

VALLEY & STATE

1970s and 1980s: Student activities, curriculum upgraded

St. Joseph Academy has always sought to provide a good range of student activities, but when the school was located at its downtown campus in Elizabeth Street, these activities were limited because of limited space and facilities. Student activities have increased since 1959, after the move to the new campus on Ringgold Street.

By 1970, St. Joseph had both high school and junior high school football teams. The high school team had 29 boys, and Willie Garcia was head coach. The junior high team had 24 players and was coached by Brother Richard.

Other athletic programs included basketball and track. There were two basketball teams, the varsity team and the junior team.

Later in the 1970s, after girls enrolled as students, girl's athletic teams were developed. In more recent years, the athletic programs have further expanded and include golf, swimming, bowling, fishing, tennis and soccer. The student band in 1970 included 36 members, and that year a new band hall was opened. That same year, the active drama club produced the show "Bye Bye Birdie."

Other student activities included the photo club and the production of the annual yearbook, "The Mesquite."

And in the 1980s, the Guidance Office, staffed by three counselors, helped students in a variety of ways. A Career Day was established, offering junior and senior students an opportunity to hear speakers describe various types of careers.

In 1984, Stella Filizola joined the faculty and in 2014, in addition to her teaching duties, now serves as chair of the Mathematics Department. During her years at St. Joseph, Stella has taught algebra I, algebra II, college algebra, trigonometry, precalculus and statistics. Presently, she is teaching algebra II dual enrollment and pre-calculus dual enrollment.

During her years at St. Joseph, Stella has seen significant advances in the curriculum and in teaching methods. Today, there is much use of technology, with computer labs available for students to do research and homework online. Some mathematics courses now have dual enrollment, with the students enrolled and obtaining credit hours at both St. Joseph Academy and Texas Southmost College.

St. Joseph has several honors societies, the National Honor Society, the Junior National Honor Society, the Spanish Honor Society, the French Honor Society and the Thespian Society. Stella is the moderator for the National Honor Society, which is the school's charter of the national organization. This society is made of the student leaders who excel in citizenship, leadership and scholarship. Students must provide 20 hours of community service per semester, working in such activities as blood drives and children toy drives.

Brother Francis, who had been principal in the 1970s, left St. Joseph for a time, serving at Marist schools elsewhere for eight years. He returned to St. Joseph in 1989 and became assistant principal for academics and taught physics, chemistry, and religion.

In June 1990, Brother Michael Lineen, the principal at that time, was killed while studying Spanish in Mexico. Brother Francis was asked to become principal again, holding this position until 1996.

During those years Brother Francis was responsible for overseeing construction of some new facilities, a multipurpose building, four classrooms, a chemistry lab and classroom and a guidance center. The old cafeteria was converted into four classrooms and a faculty workroom.

This \$2 million project, which was paid off by the time the project was completed, became possible through the efforts of Beth Pace, development director (class of 1981) and members of the Advisory Board. The project was supported by a generous response from many alumni and parents. In addition, the Incarnate Word Sisters made a sizable donation to this project in memory of their founder, Venerable Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel.

Brother Francis feels that SJA has risen to the challenge of the times and continues to prepare its students for the future that awaits them. Those who graduate have a firm academic foundation, enabling them to face the challenges of college curricula. Students also graduate with a solid religious formation, calling them to live simple spiritual lives in service of others.

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