

Case Study: Saint Augustine Catholic School

In 2007-2008, Saint Augustine Catholic School of Washington, D.C., was preparing to celebrate the school's 150th anniversary.

The PreK-3 through 8th grade school had 175 students, and 75 percent of them attended the school through the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), a federally-funded program for low income families in the District of Columbia. Without warning, Saint Augustine and seven other schools were notified that funding from the Center City Consortium would end at the end of the 2007-2008 academic year.

Spurred to action, Rev. Patrick A. Smith and his parishioners at the predominantly black parish gathered and took action to ensure the school to continue, even though the Archdiocese of Washington planned to close it.

"We decided it would not be a good idea to celebrate our 150th anniversary by closing the school," said Fr. Smith, who became St. Augustine's pastor in 2004.



Fr. Smith found 20 parishioners willing to give \$25,000 over five years, which means that the school had \$100,000 it could put toward

operating expenses. In addition, an alumna gave \$50,000 to support the school, and parishioners increased their annual giving from \$50,000 to \$100,00. Additionally, they earned \$150,000 in foundation grants. More parishioners began volunteering at the school.

On top of these critical moves, Fr. Smith hired Development Associates, a Rockville, Maryland-based consultancy that focuses on fundraising for parochial schools, to build the school's

fundraising program. In a matter of months, Development Associates had launched a website for St. Augustine Catholic School, created a database of constituents of the school, including parishioners, parents, alumni, and friends, and had begun pursuing foundation and individual donations from these constituents.

St. Augustine Catholic School

Within a few years, Development Associates, working closely with Fr. Smith and St. Augustine parishioners, was regularly raising \$350,000 a year to support the school, while saving the school the expenses of having to create a full-time job to take care of this work, which would have also involved paying benefits and other expenses. Within seven years of hiring Development Associates, St. Augustine was raising more than \$400,000 a year, which is 20 percent of the school's operating budget.

Development Associates helped St. Augustine create an attractive and informative quarterly newsletter, which it distributes to more than 4,200 alumni, parents, parishioners, and friends. In addition, Development Associates helped identify and target foundation and major individual donor candidates, create an online giving platform for St. Augustine School, as well as an e-newsletter, and it helped the parish develop and refine key donor contact events, such as Career Day and a Major Donor Dinner.



"We've had a very strong partnership with Bill Murray and Development Associates which has lasted more than 10 years," Fr. Smith said. "Working with Bill has enabled me to use my

time well, since I have a lot of responsibilities here as pastor.”

Separately from its fundraising program, St. Augustine was able to strengthen its Catholic identity by implementing weekly school Masses, praying five times daily, and fortifying its religious education content through the presence of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, a religious order. More than 60 students have entered the Catholic Church at St. Augustine since 2010, which spurred *The Washington Post* to write a front-page story on Easter Sunday 2010.

St. Augustine was also able to increase its enrollment and lessen its reliance on OSP. Meanwhile, a stronger academic program enabled St. Augustine School to place its graduating eighth grade students at top local Catholic high schools. In addition, there appear to be stronger bonds between the parish and its school, with more parishioners volunteering and sending their children and grandchildren to the school.

Visit St. Augustine School’s website at www.staug-dc.org. Development Associates’ website is www.developassociates.com.