

## Getting to Know.... Barbara Nicoletti ("Miss Nic") Written by Vic Gideon

"This is home for me," Barb Nicoletti says, reflecting on her lifelong connection to St. Ann's. "I grew up here, I was baptized here, made my First Communion here. It's just such a great feeling to be part of this community."

Barb has been a part of St. Ann her entire life, including 38 years as a teacher. For the last 35 years, she's taught kindergarten. "I love teaching at this school," she says. "Magic happens in this building. From the moment they walk in, they are part of the warm and welcoming community that will take them through their entire life."

Barb Nicoletti seemed destined to become a teacher. Her father, Michael, worked as a principal at Brecksville High School and eventually, Dean of Students at Chanel. Her mother taught seventh grade science at St. Ann, a stay-at-home mom until Barb was in high school. Barb did entertain thoughts as a young student about pursuing other professions: a lawyer, a baker, or a fashion designer.

The oldest of four and the only girl, Barb's parents married at St. Ann after her mother grew up in the parish. She still has three brothers in the area, Michael, Mark, and James, and she's godmother to all their kids, three nephews and a niece.

Growing up on Ormond Road off Lee in Cleveland Heights, she bought the house where she grew up. She attended Fairfax Elementary School – going to PSR at St. Ann – before transferring to St. Ann in seventh grade, graduating from Beaumont as a National Merit Scholar, and applying to one college, John Carroll University, where she did her undergraduate and post graduate work. When she started her student teaching, her father implored her to work in a public system, a more lucrative option, but Barb knew she wanted to teach in a Catholic school.

"Faith is the primary reason that we're here," she says of St. Ann. "We instill that with everything we do with our students."

Faith has been a big part of her personal life as well.

"My faith is the compass that shows me how to live," she explains. "You give it to God."

Her faith hasn't wavered but, since the seventies, she's seen St. Ann evolve.

"I like how it's changed," she says. "I like how it's stayed the same."

The same? The people, still a diverse group committed to education and faith.

"They want a good education but they want their children formed in a safe environment," she's found.

The change? The building, the school roughly a third the size but there's now a third-floor library where there once were classrooms and a basement science lab.

And a more recent change, the name, back to St. Ann School after becoming Communion of Saints in 2010 with the parish merger of St. Philomena, St. Louis, and Christ the King.

"I think it's very important that we're going back," she says of St. Ann's return. "It helps people know who we are. They don't know Communion of Saints but they know St. Ann. It builds on the legacy that was started by Father Powers when he opened the school in 1925 and it shows that we'll be here to educate and to form future generations in their faith."

She's seen hundreds of kids come through her classroom, she understands the impression she and the school make on students,

"There are so many people who have a lifelong friend they met when they went to school here," she says. "Even alums that come back say how important being part of this school community is to them."

And she had no plans to leave the school.

"As long as I can do it, I'll do it. I love seeing the kids that I had as kindergartners come in as the parents of the kids and they're like, 'Miss Nic' and I'm like, 'no, nope nope nope!' I'm like, 'You're not old enough to have one in kindergarten!'"

And she has no plans of retirement.

"I was born here and I will be here until the day I die."

