

THE SERVICE OF EDUCATION

Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School Strives to Help Local Children Excel



Estephany Haro
El Observador

Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School held a ceremony this past Thursday April 27th to celebrate Father Mateo Sheedy's legacy in education. Parents, students and community members were all welcomed to this celebration where the students had the opportunity to give a tour of their school as well as to share their testimonies.

Father Sheedy was a long time pastor and founder of Sacred Heart Nativity Middle School and education advocate for low income students. Currently, there are 117 students enrolled in grades 6th to 8th and there are over 400 alumni that the school continues to work with, according to Sonya Arriola, president of Sacred Heart Nativity School.

"He [Father Sheedy] envisioned a school that would serve this community and would put low-income first generation college bound youth towards college completion," Arriola said. Therefore, "Father Mateo was instrumental in finding many organizations here in San Jose, like Downtown college prep and Rocket Ship Schools."

Eylenne Diaz, and 8th grader at Sacred Heart Nativity School is an example of Father Sheedy's purpose. Diaz is the first one in her family to attend Sacred Heart and she was able to fulfill one of her many goals as a student, being accepted to her dream school, Notre Dame High School.

"It prepared me educationally very well, all the teachers are really accessible, you

could reach them and we also have the homework club where teachers are still here after school and they can help us out," Diaz said.

However, the students are not the only ones that are very involved in their school activities, parents are a big part of their children's education. "I learned that the school really involves parents in the education of our children, they give us the tools, they have many workshops," said Jessica Aguirre, president of the Parents Volunteer program at Sacred Heart.

Aguirre is a proud mother three children. Her oldest daughter attended Sacred Heart Nativity and was admitted into Presentation High School and she's currently attending college. Her younger sons are both Sacred Heart students and are also aiming to attend college after high school.

Aguirre first heard of Sacred Heart through her friends. "Many of my friends talk about it and I wanted to see for myself if it was what I was looking for, they talked about the values that they have in the school, also the academics that many of us are looking for that our children can be very successful in high school," Aguirre said.

However, Aguirre said that she believes her daughter would have still gone to college if she was a public high school student but it wouldn't have been the same for her. "I believe she would be attending college too, but not in the way she's doing, she's very strong academically but she also knows what her values are, she knows she has to

be prepared for the future, she knows how successful she can be and that comes from Sacred Heart Nativity," Aguirre said.

Even though Diaz is happy to soon start a new cycle attending her dream school Notre Dame, she's also sad to leave her classmates and teachers whom she considers her family.

"Being in the school feels like everybody is related and we have retreats and with every retreat we get closer and closer and I feel like it's hard to know that soon we will

go on our separate ways," Diaz said.

Sacred Heart Nativity's graduates have a higher completion rate than other schools. The high school completion rate is closer to 100 percent of the students that graduate on time from high school, about 70 percent of the students are graduating from college within four years, according to Arriola. "Our students are absolutely succeeding in terms of graduating from high school on time with much higher grades and completing college at much higher rates."

Eylenne Diaz, an 8th grader at Sacred Heart Nativity, will attend Notre Dame High School after graduation. Photo Credit: Estephany Haro

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