

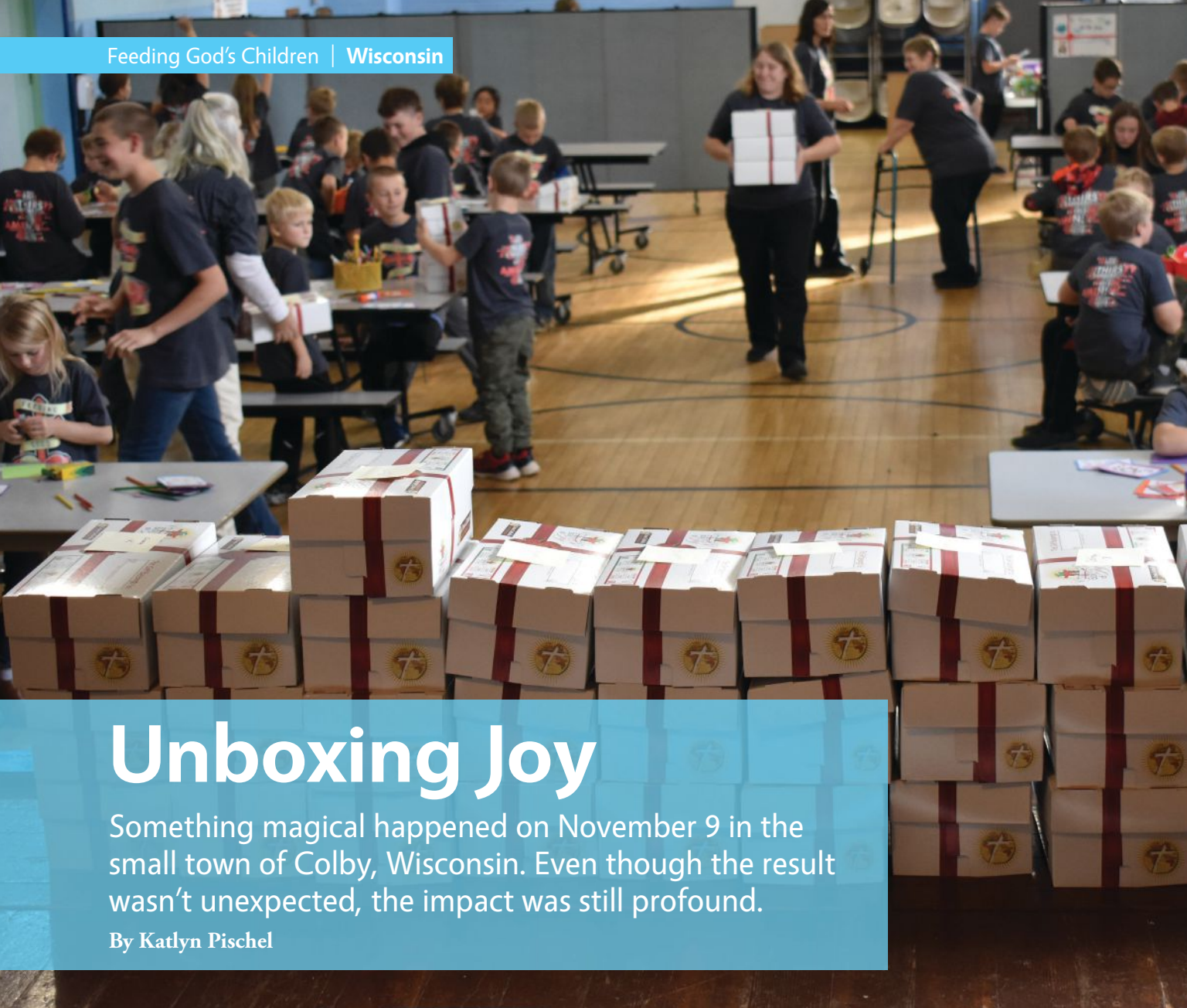
Catholic Forester

CATHOLIC ORDER OF FORESTERS NATIONAL MEMBER PUBLICATION

Unboxing Joy

Pages 14–16: **Wearing their Feeding God's Children T-shirts, St. Mary Catholic School students in Colby, Wis., packed 84 "boxes of joy" before Christmas!**





Unboxing Joy

Something magical happened on November 9 in the small town of Colby, Wisconsin. Even though the result wasn't unexpected, the impact was still profound.

By Katlyn Pischel

Deanna Roth has taught at St. Mary Catholic School in Colby, Wisconsin, for more than two decades. As the third and fourth grade teacher, she partners with Jenni Ploeckelman, the second grade teacher, to arrange service projects for the school. "That's one of our jobs we like to take on," Deanna said.

Yes, you read that correctly: Deanna enjoys taking on these projects.

If you'd met the students at St. Mary School — or even stepped into the building — you'd soon see why. Though small, this tight-knit group of children and young adults jumps at the chance to participate in service of any kind, especially when they can see the impact it has on their community. Creating uplifting greeting cards for local elderly residents and others in the community

is practically part of the lesson plan. "The older kids always step up to the challenge of helping the younger kids, so it's nice to see," Deanna said. "The younger ones enjoy it, too."

Service is woven into the education at St. Mary Catholic School, so it's no surprise staff loved the idea of Feeding God's Children (an idea Deanna believes she learned about in an earlier edition of *Catholic*

Forester magazine) and partnering with local court St. Kilian 1239.

The Box of Joy Project — the event Deanna and Jenni organized as their Feeding God's Children event in November — consists of students packing boxes with necessities such as hygiene items and gifts, such as a rosary, or toys. With nearly 90 students packing boxes and at least 10 more staff participating,

Top: The students stacked the completed boxes of joy on the gymnasium stage. At the end of the nearly two-hour event, they had packed 84 boxes.



The students created cheerful greeting cards for each box of joy. St. Mary Catholic School has involved its students in creative service projects for years.



The gift boxes contained a variety of items: toys, socks, stuffed animals, and more!

too, they would need a lot of donations. “We asked families, students, parishioners, students, and community members,” Deanna said. “We put announcements in the bulletin, the newsletter, [and] our Facebook page, asking for donations and had a few different drop-off locations. People were just really generous.”

The Box of Joy Project is an event St. Mary’s did two years ago, and

Deanna knew that experience would be an advantage but could also present some challenges. She explained, “You always have that question when you’re working with stuff: if we do it multiple times, will we lose some of the excitement and energy?” Based on the energy level, number of boxes packed, number of cards made, and the smiles all around, it’s safe to say that this repeat event was

just as impactful and fun as the first. She added, laughing, “They all seem pretty boisterous!”

It’s no secret that Feeding God’s Children events are fun, but what may be lesser known is the relationships the initiative creates and supports. “Every year now, I’d like to work with [COF],” Deanna said about future events. As far as determining how to organize a Feeding God’s Children

event, a major factor for Deanna is an event that will bring the whole school together. “It’s nice ... because they all get to wear their [Feeding God’s Children] T-shirts. We don’t have a uniform here, so it’s fun for them to come to school one day at least when we all match,” she said, donning a Feeding God’s Children T-shirt herself.

The positive reaction from students stands out to Deanna. “[It’s] a really



The gymnasium was loud and full of excitement while the energetic and focused students engaged their creative sides.

good thing because these kinds of days and these kinds of events are what they're going to remember about being a student at St. Mary's," she said. "Of course, everything we do is important and valuable, but I think the service projects are definitely a big takeaway."

Nearly 100 students and staff participated in this effort. During the almost two-hour event, 84 students packed 84 boxes. Deanna said, "We definitely have enough donations to finish packing 100 [boxes] and probably beyond." Surplus items will be loosely packed up and sent along with the boxes. They may be used to "fill in" other boxes, but they will certainly bring joy to whomever receives them. CF

Scan the deer to
watch a video
from the event!



Enthusiastic students packed their boxes with care during St. Mary Catholic School's Box of Joy Project.

© Katlyn Pischel



FS Steve Konop, Bishop Neumann 1971, Haugen, Wis., presents a \$100 check to Shannon Wahl for St. Joseph Catholic School's summer reading program in Rice Lake.



In July, Holly Wortmann (furthest right), VCR and YD of St. Rose of Lima 2509 in Crofton, Neb., hosted a welcome night for Totus Tuus missionaries staying in Crofton. "We had a brick oven pizza night with four Omaha Archdiocese seminarians and three faith-filled college students," said Holly. "They led our faith formation week with 94 kids from Crofton. It was incredible."



**St. Nicholas 403, Kranzburg, S.D.
Event: Dinner and bake sale
Raised: \$3,734**



**Holy Ghost 636, Dubuque, Iowa
Event: Parish breakfast
Recipient: Holy Spirit Parish
Pictured: George Portzen, Elaine Portzen, TR Pam Stierman, CR Linda Rogers, Rick Rogers, YD Matt Gasper, Abby G.
Raised: \$4,147**

Matching Funds.....



**Heiss 783, Arcadia, Wis.
Event: Dinner and auction
Recipient: Saints Peter and Paul Catholic School
Pictured: Amanda Gierok and Agent Roger Klein
Raised: \$5,900**

OFFICER LEGEND

FS	Financial Secretary
VCR	Vice Chief Ranger
YD	Youth Director
TR	Treasurer
CR	Chief Ranger



St. Mary 1765, Crivitz, Wis.
Event: Golf scramble
Recipient: St. Vincent de Paul Conference of St. Agnes, St. Augustine, and St. Mary
Pictured: RS Agatha Lipovac, Karen Durrant, John Durrant
Raised: \$3,358



Christ the King 1923, Bloomer, Wis.
Event: Drive-thru dinner
Recipient: St. Paul Catholic School
Pictured: Chloe Russell, Fr. Victor Feltes, TR Bonnie Schindler, Principal Jackie Peterson, Gene Schindler, Autumn M., Hannah M., and Connie M.
Raised: \$5,527



Bishop Neumann 1971, Haugen, Wis.
Event: Dinner
Recipient: Holy Trinity Parish
Raised: \$6,794



St. Peter 2034, Chippewa Falls, Wis.
Event: Drive-thru dinner
Recipient: St. Peter School
Raised: \$9,800



Our Lady of the Lake 2506, Ashland, Wis.
Event: Creating sign boards
Recipient: Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Community
Raised: \$12,204

These courts raised a total of \$92,065.
 Courts featured in the 2021 editions of *Catholic Forester* raised \$304,311.

OFFICER LEGEND

RS.....Recording Secretary
 TR.....Treasurer