

# Meet Mrs. Joanne Cooke, Our New Fifth-Grade Teacher

By Erin Cuddy and Eleanor Droege, SJE fifth-grade students

**M**rs. Joanne Cooke, SJE's new fifth-grade homeroom and sixth grade language arts teacher, brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to her position. In addition to her teaching credentials, she has a Master's degree and certification in Guidance and Counseling Education. She has taught fifth and sixth grades in Montgomery County and at St. Peter's School in Olney. She has piloted and implemented a grade-school enrichment program. Most recently, Mrs. Cooke was at the Academy of the Holy Cross as the Director of their Christian Service

Commitment program.

*Where did you grow up?*

I grew up in Morgantown, West Virginia, home of West Virginia State University (the Mountaineers).

*How big is your family?*

My husband and I have three nearly grown sons and no pets. I also have two sisters and one brother.

*Where did you graduate elementary school, high school and college?*

I graduated both elementary and high school from St. Francis School. For college I attended West Virginia University.

*Did you always want to be a teacher or did some inspirational*



Mrs. Cooke joins SJE as our new fifth-grade homeroom teacher.

*reason/person lead you to teaching?*

I always wanted to work with kids growing up. Some 20 years ago a good friend of mine told me that I had the gift of teaching.

*How many years have you been teaching?*

I have been teaching for 23 years now – since 1993.

*What about teaching makes it rewarding for you?*

I really enjoy seeing students engaged in a subject. Believe it or not, I also love middle schoolers' sense of humor, which some might see as a bit of a challenge.

*Is there anything special/unique about working at SJE?*

I think there are several things that make St. John the Evangelist unique. There is only one class per grade level, it's a small school that is very close to the parish, and the faculty and staff are also terrific.

*Are there any hobbies/interests/vacations that you enjoy?*

In my free time I love to read, crochet, do counted cross stitch and roller blade. I like to vacation at the ocean. We like to go to Ocean City, Md.

*What's your favorite holiday?*

My favorite holiday has got to be Easter. My mom's side of the family is Polish and the Polish Easter traditions are amazing. I think it's such a happy holiday!

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## Books are Alive and Well at SJE

**T**he first week of school can be a busy one for parents, educators and kids alike. To help kids ease into being back at school, SJE hosted its annual Literary Day on Friday, September 2.

Small groups of students, led by teachers and parent volunteers, discussed their assigned summer reading books. Students chose from a host of books including: *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *The War that Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Christina Lamb and Malala Yousafzai, *The Crossover* by

Kwame Alexander, and many more titles. Themes ranged from women in 18th century English nobility, war and overcoming prejudice, to recent true events inspired by the story of Malala Yousafzai, a Pashtun girl from Pakistan's Swat Valley who was born of an illiterate mother and grew up in her father's school.

Published author and former parishioner, Eric Andreas talked to the students about the process he went through when writing his book, *Origins Rising*. Mr. Andreas was inspired to write the young-adult novel when his younger daughter, Sophie, asked him if humans could evolve.

The dystopian book's premise is that an asteroid nearly destroys all life on earth and erases technology. The few remaining survivors must adapt to survive in this harsh new world. Mr. Andreas also explained to the students the many steps required to get a book published. Andreas, the father of three SJE graduates, Tristan, Julia, and Sophie, is an environmental and natural resources attorney who works in Washington, DC. Signed copies of *Origins Rising* were generously donated to SJE and raffled off to 15 lucky SJE students.

Grades One & Two completed an author

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Emily Pacconi, eighth-grade homeroom teacher, leads students in a book discussion during Literary Day.



## St. John the Evangelist School OPEN HOUSE

THURSDAY  
January 19  
8:30 – 11:30 AM

SUNDAY  
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## Parishioner's Prayers Answered and Olympic Dream Fulfilled

**M**y name is Thea LaFond. I am 22 years old and a member of Saint John the Evangelist parish. This year, 2016, marks my first year out of The University of Maryland and my Olympic debut.

I am from a small island in the Caribbean named Dominica (no, not Dominican Republic). So small in fact that we had only one Olympic qualifier, a male jumper. Since every country is allowed at least one elite male and female athlete, I was selected to go to Rio.

It had been a rough year leading up to the Olympics. I hit multiple personal bests, and came very close to the Olympic automatic qualifier.



Olympian and St. John the Evangelist parishioner Thea LaFond

Unfortunately, I got injured soon after and was forced to switch legs in order to compete with less pain. I remember coming home from an international trip and asking God for guidance and to help relieve the pain. The next day I got the call from my association, "You're going to Rio." I immediately yelled for my mom and told her the good news. We called my dad who was at work. "Well," he said, "looks like we're going to Brazil."

I landed in Brazil a month later, feeling pain free and excited. To walk into the Olympic Village was like stepping into a rainbow of nationalities: Netherlands in bright

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## Encountering Christ in Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration

**S**t. John the Evangelist Parish is one of only two parishes in southern Montgomery County to offer Eucharistic Adoration twenty-four hours per day. Parishioners and others may stop into Our Lady's Chapel any time, day or night, to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and to meet Jesus in the simplicity and

silence of their hearts. The chapel is unlocked between the hours of 6 a.m. and 5 p.m.; outside of those hours, adorers enter a combination into locks on both the outside and the inner doors. Entering through our parish library, adorers sign in before proceeding into the chapel. They may

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St. John the  
Evangelist Parish  
10103 Georgia Ave.  
Silver Spring, MD  
301-681-7663

Rev. Joseph Calis  
Pastor

St. John the Evangelist School  
Mrs. Margaret Durney,  
Principal  
301-681-7656

Monica M. Bradford, OPT Editor  
bradfordm2@comcast.net

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