

The work of the Order of Malta at The Solidarity School is evident by the presence of its members as well as the financial support the school has received over the years. The Solidarity School was founded in 2001 to provide early learning to children for which Catholic education is not afford-



able. Being situated within the parish of Holy Spirit Catholic Church where Monsignor Edward Dillon is pastor, the location is within an urban neighborhood comprised primarily of families of Hispanic ethnicity. The school is independent of the Church and funded through philanthropic means. The mission is *to provide its students with an excellent grade school education, in the context of a solid formation in the Catholic faith, and within a culturally sensitive environment. Solidarity School recognizes the unique talents and needs of each student, while emphasizing the importance of each student becoming a com-*



*mited member of a larger community that includes family, school, church, and neighborhood.* Consistent with the philosophy of Catholic education, the School's program focuses on the intellectual, spiritual, moral, aesthetic, social, and physical development of each student and is directed to forming individuals who are able to function effectively in and contribute to the positive development of their community.

The rationale behind the program provides a study in beginning English instruction at age three, with incremental levels of immersion into the language, and ultimately the use of all materials/books in English by kindergarten level. The program not only provides faith formation but seeks to have students exit Solidarity, ready to begin kindergarten either in public or private venues without ESL tracking. Upon entering elementary school, students are afforded opportunities due to their ability to have command over the English language in



both oral and written expression. The environment is sensitive to their native culture, with many traditions, holidays, and Catholic feasts being celebrated throughout the year.

Essential to the school are its teachers who not only trained in early learning, but also have a strong foundation in the Catholic faith and an understanding of the community served by the school.

Malta generously contributes to a fund for Solidarity teachers that supports continuing education and fulfills a wish list of resources to be used in the classrooms.

Volunteers who provide support and enrichment to the program are essential.



*Malta member Lynn Mullaney visits with PreK-4 students.*



*Malta member Pam Krygiel reads to Solidarity students.*

Malta members visit weekly and read to the children, adding

another layer to immersion which is key for students assimilating into the English language. Important to note is the work of the all volunteers— a child psy-

chologist, speech pathologist, nutritionist, mentors, religious, and priests— as well

as the parents who are always willing to give their time to the school. Referring to the many activities that enrich the program, the students are the beneficiaries of professionals who are willing to assist students at Solidarity and who might not otherwise have this advantage.

Student developmental scores continue to increase, families become more involved in Church related activities, English becomes proficient, and students are appropriately placed in kindergarten. Having the flexibility to address needs other



than those just associated with education, programs have been implemented related to dental health and nutrition, while attempts are made to seek outside assistance to continue to meet the needs of the students in the school. At the Mission Village where the school is located, a new day labor center was recently founded and a health clinic is in the initial stages of planning with a goal to open within the next six months.

Other ways Malta is instrumental in the success of the program are the unlimited hours members contribute and projects they facilitate and support. Solidarity relies on Malta's annual presence at both



*PreK-3 and PreK-4 students provide members of the school community and Malta the gift of the Christmas Pageant*



*Students look forward to receiving their certificates from Monsignor Dillon and the reception hosted by Malta members.*



the Christmas Pageant and Matriculation Ceremony where members provide hospitality to students and their families. Recently, The Solidarity School was the recipient of a grant from the Order of Malta to

purchase and fund operating expenses for a van that would be used to transport Solidarity students on enriching field trips and provide transportation to Holy Spirit Preparatory students who volunteer after school at the literacy center. One of Malta's past projects was the formation of a library. Preschool and elementary level books were donated through drives at Holy Spirit Preparatory School and supported by Malta in the purchasing of bookcases and furniture for a media center. Members of Malta spent hours in assembling the new equipment and cataloging over one thousand books. Another of Malta's



*Students enjoy their teachers use of the computers for instruction and practicing their A-B-C's,*



*The contribution of a media center provides students a quiet place to look at books and (when able) read to peers.*

projects was to purchase computers with large, flat panel monitors for each classroom. The updating and addition of technology has allowed for classroom instruction, virtual field trips, and each student to practice and remediate academic skills. A member of the Auxiliary of Malta, Todd Gangell, installed, set up, and networked all computer stations. Mr. Gangell continues to support the school on technical issues related to our computers. What is special about Malta's support is the amount of physical time members donate to the school. Last summer, members of Malta were reportedly covered in paint as they redecorated the reception area and administrative offices of the school. How wonderful for our faculty, students, and parents to begin the year with a fresh, clean look.

The Solidarity School is grateful for the consistent and generous assistance it has received from the Order of Malta and expresses its heartfelt thanks to all members, both locally and nationally, for their contributions of time, talent, and financial support that allows the school to provide the "extras" for children who would otherwise not have these opportunities.

