

“WITH THE GRACE OF OUR LORD - EVERY CHILD EVERY CHANCE EVERY DAY!”

August 5, 2009

Dear Eighth Grade Parents/Guardians,

Eighth grade, can you believe it? This year, for some, will be an unsettling time. For others, it will be a time for growth and maturity and still for others a time to live and laugh before the grown-up world takes over in their lives.

During my many years teaching in junior high I found that at the end of seventh grade, the students were eager to begin their leadership role in the school. It was important to me that I found a way to foster the leadership and team building skills of my students. I did just that and I want to share that with the children of St. Walter School.

We are beginning a new tradition here at St. Walter School. When the eighth grade students take their trip to Great America, the seventh grade students will go on a Leadership trip to Iron Oaks in Olympia Fields. This trip will be a privilege that the seventh grade class will have to earn each year. This year, both the seventh and eighth grade will take this trip.

The Iron Oaks Team course consists of many low-to-the ground activities. The purpose of the Team course is to enhance the participant's sense of personal confidence and self-esteem. It will increase mutual trust and support and encourage more effective communication among the participants. The students will develop teamwork skills that will carry over into day-to-day living. The team building creates strong bonds and understanding between differing groups. It is a safe place to confront and solve problems, or to simply just have a good time.

The team members will always decide for themselves how they will participate in the course. This is called “challenge by choice”. Facilitators will give all the information for the students to make an informed decision, providing alternate opportunities to get involved in the decision making process. When it comes to the physical and emotional well-being, no one is more concerned than the professional facilitators at Iron Oaks. No one is ever in arms way of danger, or forced to do something that they are not comfortable participating in.

Our teachers will only be present to watch the dynamics of the day. They will not pick the groupings or facilitate any of the courses. I can promise that when the children look back on their years at St. Walter School, this trip will be one their fondest memories.

Enclosed you will find the permission slip and waiver form for this trip. Please return the permission slip, signed waiver form and money to school no later than September 4, 2009. If you have any concerns or questions about this trip, please don't hesitate to contact me at school. You can also check out the website at www.ironoaks.com.

St. Walter, Pray for Us,

Mrs. Laura Kennedy
Principal