



# A Little Medical Training at All Saints

By Marianne Weaver

All Saints Catholic School in Manassas has added two STEM-related after-school activities for third and fourth grade students: Little Medical School and Little Veterinarian School.

Through hands-on, interactive demonstrations, crafts and games, the Little Medical School teaches children how the human body and organs work, introduces them to medical instruments, and explores the skills that surgeons use in surgery. Students taking part in the Little Veterinarian School learn about the medical makeup of their pets, how to best care for animals, and the types of medical instruments and tools used by veterinarians.

"The Little Medical School and Little Veterinarian School are co-curricular activities that occur after school and that are aligned with our goal of engaging students in meaningful K-8 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) experiences," said principal David Conroy. "Recognizing the increasing societal demand for students with strong backgrounds in these areas, All Saints is committed to not only providing our young people with a solid foundation of skills but also to introducing them to potential career opportunities."

The program was introduced by Beth Ross, president of Little Medical School-Northern Virginia, a former All Saints parent and PTO president. Ross said the parent company was started by Dr. Mary Mason, whose mother was a pediatrician.

"Mary grew up playing doctor and credits those experiences as the reason she became a doctor," said Ross. "When Mary was the chief resident for internal medicine at Washington University in St. Louis, she decided to recreate her childhood experiences, and wrote the curriculum for the first Little Medical School."

Ross, who also comes from a family of medical professionals—her father is a gastroenterologist, brother is an orthopedic surgeon, two sisters are nurses, and she worked as an



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endoscopic technician—read about The Little Medical School and began her franchise in April 2015.

"I loved the idea of the medical classes and thought the curriculum was so unique," said Ross, who previously operated a home daycare and taught preschool classes.

Conroy said students in third grade are eligible to participate in the Little Medical School, while those in fourth grade may enroll in the Little Veterinarian School.

"In addition to introducing students to specific career paths, the 'Little School' experience also provides them with opportunities to gain new skills in STEM, collaborate with other learners, and participate in higher level thinking, all of which are critical skills to develop," said Conroy.

Ross added that Little Medical School is more than just an academic experience.

"It can also play a vital role in shaping student attitudes toward health and well-being, not to mention the immense amount of confidence it provides," she said. "We encourage a scientific temper in the minds of students from a young age, which heightens curiosity and increases interest in the medical field. Learning how the body works, both human and animal, gives the students knowledge and encourages a healthy lifestyle. Armed with this knowledge, students become sensitized to the life around them, which also promotes a sense of love and caring for people and animals."

Katherine Mills said her third-grade daughter Emily loves the class ... and so does she!

"They learn to examine the other medical students and are learning in a fun way. They have taken each other's blood pressures, listened to their heart beats and lungs. It is great that they actually get to use real medical equipment and come up with care plans for each of their patients," said Mills. "I am hoping that through this class she learns that learning can be fun and that she will continue to be interested in science and healthcare."

Jacob Fleming, also in third grade, said his favorite part of the class is using the stethoscope to listen to classmate's heartbeats.

"I am hoping to learn more about how doctors tell if you're sick or well," he said. "I also want to learn more about how we breathe and our lungs."