

St. Teresa Catholic School in Titusville expands with The Boland Family Learning Center; enrollment underway as school plans to reopen; scholarships available

By Ken Datzman

TITUSVILLE — When students start the fall term at St. Teresa Catholic School, part of the Diocese of Orlando, they will see a big upgrade on campus — a remodeled space that now showcases The Boland Family Learning Center.

Barring any government actions taken because of the coronavirus pandemic, St. Teresa Catholic School is set to reopen Aug. 12 for in-person learning.

The new cutting-edge learning environment of The Boland Family Learning Center features the latest technology and attractively furnished collaborative work areas. The technology includes robotics equipment, a large interactive touch screen, and collaborative workstations.

Collaborative learning spaces empower students to work with each other to explore alternative solutions and thoughtfully solve problems. These types of classrooms are known for fostering learning, innovating, creating, making, and exploring.

“The Boland Family Learning Center is a 21st century learning environment with multiple functions,” said St. Teresa Catholic School Principal Mary McCrory, who will be starting her second year leading the kindergarten through eighth grade private institution.

She said there are distinct areas throughout The Boland Family Learning Center.

“For example, there is an area for the younger students. It resembles a library with books on shelves and chairs that have soft-cushioned bottoms. The students can wobble around a little bit. They like to move around. There is also some lounge seating for teachers. They can sit and read a book with the students. Everything in the space is movable.”

The Boland family runs the general contracting firm David Boland Inc. in Titusville. David Boland is a University of Florida civil engineering graduate. A Boland family member attends St. Teresa Catholic School.

The Boland Family Learning Center project team included American Business Interiors, a longtime Steelcase dealer in downtown Melbourne. The project designer was Pam Oliveira-Jackson. ABI has worked with a number of area Catholic schools on facility upgrades and new construction projects over the years.

One section of The Boland Family Learning Center has tables and monitors that have hookups for both iPads and Chromebooks. A group of students can work together on a project, whether it be students in the upper grades — through their Google Classroom and their G-Suite products for education — or students in the lower grades with their iPads. They can play educational games together.

The Boland Family Learning Center also features a 75-inch Clear Touch interactive panel. “It has a PC built-in with Wi-Fi. The students can physically touch the screen. The idea is for the older students to work collaboratively on a project, and then present it to the whole class,” said McCrory, whose school offers a voluntary prekindergarten education program for ages 4 and 5, and a prekindergarten program for 3-year-olds.

One general area of The Boland Family Learning Center is dedicated to robotics work and makerspace ideas. “Students build and design different projects based on what they are learning in their classrooms,” she said.

“We also have a ‘green screen’ in The Boland Family Learning Center. Eighth-grade students in their journalism class record announcements every school day and post



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Veteran educator Mary McCrory was named principal of St. Teresa Catholic School last year. She previously served as assistant principal at Holy Family Catholic School in Orlando. Both St. Teresa and Holy Family are part of the Diocese of Orlando. Originally from Ohio, McCrory is a two-time graduate of Cleveland State University and a graduate of UCF. St. Teresa Catholic School is pursuing STREAM certification through the Florida Catholic Conference.

to our Facebook account. They announce any birthdays in the school and other timely events. Before any announcements are made, the students pray and then recite the Pledge of Allegiance.”

McCrory said The Boland Family Learning Center is the first step toward creating a STREAM learning environment. The acronym stands for science, technology, religion, engineering, art, and mathematics.

“We are moving toward getting our STREAM certification. We are accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference, which also has a segment where a school can enhance its standing and become STREAM-certified. And that’s our goal.”

The Florida Catholic Conference has run the STREAM certification system since the 2016–17 school year, adapting it from an initiative by the National Catholic Education Association.

The key goals of the STREAM system include hands-on projects, creative thinking, interdisciplinary teaching, and on-campus technology. “We’re excited about integrating STREAM throughout the entire school,” said McCrory.

McCrory was promoted to principal of St. Teresa

Catholic School last year. She previously served as assistant principal at Holy Family Catholic School, in the Bayhill-Dr. Phillips area in Orlando.

She earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education and her master’s degree in curriculum and instruction, both from Cleveland State University. McCrory also has a master’s degree in educational leadership from the University of Central Florida.

“I’m originally from Ohio, where I taught in a Catholic school for nine years. I was a computer teacher,” she said. McCrory moved to Florida to teach at Holy Family Catholic School.

“I taught eighth grade for eight years and then came out of the classroom and took on the responsibility to coordinate and implement technology for that school. For the past two years, I served as the Holy Family Catholic School’s assistant principal. This is my 22nd year working in Catholic school education, and my 13th year with the Diocese of Orlando.”

She added, “I love the Titusville area and have been

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embraced by the St. Teresa Catholic School community. Everyone was welcoming. This is a gem of an institution. There is a strong sense of community. I'm thrilled to be the principal at this school. We have much to offer families. The small class size is one of our strengths. It gives us the opportunity to provide personalized attention to students. We also have educators who come in and help students if they are having difficulty in a certain area of instruction, such as reading. And, we have an enrichment professional on staff. We are also going to have an enrichment class for accelerated learners."

Enrollment for the fall term is underway at St. Teresa Catholic School. Catholic schools like St. Teresa welcome students of every faith, color, and socio-economic background. "All students all welcome. We just ask that they be respectful of our Catholic tradition," said McCrory, adding that the school offers scholarship opportunities.

Scholarships are available to assist with Catholic school tuition for families facing financial difficulties and whose financial situations may have changed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have high academic standards and a rigorous curriculum. We feel that our school is so good — based on standardized test scores and other benchmarks — we want everybody to be able to attend it. We accept various scholarships that help families experience a Catholic school education. An example is the Step Up for Students scholarship."

Step Up for Students is a nonprofit organization that helps manage the income-based Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

The scholarship program provides tuition assistance to a private school of the parents' choice. Since 2001, Step Up

for Students has awarded more than 570,000 scholarships.

Step Up also helps administer the state-funded Gardiner Scholarship for Florida students with certain special needs. With the Gardiner Scholarship, recipients may use the funds for a variety of approved services, including private tutoring, occupational therapy, and instructional materials.

The scholarship honors Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner, who led the legislative effort to create the program. Gardiner and his wife Camille have championed the cause of children with unique abilities for many years.

The Gardiner Scholarship amount awards for the 2020–21 school year are still being determined. However, the average amount for most students in the 2019–2020 school year was \$10,400.

St. Teresa Catholic School also accepts the McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities. The program was originally created in 1991 and provides scholarships for eligible students with disabilities to attend a public or private school of their choice.

Yet another option for St. Teresa Catholic School families is the Family Empowerment Scholarship. On June 25 of this year, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 7067, which provides additional education opportunities for children from low-income families.

The K–12 Scholarship Programs legislation championed by DeSantis expands the Family Empowerment Scholarship by increasing the authorized annual growth in number of participating students and ensures the educational continuity of students in the program.

The legislation will allow nearly 29,000 additional students and families, every year, to tap the Family Endowment Scholarship.

To learn more about scholarship opportunities, call

contact St. Teresa Catholic School at (321) 267–1643.

In other Catholic school news, Melbourne Central Catholic High School and Good Shepherd Catholic School in Orlando were presented with the St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta 2019 Award in recognition for service projects completed during the school year.

MCC students created a partnership with the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen in Melbourne, where students prepared meals, fed the homeless, washed and folded donated clothing, and took on various tasks that are necessary to the success of Daily Bread. MCC also held five donation drives that directly benefited Daily Bread.

Good Shepherd students crocheted mats from recycled grocery bags to give to the homeless.

McCrory said students are eager to return to a classroom setting after months of distance learning because of the virus.

"Our teachers were fully engaged in online learning. They didn't just put lessons online and then step away from the process. We took attendance. We graded. We ensured that learning was taking place while the school was closed. The teachers called the families to check on how things were going. Close relationships were formed between the teachers and the families, and that's what St. Teresa Catholic School has long been known for in the community."

This October, St. Teresa Catholic Church hopes to host its 60th Fair. The event is touted as "the largest church fair on the East Coast of Florida."

"This is an event that brings together St. Teresa alumni from various generations. Hopefully, we will be able to pull it off. Everyone looks forward to the annual Fair. The program will include a gathering in the parish center for all alumni of St. Teresa," said McCrory.



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