

“More” Notes for Parents



September 30th, 2008
1st Quarter Progress Reports

From the Dean of Students Office:

It is finally nice to have the boys back on campus. Our community is not the same without the students. The first four weeks have been very busy. We successfully navigated the school's first full-fledged student orientation program. We have taken the Stanford Achievement exams. We have gone through four weeks of our new schedule. We have had three meetings with our student clubs and groups. We've even braved the aftereffects of Hurricane Gustav and a major Nor'easter. Yes, we have been busy!

I am pleased to report that the student groups have begun in earnest. The community service group has changed its name to T.I.E.S. (Together-Improving-Empowering-Society). The T.I.E.S. has already completed two service projects and will begin a Youth United build in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity in late-October.

Beginning this year, the school has begun a distinguished speaker series. On September 22nd, Congressman Joe Courtney spoke to the STM community about service, education, the upcoming presidential election and the youths' role in society. In January, Dr. Henry Lee, a nationally renowned forensic scientist, will speak to the community.

The Residential Life Curriculum has launched. So far, each dorm floor has formally met six times, covering topics such as Adjusting to Dorm Life, Living in a Residential Community, The Environment, Sustainability and Respect for Personal Property. Many dorm floors have made a commitment to recycling and energy conservation. Besides doing their part to save the environment, monies from the recycling will be used for each dorm floor's benefit. In the coming weeks, the floors will meet to discuss Diversity and Substance Abuse.

The Chancellors Club for September (Those students who have demonstrated exceptional moral and civic qualities by receiving zero disciplinary infractions) is the largest list in years. 82 students, or **49% of the student body**, earned this distinction. These students were rewarded with a dress-down day on October 3rd.

On a serious note, an incident that occurred on campus I want to make all parents and guardians aware. A rising trend of teenagers has been the abuse/misuse of aerosol products to get a quick, yet dangerous high. The side-effects of such use are devastating. A single use can lead to irreversible hearing loss, loss of sensation to the extremities, permanent liver and kidney damage,

and death. The school responded quickly to an incident on campus. Four students used these products, and consequently were taken to the emergency room for evaluation. In the following days, I learned that in one weekend alone, the State of Connecticut had over 100 reported cases where teens were admitted to the hospital for inhalant use. The school's response has been measured. The school now prohibits students from possessing any aerosol product. These products include spray deodorant, aerosol air freshener, dust-off, and other propellant-type products. The school feels that this response is in the best interest of the safety of the community. While those who misuse these products are the vast minority, we feel that this policy will greatly improve the overall safety of the STM community.

I welcome and encourage communication. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments and/or concerns.

Sincerely,
Tim Viands, Dean of Students
Maura Howard, Assistant Dean

From the Academic Dean's Office:



Thirty days ago we were celebrating Labor Day and enjoying summer weather. Today school is in full swing as we enter another beautiful New England fall season.

The school year began with a three-day student orientation. This was a new approach designed to help students gain a deeper understanding of school policies and procedures in the classroom, as well as their residential life and their athletic and extracurricular activities. The investment paid off with much smoother transitions into a positive climate and stronger relationships. The faculty also invested time in interpersonal skills training, facilitated by a professional consultant. We believe that all learning takes place in the context of a relationship. Continually working on these skills is essential to actualizing that principle.

Next to relating, organization is fundamental to student success. All students were given a St. Thomas More School Master Planner. It contains the school calendar, weekly planning pages, record of grades earned, project-planning forms as well as a copy of the Student Handbook. The goal is to make it an integral part of the students' lives. Teachers, coaches, dorm parents and advisors all monitor its use. We hope it becomes a tool to help them organize their life at STM and beyond. You might encourage its use at home.

Finally, there are several exciting academic initiatives in the works. One involves collaboration with the Science Technology and Engineering Magnet School and another is a global education project called Challenge 20/20. Challenge 20/20 involves working with students in another school outside the USA on one of 20 pressing problems facing the world in the next 20 years. I've had the privilege of working with students on this project in the past. It can be a life changing experience building international relations.

Sincerely,
Steve Davis, Academic Dean

From the Health Office:



-See Supplement at the end of the newsletter-

From the Chaplain:

The year has begun very smoothly and the students have been cooperative and engaged in the various programs sponsored by the Chaplaincy. We celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit on the weekend of September 6th invoking the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit as we begin this new academic year. This special Mass beginning the academic year is an ancient tradition of the Church.

To recognize, celebrate and offer thanks for the courage, commitment and charisma of the Founder of St. Thomas More School, Mr. James Hanrahan, Sr., the school gathered for the Founder's Day Mass on September 17th. On this occasion we also gave thanks to all who have shown dedication to the vision and goals of the school. The musicians who assisted at this Mass made comments on the attentiveness and respect of the students—now we just need to encourage them to add their singing voices with greater confidence!

The mid-week dorm Masses have begun and they provide a nice opportunity for a small group of students to take time to focus and reflect. The class for those considering receiving the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation began on Wednesday September 24th. At this point, seven students have expressed interest in the program.

The Big Brother Program will get underway September 30th. This year we have a full contingent of 24 students participating in the program, which take place at the Oakdale Elementary School. It has been a very rewarding program for both the Big and Little Brothers in the past and we anticipate this year's participants will also gain a great deal from the experience.

Sincerely,
Fr. Richard Gross, School Chaplain

Upcoming Events & Dates:

- Saturday October 4th- SAT Exam
- Friday October 10-13th- Long Weekend
- Monday October 20th- College Fair for all Seniors & PG's
- October 24th- 1st Marking Period Ends

STM News:

- The calendars printed in the Parent – Student Handbook are incorrect. Our printing company printed last years' calendar. Enclosed you will find an updated calendar. The calendar on the school's website has been and is accurate.

- The Pre-Algebra class has incorporated fantasy football into the curriculum. Students draft teams, maintain a salary cap, submit weekly lineups and use concepts learned in class to compute statistics and points for their teams.
- Mrs. Florencio's art classes have produced a plethora of unique pieces. Stop by the Administration Building to see examples of the students' work.
- School pictures have arrived and have been distributed in your son's mailbox. Ask your son to bring them with him the next time he goes home. With the pictures, your son was issued a school ID, which will arrive in the next few weeks. This ID card can be used as identification for him to travel on trains and planes.

STM on the Web:

Please visit www.stmct.org to find out more information about your son's experience. The school's website features updated athletic, academic and residential life information. Under the PARENT & STUDENT portal, parents will find a detailed school calendar, school news, dining hall menus and nutritional information, special events, and the athlete of the week announcement.

Contacting Faculty and Staff:

Every faculty and staff member has an email address and voicemail extension. Links to all email addresses can be found on our website- www.stmct.org. Feel free to contact your son's teachers, coaches, dorm parents and advisor.



Supplement from the Health Office

Happy fall to everyone! The trees are starting to turn here at St. Thomas More School and the colors of fall are appearing all over campus. I hope this edition of "More Notes" finds you all well. This month I wanted to give you some information regarding Inhalant Abuse, Allergies and the Flu Shot.

Inhalant abuse is becoming more common among adolescents. It is often called "Huffing, Dusting, Sniffing and Bagging" to name just a few. Inhalants can kill the very first time children experiment with them. I am sending this information to you all, not as a scare tactic for parents but with the hope that it will help you all to start the often difficult conversations with your STM student as well as your other children regarding this very dangerous behavior.

The information fact sheet on Inhalant Abuse was taken directly From the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) website. I encourage you to check out the site, it can be an excellent reference.

What are inhalants and how are they dangerous?

Hairspray. Gasoline. Spray paint. Glue. Typewriter correction fluid. You probably have at least one of these products in your home. There are over 1,000 inhalants -- common products that are legal because they have a useful purpose. They are also safe when used for that purpose. But when young people misuse them by breathing them into their lungs, inhalants are poison.

Over time, the abuse of inhalants can cause severe permanent damage to the body, especially the brain. The scariest thing about inhalants is that your child could die from using them only once.

Effects of inhalants

One thing that all inhalants have in common is that they contain chemicals that were never meant for people to consume. So why would anyone breathe toxic chemicals on purpose? Just like the users of other drugs, inhalant abusers try to get "high" from the chemicals.

The effects of inhalants usually last only a few minutes, unless users inhale repeatedly. At first, inhalants have a stimulating effect. Then if the users keep inhaling, they may feel dazed, dizzy, and have trouble walking. Sometimes users get aggressive or think they see things that are not there. Stronger chemicals or repeated inhaling can cause people to pass out. A user can also die suddenly from using inhalants.

When someone uses an inhalant, large amounts of toxic chemicals enter the lungs and pass from the bloodstream into the brain. There they damage and kill brain cells. The amount of fumes a young person inhales greatly exceeds what is considered safe even in a workplace setting. It takes at least 2 weeks for the body to get rid of some of the chemicals in inhalants. Inhalants exit the body mainly through exhaling, which is why an inhalant abuser's breath often smells like chemicals. Inhalants also pass out of the body through urine.

Short-term effects of inhalants are:

- Headaches, nausea, vomiting
- Loss of balance

- Dizziness
- Slurred and slowed speech
- Mood changes
- Hallucinations

Over time, inhalants can cause more serious damage, such as:

- Loss of concentration
- Short-term memory loss
- Hearing loss
- Muscle spasms
- Permanent brain damage
- Death

How inhalants kill

No one can predict how much of an inhalant will kill. A young person can use a certain amount one time and seem fine, but his or her next use could be fatal.

The Texas Commission on Drugs and Alcohol Abuse reports the following ways that inhalants can kill:

- Asphyxia—Solvent gases can cause a person to stop breathing from a lack of oxygen.
- Choking—Users can choke on their own vomit.
- Suffocation—this is more common among users who inhale from plastic bags.
- Injuries—Inhalants can cause people to become careless or aggressive. This often leads to behaviors that can injure or kill, such as operating a motor vehicle dangerously or jumping from great heights. Teens also can get burned or even be killed if someone lights a cigarette while they are huffing butane, gasoline, or some other flammable substance.
- Suicides[?]— coming down from an inhalant high causes some people to feel depressed, which may lead them to take their own lives.
- Cardiac arrests—Chemicals from inhalants can make the heart beat very fast and irregularly, and then suddenly stop beating. This is called cardiac arrest. One reason why this might happen is that inhalants somehow make the heart extra-sensitive to adrenaline. (Adrenaline is a hormone that the body produces, usually in response to fear, excitement, or surprise.) A sudden rush of adrenaline combined with inhalants can make the heart stop instantly. This "Sudden Sniffing Death," as it is called, is responsible for more than half of all deaths due to inhalant abuse.

Signs and symptoms of inhalant abuse

- Breath and clothing that smells like chemicals
- Spots or sores around the mouth
- Paint or stains on body or clothing
- Drunk, dazed, or glassy-eyed look
- Nausea, loss of appetite
- Anxiety, excitability, irritability

The best way to fight inhalant abuse is to educate your child about how harmful these products are. Explain how they can cause both short and long-term health problems, further drug abuse,

and death. It is important to start talking with children at a young age, because inhalant abuse often starts as young as 8 or 9 years old.

Published online: 3/07

Source: Inhalant Abuse: Your Child and Drugs: Guidelines for Parents (Copyright © 1996 American Academy of Pediatrics)

Allergies: Things You Can Do to Control Your Symptoms

What causes allergies?

You have an allergy when your body overreacts to things that don't cause problems for most people. These things are called allergens. Your body's overreaction to the allergens is what causes symptoms (see the box below for a list of symptoms). For example, sometimes the term "hay fever" is used to describe your body's allergic reaction to seasonal allergens in the air, such as grass or pollen.

Your doctor may want to do an allergy skin test to help determine exactly what is causing your allergy. An allergy skin test puts tiny amounts of allergens onto your skin to see which ones you react to. Once you know which allergens you are allergic to, you and your doctor can decide the best treatment.

What are the most common allergens?

Pollen from trees, grass and weeds. Allergies that occur in the spring (late April and May) are often due to tree pollen. Allergies that occur in the summer (late May to mid-July) are often due to grass and weed pollen. Allergies that occur in the fall (late August to the first frost) are often due to ragweed.

Mold: Mold is common where water tends to collect, such as shower curtains, window moldings and damp basements. It can also be found in rotting logs, hay, mulches, commercial peat moss, compost piles and leaf litter. This allergy is usually worse during humid and rainy weather.

Animal dander: Proteins found in the skin, saliva, and urine of furry pets such as cats and dogs are allergens. You can be exposed to dander when handling an animal or from house dust that contains dander.

Dust: Many allergens, including dust mites, are in dust. Dust mites are tiny living creatures found in bedding, mattresses, carpeting and upholstered furniture. They live on dead skin cells and other things found in house dust.

How can I avoid allergens?

Pollens: Shower or bathe before bedtime to wash off pollen and other allergens in your hair and on your skin. Avoid going outside, especially on dry, windy days. Keep windows and doors shut, and use an air conditioner at home and in your car.

Mold: You can reduce the amount of mold in your home by removing houseplants and by frequently cleaning shower curtains, bathroom windows, damp walls, areas with dry rot and

indoor trash cans. Use a mix of water and chlorine bleach to kill mold. Open doors and windows and use fans to increase air movement and help prevent mold.

Pet dander: If your allergies are severe, you may need to give your pets away or at least keep them outside. Cat or dog dander often collects in house dust and takes 4 weeks or more to die down.

What medicines can I take to help relieve my symptoms?

Antihistamines help reduce the sneezing, runny nose and itchiness of allergies. They're more useful if you use them before you're exposed to allergens.

Decongestants help temporarily relieve the stuffy nose of allergies. Decongestants are found in many medicines and come as pills, nose sprays and nose drops. They are best used only for a short time. Nose sprays and drops shouldn't be used for more than 3 days because you can become dependent on them. This causes you to feel even more stopped-up when you try to quit using them.

You can buy antihistamines and decongestants without a doctor's prescription. However at St. Thomas More you must have the Authorization for self administration of Medication completed by your physician on file in the health office in order to have any of these items in your room.

Eye drops. If your other medicines are not helping enough with your itchy, watery eyes, your doctor may prescribe eye drops for you.

Source: **Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.**

American Academy of Family Physicians

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Lastly, I wanted to let you know that the flu vaccine has arrived and the shots will be administered at the end of October. We had an excellent response to the flu shot offer. It is my hope that we can decrease the numbers of colds and actual cases of the flu come this winter as a result of the Flu shot clinic. If you have any questions about any of the above information do not hesitate to contact me. My office number is 860-859-1900 ext. 136 or my email is lcole@stmct.org. I check it daily.

Sincerely,
Lynn Cole, RN