

Students beached at St. Pius School

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

It may have been freezing outside, but students at St. Pius Tenth School in Chili spent their day at a "beach" Jan. 29.

As part of their celebration of Catholic Schools Week, the St. Pius students came to school on "Beach Day" attired in all kinds of clothing more appropriate for July than January. They also brought towels so they could sit on the cafeteria floor during lunch.

The *Catholic Courier* dispatched its investigative news team to St. Pius to get to the bottom of Beach Day. About 30 children surrounded a *Courier* reporter like seagulls at the beach spotting a discarded, half-eaten meal when his presence was announced by Rose Seymour, cafeteria manager.

Several students were asked about their favorite things to do at the beach. Second-grader Nicholas Diantino apparently misunderstood the question when he responded: "My favorite thing in the world is a hamster!"

As the crowd of children crushed the reporter, who made the mistake of wearing a heavy winter coat and sweater to the "beach," they frantically answered questions before being called back to class. First-grader Rachel Brown said she had brought a "Princess" towel on which to sit, and added that she liked to "boogie board" at the beach.

"It's a little board that you lay on, and you go up the waves," she said when asked what type of board can boogie. "Like the waves pushes you."

Her commentary earned a sustained and crushing hug of affection from Kyra Ziobrowski, who is also in first grade. She then showed off her "American Doll" who she said rides horses. When asked why she was dressed in a Girl Scout uniform rather than beach attire, she blamed her father.

"My dad didn't know we were supposed to wear beach clothes," she said.

At that moment, Tyler Poole, who attends first grade with his twin brother, Justin, noted that he had brought a Sponge Bob Square Pants towel to school. He then turned to the subject of catching minnows at the beach.

"I trap these little minnows in my net," he said, adding that he and his grandpa once caught a small-mouth bass.

Second-grader Michael Roney, stylishly attired in a Gap hat and sunglasses, said he likes to go swimming at the beach because he likes getting wet. His classmate, Jordan



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

St. Pius Tenth School first-graders Emma Bevilacqua (left) and Ciara Reifenstein enjoy lunch Jan. 29 at the Chili school during "Beach Day," an activity held as part of Catholic Schools Week celebrations.

McGee, fashionably decked out in a flower necklace, said she also likes swimming and picking up seashells.

Second-grader Ben Conroy said he liked Beach Day because the cafeteria tables had been removed, and he was able to sit on the floor.

"It's better than sitting on seats," he said. Ben added that he likes to build sand castles at the beach "because when I build, I add stuff to them, like sticks and stuff."

Nicole Mannella wore a New York Yankees shirt and said that she likes wrestling at the beach with her father.

"He goofs around, so I have to tackle him to stop him from doing that," she said.

Michael Spoto, a fourth-grader who likes the Buffalo Bills, said he likes to snorkel when he goes to the beach.

"I just look at the rock formations and all the animals," he said.

He added that Beach Day was a welcome break from winter. "I like it because you get to come to school dressed up in beach stuff when it's actually really cold outside."

His classmate, Andie Christanis, said she was a jazz dance student and enjoyed swimming in the ocean "because it relaxes you and cools you off."

In need of relaxation after playing



the role of interrogator, the *Courier* reporter concluded his frontline interviews with the children and finished up his investigation by talking to Seymour, the cafeteria manager. Beach Day was an unqualified success, she noted.

"In their structured day, it's a fun activity for them," she said. She added that students also were treated to ice cream that day, a fact confirmed by a ring of chocolate

around the mouth of one interview subject.

Vice Principal Sharon Stiegman said Beach Day was a chance for the children to come to school without wearing their uniforms for a day. However, she did stress that the children's informal attire that day was an exceptional event.

"They will be dressed up for the Catholic Schools Week liturgy tomorrow," she said.

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