

Dear St. James Families,

We are so happy to be back to school, working to return to "normal" after Hurricane Sandy and the Nor'Easter. But at the same time, we know many of our families have been devastated by these storms, losing part or all of their homes and belongings, and having their businesses devastated. Please know, we are here should you need anything. Reach out, let us know how we may help, and we will get moving. Let us know in the coming weeks, and even months, how the St. James PTA can assist...we are here to help and support our families.

Late November and early December are always fun-filled, busy months for PTA Activities -- Breakfast with Santa, Grandparents Tea, Book Fair, Secret Santa Shop, Advent Wreaths and the ever-popular Christmas Stocking Stuffers. These events are important; they will help us begin to return to our normal routine. At the same time, we've taken a step back, knowing that we need to find a way to come together as a school community, to pray and heal together and determine how we can best serve all those who need our help.

For this year, we will combine Breakfast with Santa and Grandparents' Tea into a one-day event -- *"The St. James School Community Day."* On Sunday, December 2nd we invite all St. James families to come together at 12pm Mass and start our day in prayer together. Following Mass, from 1pm -- 3pm, we will open the school cafeteria for numerous activities for our families including visits with Santa Claus (*don't forget your camera*), arts and crafts for the children, bagels, coffee, tea & sweets, an opportunity for our children to show their Grandparents their school, our annual Book Fair in the lobby and the Secret Santa Shop in the cafeteria. Attendance will be free of charge, courtesy of the St. James PTA. No RSVP required. This is a wonderful few hours for the entire family, not just the little ones. Having our older students present helps them return to normal, but also helps our younger students too. It provides a sense of community for all.

In addition, we will have several fundraising opportunities as well -- some to help our school, others to raise funds to support Hurricane Sandy relief efforts. Several magnificent gift baskets will be on display and raffled off. Originally planned and organized for Breakfast with Santa, these beautiful baskets will assist with funds to be used towards PTA programs. The Book Fair will continue in its mission to fund our Library, and the Secret Santa Shop to help fund PTA programs.

With so many Hurricane Sandy drives occurring and donations coming from distant areas we have decided that rather than doing a drive we will be taking a collection of cash, checks or gift cards (grocery stores, Lowe's, Home Depot, Costco, etc.) to benefit Hurricane Sandy Relief. Please bring your donations the day of the event. The donations received will be added to the many already collected by the initiative spearheaded by our Parish, Red Bank Catholic and St. James, currently running outside the atrium in Alicia's Chapel.

In the future, under the leadership of Mr. Cardone, Mrs. Giordano and our Care Steps Program, we will prepare a comprehensive plan to continue to assist our community through our charitable giving programs. If you know of a specific family within our school community or extended family that has immediate needs, please share the information with us so we can find the best way to provide assistance.

Thank you everyone for all you are doing personally, professionally and spiritually for our beautiful Jersey Shore.

All our best,  
Maria and Paula