

## **ND ACE ACADEMIES Volunteer Group Spotlight: IHM Men's Group**

### ***Immaculate Heart of Mary Men's Club serves St. Anthony School for more than 15 years***

A unique outreach program, forged 15 years ago between the Men's Club at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (IHM) and St. Anthony School, has beneficially impacted both parties.

The relationship began in 2000 when the Men's Group sought an outreach program with a meaningful purpose. Their leadership approached the principal at the then All Saints Catholic School (predecessor to St. Anthony) to see if they could be of help. She indicated they wished to have "Christian men walking through the front door." From that initial meeting, a long and fruitful partnership has flourished.

Men's Club volunteers provide support by supplying tutors, mentors, chaperones, fundraising, enrichment programs, supplies and maintenance projects, just to name a few. Over the course of their relationship, the Men's Club has volunteered in excess of 8,685 hours to benefit St. Anthony School - 3,600 as mentors/tutors, 3,000 as class delegates, 1,200 on maintenance projects, 360 hours as field trip chaperones, 300 as library support and 225 as Cub Scout after school volunteers. They have also contributed \$108,500, plus a \$50,000 grant.

Gary Ahlrichs, IHM Men's Club president, says that their members are quick to respond to the needs at St. Anthony. When a need is expressed, Ahlrichs simply sends a group email asking for help and the needs are met. He notes that while many parishioners can and do volunteer their time, those who are not able to, are generous financially. Ahlrichs also says that the relationship with St. Anthony School primarily began as just a Men's Club function, but has become a parish-wide outreach. "We now see the IHM children's school Mass monthly collection benefiting St. Anthony, the parish Christmas giving tree donations almost exclusively benefit St. Anthony School, our parish hosts a summer health fair for the school which includes CYO sports physicals for the children, and I even receive phone calls from families hosting their children's birthday parties who want to know how they can donate to St. Anthony School in lieu of birthday gifts."

Ahlrichs believes this relationship is the best thing that has happened to the Men's Group, adding that he "is overwhelmed by the generosity of IHM hearts." Personally, he derives a great deal of fulfillment from his role as a tutor. "It's that 45 minutes to an hour I spend with a student, knowing I am making a difference, that I find rewarding," he says. "You get to know his own individual story, which is sometimes heartbreaking, and you can offer support."



*Grilling at Field Day: Immaculate Heart of Mary's Men's Club members with Cindy Greer, St. Anthony School principal*



*Men's Club volunteer Brian Russell served as a chaperone at the recent field trip to the Indianapolis Zoo.*

St. Anthony School Principal Cindy Greer has this to say about the support they receive from the Men's Club:

"Immaculate Heart of Mary is an invaluable resource to the St. Anthony Catholic School community. I hesitate to try to list all of the ways they support our families, because they basically respond to whatever is needed. They recently organized a fundraiser for the school at the new Metro Diner, located on Butler's campus. It was the best turnout that the franchise has ever recorded for that type of event. IHM sponsors an annual Health Fair in the summer which includes students receiving book bags full of supplies and an opportunity for a free physical so the student may play sports in the upcoming year. The IHM Men's Club has a strong mentor program at St. Anthony. One volunteer partners with a young man and helps with a subject area in which the student is struggling; more importantly however, the mentor also offers words of advice and encouragement. The mentors often have this bond for as long as the student is at St. Anthony Catholic School Parents may also give permission for the mentors to connect with the students outside of the school day. Many students have had the opportunity to attend Indians or Colts games, go to the Indianapolis Zoo or other attractions thanks to their mentors. IHM Men's Club has also sponsored our trip to Lenscrafters, so that students may receive the eyeglasses they need to help them be successful. Volunteers attend field trips, assist in the classrooms and put on a fantastic field day cookout on our last day of school. These are only a few of the ways that the Men's Club supports our community. In today's challenging times for our families, we are indeed blessed to have their support."

***If your parish or organization is interested in forming an outreach partnership with an NDAA school, please contact Kim Pohovey at [kpohovey@archindy.org](mailto:kpohovey@archindy.org) or [317-236-1568](tel:317-236-1568).***