

Two Familiar Faces Leaving St. Matthew

News about St. Matthew Parish & School in Oak Creek, Wisconsin

September 2010

Two Familiar Faces Leaving St. Matthew

Tom Schneider, St. Matthew's Director of Administration and Stewardship, as well as Janice O'Connor, St. Matthew's accountant, both decided to leave their positions effective Friday, August 20th. On their last day, "The Buzz" sat down with both Tom and Janice to recount some of their fond memories of their time at the Parish.

Tom Schneider came to St. Matthew in April 2002 and was originally hired to be the Director of Stewardship. Nine months later, with the retirement of the then-Business Manager, Tom took on his new role of both Director of Administration and Stewardship. Before joining St. Matthew, Tom was a clinical social worker and led Catholic Charities as its Executive Director for 18 years, after 6 years as the agency's Racine director. Tom also served as the Executive Director of Franklin Senior Citizens, Inc., and helped develop plans for a senior center.

Looking back on his time at St. Matthew, Tom said he'll remember the projects the parishioners came together to accomplish. Tom explained, "By working together, we helped to air condition and turn the worship space 90 degrees - all for just \$3,000 - and that included scrubbing walls, painting, and the backdrop. " During Tom's years as Director of Administration and Stewardship, there were two capital campaigns for building the Gathering Space

and meeting rooms, as well as other external and internal projects like landscaping, the "Old Hall" demolition, and 5 Eagle Scout projects. Tom says, "One of the things I am most proud of is the improvements made to our fiscal system and communicating with the parishioners about finances."



Tom was also instrumental in the monthly production of this newsletter, "The Buzz". Even though the production of "The Buzz" began a few years before Tom took over his position at St. Matthew, he has been a key player over the last eight years making sure the production continued on a regular basis to communicate key news items to parishioners. Tom explains, "I always looked at "The Buzz" as quality stewardship. It tells the St. Matthew story and recognizes people involved in ministry. That is part of quality stewardship." Tom worked closely with the Chairman of the Communications Committee (Amy & Kenn Cicigoi, 2002-2009 and Robert

Tabern, 2009-Present) to help generate story ideas for "The Buzz". Tom also negotiated the financial needs of "The Buzz", as well as that of the weekly bulletin. Tabern states, "Tom has been great about finding us stories and ideas. I hope we can keep "The Buzz" a monthly publication when Tom leaves, but that might be quite a challenge."

When asked about some of the challenges facing St. Matthew, Tom explained there were several saying, "One of the biggest challenges is trying to get an increase in financial contributions. It's hard to ask people to give more money when they are not working or maybe their spouse is out of a job. However costs are always going up. For our Parish, or any Parish to survive, we need that financial support. Other challenges faced by Tom during his tenure included the area of stewardship. Tom says, "The biggest challenge is how to keep people involved and get people involved in new ministries of the Church."



Another challenge Tom said he always faced was maintaining a top quality administration. Tom explains, "A church is really like a small business. It takes a lot of time and work to keep it going."

Tom earned high respect from those who knew him best at St. Matthew. Dan Wachs, Maintenance Supervisor at St. Matthew says, "Tom was a hands-on supervisor. He had no problem jumping in with his sleeves rolled up. We joked about his hand drawn maps and pictures because they were often hard to understand." Alan Bronikowski remembers, "Tom always led by example. He always jumped in to help get the work done. That ranged from tearing down ceilings to installing insulation, from shoveling mulch to shoveling stones. Tom also realized the importance of relationships with people. To get people to volunteer, they need to feel connected to St. Matt's. Tom always worked to connect

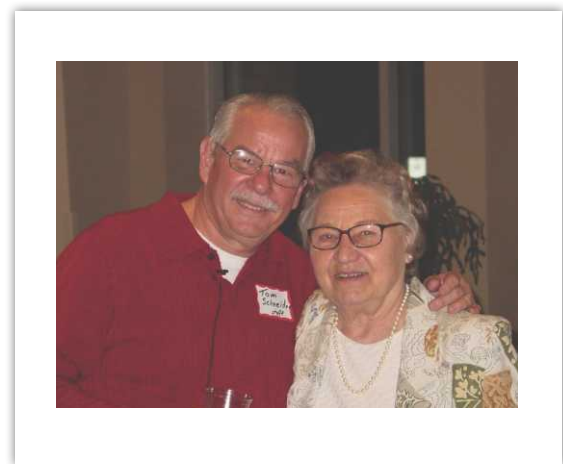
with new parishioners so that they would feel a part of the parish and would be willing to volunteer. Tom also remembered to thank people. The bulletin articles were always written up and included the names of everyone that helped. Even if we forgot someone, the following week there would be a note including that person's name. That extra attention to detail helped to make people feel appreciated which is one of the most important things with a volunteer work force." Mike Kuick also reminisces, "Tom and Janice's office was a place you smiled when you went into because that is the kind of people they were. It was such a pleasure to work with them and the intangibles things they did for this parish over and above their jobs will never be replaced."

Tom, who is now 62 years old, does not call his departure from St. Matthew a retirement. Tom explains, "Right now, I do

not have another job lined up, but would like to keep working somewhere else. I am looking forward to having more time with my family until something else comes around that I want to do." Tom also plans to continue remaining active at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. Tom will not continue to be a member of St. Matthew anymore, but will consider coming back for visits in the future. Meanwhile, Janice is planning to spend more time working at her part-time position with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, where she has also been putting in hours the past few years.

There has been no word yet on a possible replacement for Tom and Janice at this time, or what will become of their positions.

— Robert Tabern



St. Matthew Parish Buzz

Produced by the St. Matthew Communication Committee

Rick Barribeau
Amy Cicigoi
Kenn Cicigoi

Maria Caduto
Angela Kornacki

Robert Tabern
Carol Tenner
Mark Shawver

Mrs. McDonald & the 7th Grade Class

Submit Photos, Stories or Story Suggestions to the Communication Committee at
thebuzz@stmattoc.org • 414-764-9617