



ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH SCHOOL

## *News Release*

500 MULL AVENUE



AKRON, OHIO 44320

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 17, 2011**

### **St. Sebastian Parish School Starts a Chain Reaction with Rachel's Challenge**

AKRON, Ohio –

On Wednesday, January 12, St. Sebastian Parish School started a “chain reaction” when it hosted Rachel’s Challenge, a national school program inspired by Rachel Joy Scott. Rachel was the first person killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Her acts of kindness and compassion, coupled with the contents of her six diaries, have become the foundation for this program, which motivates students to make a positive change in the way they treat others.

At St. Sebastian, the program was presented in three parts, led by Jon Prensner, a program speaker for the Rachel’s Challenge organization. Prensner grew up about 40 miles from Columbine and was in high school at the time of the Columbine tragedy.

In the morning, students in grades 4-8 witnessed powerful video and audio footage of Rachel’s life, her dreams and the compassion she had for fellow students.

Students were presented 5 challenges:

- 1- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- 2- Dream Big and Believe in Yourself
- 3- Appreciate everyone and mock no one
- 4- Practice the Power of Positive Gossip
- 5- Forgive and Be Forgiven

Following the morning assembly, a group of forty students participated in a training session so they could be leaders in the newly-established Friends Of Rachel (FOR) Club at St. Sebastian Parish School. FOR Clubs are a forum for students to help spread acts of kindness throughout their school and community.



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St. Sebastian's FOR Club will help the school focus on helping others during Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 30- February 4. In response to the Rachel's Challenge program, St. Sebastian has chosen the theme "Start a Chain Reaction, One Change at a Time" for that week. The school will be conducting a change drive for the family of a young man who was critically injured in a car accident.

Prensner also presented a parent program in the evening, providing parents with an overview of the program as well as their own sets of challenges.

St. Sebastian Principal Greg Garey said the student program provided "a powerful message of one girl's dream of making the world a place of kindness and compassion." He said the parent program was powerful too, noting that Prensner shifted his focus onto the Columbine tragedy and "how, out of that tragedy, the message of forgiveness and compassion for others grew."

St. Sebastian Parish School is the first – and so far the only – school in the Cleveland Diocese to present this anti-bullying program for its students. The school's Home and School Association (HASA) provided funding for the program, which has been presented to over 15 million students worldwide.

Photo: RachelsSign.jpg

Caption: Students sign the Rachel's Challenge banner in acceptance of her legacy

Photo Credit: St. Sebastian Parish School





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Photo: rachels print.jpg

Photo Credit: St. Sebastian Parish School

