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Steve Spreitzer  
14467 Parklane  
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Dear Steve:

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts and words with fellow alumni of St. Maurice Catholic School as they gather this weekend to catchup, reminisce and build stronger bonds. On behalf of the City of Livonia, welcome back to where it all began. I wish I could be there to share old stories and pay tribute to the Oblate Sisters of Providence for the amazing work they did in launching us.

Early educational experiences are often fundamental to who we are today. Some of my most vivid and empowering childhood memories are of the amazingly warm and loving introduction to school I received at St. Maurice under the care of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. I'm certain your memories are equally as fond of the caring experiences you had as together, we sported our impervious red plaid uniforms and crisp white shirts and ties.

I was hoping to find some of the photos I had from the two years I spent at St. Maurice. Because I was the oldest of four, my mom took many. But having recently moved, finding my box of photos became an impossible mission. So, let me share some of the mental images I have of two short, but formative years at St. Maurice.

A hallmark of the way we were educated was that we were surrounded by confidence – confidence that we were being taught well, confident that we could learn anything and confident we could do anything. I credit that confidence to two things – good parents who were dedicated to our education and the Oblate Sisters and their approach to education. At the core of their mission is a "response to love." They found the good in everything and everyone. I can't imagine a better entry point for any student to the formative years ahead of us.

Mother Mariam was running the school as its principal. Going to her office was a treat, not a threat. Sr. Ernesta and her menagerie of animals provided a first-grade environment where we all learned how to care for one another fueled by the confidence gained caring for guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, rabbits, fish, and birds. Sr. JoAnne, in her gentle way, prepared us for First Communion, made us readers and taught us through science that preconceived notions about "boys' jobs" and "girls' jobs" was just that – a notion. And Miss Mary Edna didn't just run the show at the convent, she ran the talent show at the school and cared for everyone and everything, from children who forgot their lunches to baby bunnies that needed time in an incubator.

So many of my experiences as a first and second grader at St. Maurice have resulted in lifelong lessons. So, when I read the book "All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," I often found myself saying, "Close."

These are the things I learned:

**Be aware of wonder.** A classroom filled with guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, mice, gerbils, birds, and fish can create all manner of mayhem. From hamsters who escape and get into the teacher's desk to shred the day's spelling worksheets to the rabbits David Sexton and Dean Frenchie took home and let "play" together, resulting in more rabbits ... there was plenty of opportunity to wonder.

**Play fair.** When an eighth-grade needle threading challenge/science experiment breaks out it could be easy to get caught up in stereotypes. It might even be easy to see why most all bets were on the girl's ability (mine) when pitted against Randall Gollis' skills to see who could thread the needle faster. I handily lost the competition, helping to teach the lesson that stereotypes are unfair ... until we later learned Randall's mom was a seamstress with vision problems, leaving Randall with a tad bit more experience threading needles.

**Don't take things that aren't yours.** When Sr. Ernesta puts seven baby guinea pigs up for adoption and tells you they are free if your parents say you can have one, and you lie about losing the adoption "application" because you want one so badly, you learn you can only hide a squeaking guinea pig in your room in a shoebox for so many days and then you have to confess to a nun that you lied.

**Share everything.** That means even your talents. I insisted I could play the organ in the second-grade talent show and that my mom could bring our organ from home for the event. This sent Sr. Ernesta and Miss Mary Edna into full planning mode, making arrangements and creating space for the delivery of a major musical instrument, only to be "amazed" when my mom carted in a tabletop electric organ.

**Clean up your own mess.** Like many families, we entertained the nuns at our home. I remember waiting for Sr. Mariam, Sr. Ernesta and Sr. JoAnne to arrive for dinner. They got there an hour late. So, in an effort to preserve her sanity and avoid having to answer the question again for the twenty-ninth time, "when will they be here," my mom sent us out of the house with instructions to "Go find the nuns. They must be lost. Wait at the corner and when they drive by flag them down and show them how to get to the house." When they arrived, they explained they were at the beauty shop getting their hair done. That caused some sideways glances at the table, as their hair was not visible under their habits. During the serving of dessert my mom was pouring milk from a one-gallon container, it slipped, and the entire gallon poured directly down the back of one of the nuns, completely saturating her. Twenty minutes later the ever-cheerful nun appeared back at the dinner table in one of my mom's housecoats, slippers and without her habit. Her hair looked fabulous.

The fact is, Robert Fulghum was right. Everything we needed to know was in there somewhere. So much of what I've learned in those early years at St. Maurice, and experienced with some really neat little kids, can be extrapolated and applied to my family, my work and the world around me. And I am ever grateful for it.

And the final thing Mr. Fulghum said it's still true, "No matter how old you are when you go out into the world – its best to hold hands and stick together." I'm so glad to see you're sticking together.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen Miller Brosnan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Maureen" being the most prominent.

Maureen Miller Brosnan  
Mayor