

# St. Anthony Indian Mission

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From the desk of Fr. Patrick McGuire

Back-to-school greetings from all of us at St. Anthony's!

I apologize for not writing to you during July. The staff asked me about the July letter and all I could say was, "What will I write about? We only have holes in the ground and who wants to hear about that!" Now that school has resumed I feel I have something to write about.

During summer vacation there was only maintenance work going on. Truth be told, I looked forward to the staff arriving early each morning to work and thereby avoiding the heat of the day because by afternoon we were often well over 100 degrees! The Sisters were on leave, the faculty were on vacation and the students were scattered all over. Most nights, there were 15 empty buildings, five acres of land -- and me. So joining the workmen was a joy. (I can now add "night watchman" to my resume. . . .)

As to holes in the ground, in a previous letter I mentioned that part of our parking lot seemed to be sinking. When we investigated it turned out a tree stump had been covered over by the asphalt. Mother Nature took the stump and left me the legacy of a deep hole. But we eventually made the repairs.

As it turned out, Mother Nature and I had another disagreement. The courtyard of the school buildings became overgrown with weeds, despite ground cover and gravel. I decided that we should work with nature, remove the gravel and try to grow grass which would be more easily maintained. Plans were afoot to harvest rain water from the roofs to enable us to cultivate a grassy environment for the students. The rains came early and only briefly, so I was left with another hole and an ongoing project for this year. Meanwhile, the courtyard looks great.

During the summer, the good ladies from Kansas came once again to hold an art camp for the students. This year it was more fun than ever! The students had painting and drawing at which they excelled -- plus music, theater and hand-crafts. Many parents came for lunch on the last day of the camp and viewed the students' artwork. I'm not sure who was more proud -- the parents or the students! As lunch ended, the heavens opened up and blessed us with a cooling rain. Undeterred, both parents and students ended up dancing in the puddles in the parking lot.

Again Mother Nature took to teasing me. The following Sunday, as I opened the cafeteria for coffee after Mass, I was met with a flood of water in the kitchen. It turned out, the water heater had burst overnight. When we had dried it out, we had to remove and replace 200 floor tiles. Eventually we had the place ready for the reopening of school, but we had to postpone some more remedial work until the Labor Day holiday when school will next be out.



Having fallen well behind with my schedule of work planned for the summer, I confess to having become anxious. Some former students came to my rescue and even Mr. Jonathan (gym and seniors computer teacher) brought two of his children to help. I was also excited to host a youth group from Colorado and two groups from College Mission trips. All three groups "put shoulder to the wheel" and helped tremendously to prepare St. Anthony's for the students' return. I cannot commend these young people enough for their generosity, enthusiasm, and willingness to assist others. They were remarkable! You might remember that last year, one such group went to assist an elderly lady whose roof was leaking. This year, one of our groups went back to her, waterproofed her roof again, made a vegetable garden for her, and cut enough firewood to see her through next winter. Newspapers carry a great deal of negativity about young people; I wish the public at large could meet those who help us, and they would see a very different picture!

As I write to you, school is well underway for the new year. As the children arrived in our new school bus, several little ones ran over and hugged me. I must confess that tears welled up within me, and the children's excitement spilled over on to the staff and faculty as well. I noticed the same excitement (and dare I say tears) among parents who brought their children to the first day of school.

My greatest relief was having a full faculty for the commencement of the new year. Sr. Ragini (3rd grade) has been delayed in India trying to sort out visa issues. Ms. Chimoni, who retired last year from Kindergarten, kindly agreed to take 3rd grade in the interim. Ms. Kara, who taught with us several years ago, returned to take Kindergarten, and Mr. Jeremy, who left us at the end of last year, decided that he would like to return and is happily back with Junior High, teaching social studies and religion. What a relief! It is not easy to find teachers to work on the Pueblo, and the familial ethos of St. Anthony's has certainly shone through.

One little side note. One day this summer, the cafeteria was used to celebrate a former St. Anthony's student who has recently attained a doctorate of Physical Therapy. We were delighted to celebrate with Dr. Amber Rose Seowtewa, class of 1996. Generations of the Seowtewa family have been sending their children to St. Anthony's since 1923.

After consultation with Sr. Marsha (our wonderful Principal), I made the bold decision to restart Pre-kindergarten. These last two years there have only been one or two applications for pre-school: not enough to warrant forming a class. (All the local schools have had the same difficulty.) So we have reorganized Kindergarten into a two year program to accommodate pre-k. It is new ground for Ms. Kara, but with Ms. Leola to assist, the class has merged nicely and the little ones are learning and enjoying themselves to a marvelous degree. (At times I wish I could join them for their "mandatory" afternoon nap!)

The holes are filled in, the faculty is complete, and the School is back in full swing. The students are deep in study and the cafeteria is filled with laughter. What more could I possibly ask? Thank you for making it all so wonderfully possible.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Patrick McGuire". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Fr. Patrick McGuire