

YOUNG OBSERVER



(Photo/ St. Edward Central Catholic High School)

Clarinetists Join Symphony Orchestra

ELGIN—Matthew and Gabriel Tulgar ('25), students at St. Edward Central Catholic High School, were selected to perform with the Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra (EYSO) for the 2022-23 season. Both have studied clarinet for six years. EYSO ensembles perform masterworks of the classical repertoire and have performed at the Illinois State Capitol, the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, the Ravinia Festival, and on 98.7WFMT, Chicago's classical music radio.



(Photo/ Marian Central Catholic High School)

Cookies and Chemistry Mix Well for Marian CCHS Students

WOODSTOCK—Marian Central Catholic High School students in Megan Graf's Chemistry 1 class put their dimensional analysis conversion knowledge to the (taste) test by making no-bake cookies. After converting measurements to determine the recipe, the students checked if their calculations were correct.

Diocesan students receive College Board academic honors

AURORA, WOODSTOCK—An Aurora Central Catholic High School student and two Marian Central Catholic High School students earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Programs.

Students who are honored through the National Recognition Programs excel in College Board assessments

and schoolwork. Eligibility requirements include a GPA of 3.5 or higher; as well as scores of 3 or higher on two or more AP exams; or scores in the top 10% on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10.

These students are also members of underrepresented groups, including:

- Black or African American;
- Latinx or Hispanic

Illustrating a book? 'Knot' a problem!

Young artist illustrates book about Mary, Undoer of Knots

According to her mother, Virginia Catholic Mia Sasscer was drawing before she could talk.

When she got a little older, she would sketch on paper, staple the pieces together and write words at the bottom to make little booklets. As a teen, she would crochet eco-friendly yarn into scarves and sell them, saving the money to pay for art school.

Today, the latest illustrations of the 21-year-old parishioner of Our Lady of the Valley Church in Luray, Virginia, can be found in "Our Lady Undoer of Knots," a children's book recently released by Tan Books. The devotion to Our Lady Undoer of Knots, a patroness for those facing difficult problems, was popularized by Pope Francis.

The author of the book, Sylvia Dorham, was Sasscer's neighbor. Dorham's daughter and Sasscer's sister practiced ballet at the same studio, where Sasscer often brought her sketchbook and drew while waiting.

"That's where she introduced me to the idea," Sasscer told the *Arlington Catholic Herald*, newspaper of the Diocese of Arlington, Va.

Dorham and Sasscer's first project, a collaboration with a group that fights human trafficking, was a workbook called, "Avoiding the Octopus: A Family Guide to Standing Strong Against Human Trafficking."

For "Our Lady Undoer of Knots," Dorham would send the text to Sasscer with suggestions for illustrations.



(CNS photo/Handout via Arlington Catholic Herald)

Mia Sasscer, a 21-year-old parishioner of Our Lady of the Valley Church in Luray, Va., is seen with the children's book "Our Lady Undoer of Knots," which she illustrated.

Sasscer would start with line art on paper, then scan the drawing into the computer to touch up the lines and add color. She would send the finished page with the words positioned around the illustration back to Dorham to review.

Their finished project tells the story of a boy who turns to Mary when he gets into trouble or causes an accident. "I thought he was quite a character," said Sasscer.

When she read picture books growing up, illustrations of children speaking to Mary depicted them as angelic, not like the rambunctious boy Dorham described. Sasscer's simple and expressive images bring that quality to life.

She hopes readers appreciate the book's message.

"I love how it encourages

young children to go to Our Lady with whatever problems they're having, even something as simple as 'I argued with my brother and we're not getting along,'" she said.

In the future, Sasscer plans to finish her degree at the online Sessions College for Professional Design and continue illustrating books like "Our Lady Undoer of Knots."

Sasscer's faith animates her art. "I always think that the act of creating is somewhat sacred," she said, citing a J.R.R. Tolkien quote about humans being created in the image and likeness of the Creator.

"I think it's cool that the reason why people are creative is because God is creative and we reflect God," she added.

—By Zoey Maraist, Catholic News Service

helping them stand out during the admissions process.

Eligible students are invited to apply during their sophomore or junior year and, if chosen, will be awarded at the beginning of the next school year.

Diocesan students who received academic honors are:

- Ashley Boyd, Aurora Central Catholic High School,

National African American Recognition Award;

- Terry Blades, Marian Central Catholic High School, National Hispanic Recognition Award; and

- Robert Eschenbacher, Marian Central Catholic High School, National Rural and Small-Town Award.

—Information provided by Jacque May and Laurie DiSilvio.