that our Preschool renovation and expansion was completed on time and the 2025-2026 school year opened with a beautiful new space for our 3- and 4-year-old students! We are indebted to so many of you for your wonderful support of this project, which will ensure the longevity of Mount Aviat. It felt like a fitting time to thank everyone on January 8th, as Fr. Paul Colloton, OSFS

formally blessed the new space and we announced its new name! See page 4 for the exciting details.

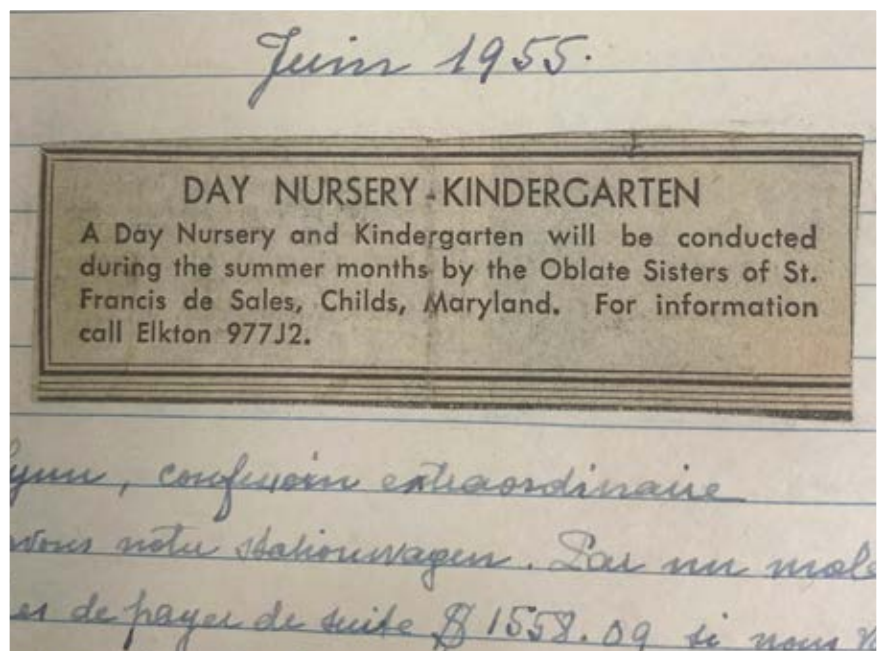
In March we will be celebrating another milestone here at MAA—the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Oblate Sisters in the United States. The cover story takes a look back at the incredible experience of the five Sisters from Europe who forged a path for a Congregation in the United States. Please join us for Mass on March 12, 2026, when we will celebrate this momentous occasion.

As always, thank you for joining us this Fall at the annual Roast Beef Dinner, on the green at our annual Golf Tournament, and at our 63rd annual Christmas bazaar. We look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming Cream Puff Day, our annual Open House on February 22nd from 2-4 p.m., or our “Moonlight on the Bay” Dinner Auction on March 7th—and be sure to check out the new PreK and playscape!

Yours in Christ,

Sr. John Elizabeth, OSFS

Sister John Elizabeth Callaghan, OSFS





The Oblate Sisters' kindergarten opened in 1954 with three children, Mount Aviat High School in 1960, Sisters moved to Delaware City to open an elementary school...and God continued to write with crooked lines. MAA transitioned into the Blue Ribbon elementary school it is today with frequent twists and turns. Oblate Sisters served in St. Anthony of Padua and Padua Academy in Wilmington, St. Bernadette in Drexel Hill, founded Holy Cross Academy in Fredericksburg, and currently spread the strong Salesian Spirit at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Towson. Sisters have dedicated themselves to teaching Religious Education in parishes and summer camp programs.

As a young religious, Sr. Jane Stanislaus' prayer was: "God, I am ready to serve, but, please, not in the kitchen." Her reason: she wanted time in the chapel on Sundays. Another crooked line: the morning after settling in, Sr. Jane Stanislaus became the cook, and mother, to over 50 young postulants and novices who left their homes to discover Oblate life as a priest or brother. Over her 30 years of service, she helped form hard workers, built strong bonds of Salesian love, and left cream puff and apple pie recipes that have taken on a life of their own. In her spare time Sister sewed habits, built the grotto, and organized large meals and celebrations. Sr. Mary Bertha, an educator at

heart, studied, taught, coached, and encouraged generations of young minds. After-school hours included college courses, visits to the sick, cooking, gardening, and whatever else needed to be done. Her high standards, ready smile, and strong work ethic were a shining example of seeing God's will in the turns and curves of life! They are both a hard act to follow.

We are fortunate to have their journals and notes, which detail those early days:

Here in our 6-year-old Foundation in America, our years pass much more quickly than they do for most 6-year-olds. We have a lot to write about because we are the busiest and happiest we have ever been in the United States...

We pray vocations flourish, so the story God confided to us as he continues to write our story with crooked lines begins a new chapter. Stay tuned...



1. MAA's Kindergarten originally included a welcome wagon to help provide students with transportation to Childs. 2. Five Oblate Sisters—Sr. Mary Bertha, Sr. Frances Theresa, Sr. Bertha Gonzaga, Sr. Teresa Elizabeth, and Sr. Jane Stanislaus—bravely found a new congregation of Oblate Sisters in the United States. 3. Sr. Bertha Gonzaga kept a journal—in French—detailing the Sisters' experiences as they started a congregation—and school—in the United States. 4. Sr. Cecilia Frances, Mount Aviat's first Kindergarten teacher, enjoys time outdoors with her students. 5. The Oblate Sisters' first home, Villa Maria. 6. Kindergarten quickly filled with children eager to receive an Oblate education.



A NEW ERA BEGINS AT MAA: THE GLEBER FAMILY EARLY LEARNING CENTER OPENS!

At this year's Ice Cream Social, PreK parents were in for a special treat and it wasn't just ice cream! Parents were invited to tour the PreK building thanks to our amazing summer help in the form of dedicated alumni and teachers who worked feverishly to put the finishing touches on each classroom as the clock ticked toward a new school year.

Indeed, the project was the biggest expansion the school has completed since the addition of Holy Family Hall in 1993! The project allowed a growing, critical PreK population to go from one classroom of 4-year-olds to three classes—two 4-year-old classes and one 3-year-old class—helping to ensure the sustainability of Mount Aviat Academy. And on January 8, 2026, Father Paul Colloton, OSFS finished the last step in this process: he formally blessed the new building and playscape with the entire school population and special guests gathered around. Principal Sr. John Elizabeth took this opportunity to thank those who contributed to the successful completion of the project.

First, when the proposed building project needed a steady hand, MAA Board member Mike Hanby didn't hesitate to step in and lead the way. Mike meticulously oversaw every detail of the process, ensuring that the building met the highest standards—all while keeping costs in check and personally pitching in whenever a job needed to get done. In addition, Jake Gies and Mike Kelly of Nowland Associates put their outstanding construction and management skills to work at every stage of the preschool's

transformation, ensuring top quality and attention to detail. And of course, outfitting the new classrooms required a lot of furniture. The team at Lakeshore Learning went above and beyond to help the Sisters, finding exactly what we needed at incredible discounts.

And just when Sister thought the work was finished, another adventure awaited—a playground for the preschool! That's when MAA parent David Squitieri and his partner, Evan MacGuinness (brother of MAA grad Erin '92), from Design Concepts dove in with creativity and heart. They didn't just design a playground—they envisioned a playscape full of wonder, complete with donated slides, a hand-built hill featuring a rock climb, and a boulder scramble. They even managed to move thousands of pounds of repurposed turf. And when Sr. John Elizabeth found a fantastic deal on used boats, the Fritts family and Mr. Allen rolled up their sleeves and painted and restored the boats until they looked like new. To top it all off, the Design Concepts team constructed a dock using reclaimed materials. Their teamwork and generosity truly brought outdoor dreams to life.

Sister worked with the teachers to think of ideas such as spaces for art and music. The playground needed a bridge to cross the swale. So, the school joined forces again with Mr. Fritts, whose motto could easily have been, "If you can dream it, he can build it." No matter if the weather brought heat, rain, gusty winds, or freezing cold, Mr. Fritts was always there, using his incredible talent to create joy for the students. MAA parent Mark Hudson and MAA grad John Adam



Mackie '02 jumped in to spread more mulch than you can imagine, leaving the playscape literally ready for play.

Finally, this project would have been possible without funding. The Auction and Golf Committees poured their hearts into raising support, working to keep this dream alive. The Oblate Sisters shared this story far and wide—through letters and online—reaching generous souls across the nation. Donations came, from modest gifts to thousands of dollars.

One family in particular generously chose to champion the early childhood expansion in a truly remarkable way and for that generosity, Sister John Elizabeth announced that the

Oblate Sisters were proud to name the brand-new preschool the Gleber Family Early Learning Center. For years, the Gleber family were devoted MAA parents and volunteers, and they continued to support MAA long after their last drive through the carpool lane. Mr. and Mrs. Gleber and their children—Jason '97, Jonathan '99, and Jamie '00—all proud MAA graduates—have left a lasting impact at Mount Aviat. Sr. John Elizabeth closed the ceremony with a promise to honor the legacy of the Gleber family by nurturing generations of children in a space that is “safe, inviting, and truly inspiring.”





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1. Nicholas Vlamis, AJ Vlamis, Olivia Vlamis, and Brooklyn Dunlap are eager to return to MAA for the first day of a new school year. 2. The first day of first grade is an exciting time, especially for Rory McClosky and Sophie McCallister who are all smiles. 3. Second grader Ava Bogus brings a truly special pet to the annual Pet Parade. 4. Like other students, second grader Sally Flockerzi enjoys meeting a baby calf at the annual Pet Parade. 5. The MAA Knight, otherwise known as 8th grader Nicholas Graham, greets new students at Mount Aviat's Ice Cream Social. 6. Fourth grade soccer players Kennedy Nutter, Elliot Andrews, Dylan Rueda, and Nathan Nonn show their team spirit on the Fall Athlete Spirit Day. 7. Eighth grader Payton Whiteman and Kindergartner Lily Bogus enjoy activities with their Halloween pumpkin like weighing it, counting its' seeds, and of course, carving it! 8. PreK3, including teachers Mrs. Cicero and Ms. Merritt, are ready for the Halloween parade. 9. PreK3 and PreK4 students enjoy visiting with Officer Gillin, Sgt. Cavanaugh, and K-9 Jones from the Amtrak Police Department as they learn about community helpers. 10. PreK4 teacher Mrs. Stephanie Parke gears up like a firefighter during a visit from Singlerly Fire Company. 11. PreK students check out where K-9 Jones rides when he works with Officer Gillin! 12. Señora Cook creates a beautiful *Ofrenda de Día de Muertos* with her Spanish classes, complete with beautiful hummingbirds made by 8th graders in Art class. 13. Kindergarten and 8th Grade proudly display their creatively carved pumpkins for Halloween. 14. Third grader Kaitlyn Rueda plays a loving Mary in MAA's Christmas show. 15. PreK3 student Mara VanReenen savors the delicious Thanksgiving meal shared with PreK4 and Kindergarten. 16. Under the direction of Band Director Mr. O'Neill, MAA's band gets the audience in the Christmas spirit with their performances of "Jingle Bells," "Up on the Housetop," and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." 17. PreK4 students Everett Simmons, Rebecca Schwander, and Ava Marney show that practice makes perfect at the PreK Christmas show. 18. Advanced Band members bring their expertise to performances like "Jingle Bell Rock" at their annual Christmas concert. 19. Eighth graders Shea Davis and Levi Allen present symbols of Christmas as part of the Crib Ceremony. 20. Second graders carol loud and clear after the annual Crib Ceremony. 21. Mary, played by Lilly Bogus, greets her cousin Elizabeth, played by Giada Porter, in the Kindergarten Christmas show. 22. Mrs. Russell poses with some friendly first grade beasts before MAA's Christmas show. 23. Third graders are ready to take the stage for MAA's Christmas show. 24. The Three Wise Men, played by Kindergartners Calvin Fasick, Finn DeMaio, and Tyler McGuirk, come bearing gifts for the birth of Jesus.



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FRIENDS' FALL FUN!



1. Several middle schoolers rush to clear tables for more diners at the annual Roast Beef Dinner. 2. Hardworking volunteers work to fill guests' plates with savory roast beef, creamy mashed potatoes, and all the fixings at the Roast Beef Dinner. 3. Fall Fest has become an annual tradition thanks to the support of an amazing group of parents and of course, their children! 4. Without Friends like these, there would be no Christmas Bazaar! Friends do everything from cooking to dishes to ensuring Santa arrives and everything in between! 5. Carpool #110—Mrs. Mary Warren, Mrs. Terri Danberg, and Mrs. Chris Doordan—reminisce about the good old days at MAA in carpool #110 while visiting MAA's annual Christmas bazaar. Do you remember your carpool number?



MOUNT AVIAT UPCOMING EVENTS:

February 22

Open House, 2-4 p.m.

March 7

Dinner Auction

March 12

School Mass, Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Oblate Sisters in the U.S., 10 a.m.

April 2- 12

Holy Week and Easter Vacation

April 19

5K and Sister Walk

May 8

Grandparents' Day & Spring Show

May 21

Family Celebration

June 2

Eighth Grade Graduation

June 4

Kindergarten Graduation



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PLAY DAY = PLAY SPACE!

On Monday, October 6, 2025, the Mount Aviat Academy community gathered at Newark Country Club for a day of golf, fellowship, and shared purpose. More than 60 golfers and guests enjoyed a beautiful day on the course while supporting a cause that directly benefits MAA students and families.

A new highlight this year was the dice-roll station, which quickly became a crowd favorite. Golfers loved chatting with Sr. Joseph Anne, with many golfers asking her to bless the dice before their roll. She brought so much joy to the course, and her presence set the tone for a day filled with fun and memorable moments.

After a full day on the course, participants gathered for a buffet dinner to conclude the event. Awards were presented and prize drawings added to the fun of the evening. Congratulations to our first-place team—Neil C. McAneny, Neil G. McAneny, Kyle Martin, and Pat Aylward—on their impressive win.

During dinner, alumnus Dalton Holland '13, speaking on behalf of the @302BIRDS Podcast, shared a heartfelt reflection on his years at Mount Aviat. "Mount Aviat isn't just a school I attended," he said. "It's been woven into every chapter of my life... a place where I could be myself—and not just be myself, but be myself well." He went on to say, "The Sisters have truly been like a second family to me... they believed in me even when I struggled to believe in myself." His words were a beautiful reminder of the lasting impact of an MAA education.

This year's tournament was made possible thanks to the generosity of our sponsors (see sidebar) and the hard work of our planning committee: Tom Petrella, Kathy Keogh, Lou Peticca, Sr. Joseph Anne, Sr. Anne Elizabeth, Jack Doordan, Stephanie Hendron, and Tracy Harreld. Proceeds from the event supported the creation of a brand-new playscape near the PreK building—something our youngest students are already excited about and will enjoy for years to come.

We are also grateful to the Newark Country Club staff for their warm hospitality, and to every golfer, guest, and volunteer who helped make the day a success.

Mark your calendars—next year's tournament is tentatively set for Monday, October 5, 2026. We hope to see you back on the course for another great day in support of Mount Aviat Academy!





the Fund for MOUNT AVIAT

The Fund for Mount Aviat continues to be one of the main sources of funding in the school's operating budget. The Fund helps us to manage the increasing costs of educating a student, which tuition alone does not cover. It also supports our efforts to consistently enhance our curriculum and technology, and improve compensation for faculty and staff.

Thank you to the 187 donors who have already contributed during the 2025 – 2026 school year. We have raised \$53,032.07 toward our goal of \$150,000 as of mid-January.

To make a gift to The Fund for Mount Aviat, please scan the QR code at right or send a check to MAA at P.O. Box 85, Childs, MD 21916. For more information, please contact Stephanie Hendron at advancement@mountaviat.org or (410) 398-2206 ext. 220.

Scan to Donate



The 13th Annual Mount Aviat 5K & Sister Walk is scheduled for Sunday, April 19, 2026. This is a fun and healthy family, school, and community event with the course set in the neighborhoods next to the school. A Mass will be celebrated on the morning of the race in Holy Family Hall. After the race, an awards ceremony with refreshments will take place in St. Joseph's Hall. There are trophies for the overall female and male winners. Medals for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place are awarded for various age brackets. Registration for the race will begin in February 2026:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/MD/Childs/MountAviatAcademy5KSisterWalk>

Proceeds from this event are used for classroom enrichment which directly benefits the students. We are looking to partner with businesses for sponsorship of the race. Please reach out to Jessica Carlaw via email at jessicacarlaw1@gmail.com if you are interested in sponsoring our event.



KNIGHTLY NEWS



Raegan Brown '22 placed 1st overall as an individual in the Cecil County School of Technology FFA Ag Sciences Big E regional competition in September 2025. Her team, including MAA alum **Mallory Cohn**, placed 4th. In June 2025, this team placed 2nd in the state of Maryland in this competition which then allowed them to represent the

state of Maryland against other Northeastern and Mid Atlantic state teams at the regional event. Members are tested on knowledge, skills, and teamwork through exams and hands-on Practicums.



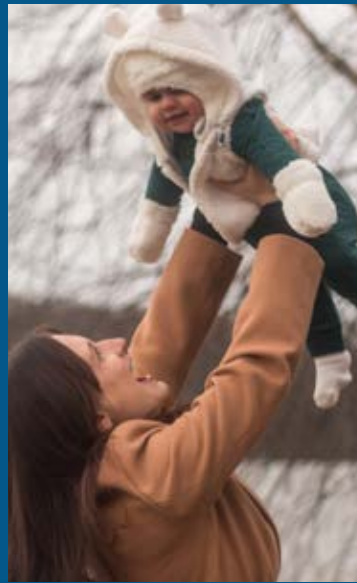
Briana (Lockhart) '10 and husband John Bachkosky celebrated the first birthday of their daughter Violet surrounded by family and friends at her Dr. Seuss Whobilation party.

If you have alumni news you would like to share, please contact Mrs. Charlene Nichols, Admissions Director, at Admissions@MountAviat.org. If you would like to receive MAA's weekly newsletter, simply send an email to info@mountaviat.org.



Franklen Lockhart '13 and wife, Meredith, welcomed their son, Teddie, on December 7, 2025.

Webster Lowe '17 graduated from the United States Naval Academy on May 23, 2025.



Heather (Conrad) Mekulski '10 and her husband, Mike, welcomed a daughter, Addison Paige, into the world on August 12, 2025. She was born at Christiana Hospital at 11:40 AM and weighed 8 pounds 7 ounces. She is now almost 5 months old and has the most hysterical sense of humor and is growing fast.



Don't forget to like our Facebook page (Mount Aviat Academy Alumni Association) and follow MAA on Instagram @MountAviat.



In early 2025, the Office for Catholic Youth, Young Adult & Family Ministry established a Catholic Diocese of Wilmington Team Sportsmanship Award to highlight those teams that embody the mission and core values of the program. The recipients for the Fall 2025 season were both in co-ed soccer, honoring Holy Angels and Mount Aviat Academy.

"Receiving the 2025 CDOW Team Sportsmanship Award is a great honor for our team as well as our school!" said Coach Andrews of Mount Aviat. "It truly reflects all of the core values that Mount Aviat instills in its students, not only to be good student-athletes but to be good human beings by 'Living Jesus' daily. Our student-athletes are always told to offer up 'No more and No Less than their very best' with every action that they perform. The sportsmanship and team camaraderie that our kids have shown this season truly exudes the essence of the Catholic faith. I would like to thank the CDOW, all MAA coaches, parents, and players for their commitment and efforts throughout this great season."

Thanks to all the Varsity Coaches and the Varsity team: Coaches Matt Andrews, Mary Turbide, Brian Besancon, and Adrienne Peticca (not shown) and team members: Parker Wikes, Vincent Peticca, Xavier Moran, Damian Drost, John Paul O'Connor, Nicholas Papaleo, Jacob Barlow, Simon Besancon, Nicholas Graham, Isabel Colon, Mary Turbide, Hayden Andrews, Riley Lewis, Cash Fockler, and Nicholas Moschella.

If you no longer wish to receive the *Link*, please let us know by telephoning the school at 410.398.2206, ext. 214. Thank you.



Class of 2026 Prays for Peace During Living Rosary

MAA's 8th graders pray a special intention for peace during the annual Living Rosary where all students come together to form a living rosary and pray the rosary together.

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