

# Kendall Park school finalist for Total Community Involvement award

St. Augustine of Canterbury School, Kendall Park, is a finalist for one of four Innovations in Catholic Education (ICE) awards scheduled to be given by "Today's Catholic Teacher" magazine in April.

St. Augustine is a finalist in the category for Total Community Involvement with Immaculate Conception Catholic School, Denton, Texas, and Julie Billiart School, Lyndhurst, Ohio.

The other categories are: Catholic Identity, Curriculum and Instruction, and Technology Integration.

Schools apply for the award in the fall in one of the categories. Each school responded with descriptions of unique programs and projects to the magazine's search for the schools with the best innovations in Catholic education. This year's finalists were selected from more than 100 applicants.

At the banquet, which will be held in Chicago in conjunction with the annual National Catholic Education Association Convention, one grand-prize winner will be announced in each category. The four winning schools will each receive a \$1,000 prize. All 12 schools will receive award trophies, large indoor/outdoor banners and copies of the awards publication.

The winning school in each category is also given a feature article in the summer issue of "Today's Catholic Teacher" magazine.

St. Augustine won the ICE Award



Students from St. Augustine of Canterbury School (from left), Layna Tarbotton, Lacey Okamura, Kayla Smith and Adrian Perdone present a check to an employee of Saint Peter's University Hospital in support of the Saint Peter's Foundation. The money was donated by students at the school. — *photo courtesy of St. Augustine of Canterbury School*

for Technology Integration in 2010 for the development of its student-led closed circuit TV station, the Knights Television Network (KTN).

St. Augustine's entry this year was based around a student-led community outreach program that began with the "plarning" club under the direction of Middle School religion teacher Colleen Paras. The club was featured in a story in

the Jan. 25, 2018 edition of "The Catholic Spirit" and has expanded to include more students and other areas of community service.

The students reached out to volunteers from the Matthew 25 Ministry in Somerville to teach them how to make "plarn" (plastic yarn). They collected grocery bags, sorted and organized them,

cut them into strips, tied the strips together and rolled them into balls. The balls of plarn are then used to crochet a plastic mat that provides cushioning for someone who is sitting or sleeping on a hard surface, and is lighter and more weather-resistant than a cloth mat.

Each mat is six feet long, requires 600 to 700 bags, and can take as long as 40 hours to crochet. The mat would then be donated to a homeless person in the local community.

Students met after school each Monday to create plarn so that the women of Matthew 25 Ministry would be able to crochet without the extra hours of labor. Students also took time to pray for the needy.

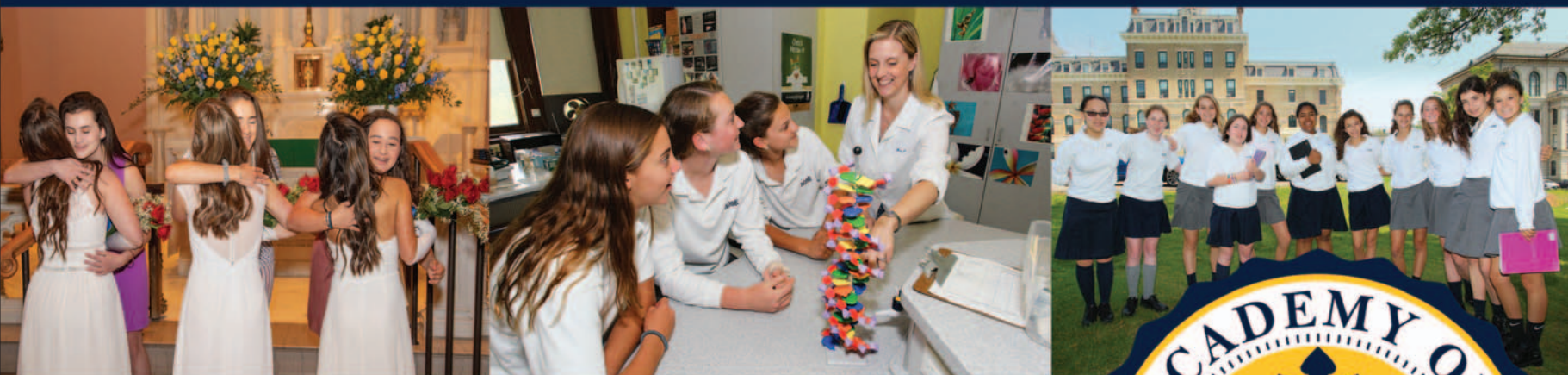
Students also worked with Robert Mason from Elijah's Promise, a community soup kitchen serving the hungry in New Brunswick. After Mason told the students about being homeless and his renewed faith life, the students took up a collection to assemble "Blessing Bags" for clients served by Elijah's Promise.

They also began a partnership with Saint Peter's University Hospital, New Brunswick, to help single mothers by collecting donations for diagnostic and wellness exams.

Future plans include monthly community service and outreach projects to Newark to work with volunteers help provide Christmas gifts to needy mothers and children.

— **Chris Donahue**

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