

NorAm

*The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America
Mission Frère-Advocacy Newsletter*



December 2019

COVER: Catholic Memorial students at the U.S.-Mexico border wall, Brownsville TX (photo credit Mike Kotsopoulos, Boston Globe).

1-2



During three weeks in November, ERCBNA schools from across the Province learn about immigration at the U.S. Mexico border.

3



Iona College celebrates its annual Week of the Peacemaker by raising awareness of gun violence.

4



The ERCBNA Mission Frère-Haiti program continues to advocate for Haitians in a variety of ways.

5



49 students from 18 ERCBNA Consortium schools (from 5 different countries) participate in the 50th annual ACTION Student Leadership Workshop.

6



Students at the ACTION Workshop take a different approach to participate in the September 20th Climate Strikes happening across the world.

7



Students at Catholic Memorial use “Movember” to host a day promoting men’s health in a variety of ways.

8



Students from All Hallows spent a November day serving at two local Bronx parks and, through a partnership with Bronx is Blooming, learned how to be advocates for parks in their area.

9



Students from Tampa Catholic have been busying providing for those in need this fall, participating in a number of activities such as a baby supply drive and toy drive.

10



Students from Bergen Catholic answer the call to join with Grains of Hope and Holy Name Medical Center to provide over 50,000 meals for Haitians during the Christmas season.

11



Upcoming events from around the ERCBNA Province and dates for the 2020 ERCBNA Advocacy Coordinators Workshop being held in Tampa, Florida.

12



Advocacy links to various ERCBNA program and partners from across the Edmund Rice Global Network.



5th Annual Brownsville Immersion



During the first three weeks of November, schools from across the ERCBNA Province traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border in Brownsville, Texas to learn about immigration and serve at various agencies connected with serving and advocating for recent immigrants. This year marked the fifth straight year that ERCBNA schools traveled to Brownsville to learn about and serve those affected by the immigration crisis at the border. During each of the weeks, the

students and staff members served at a variety of different programs that work with and advocate for immigrants. The immersion groups also had the opportunity to visit fellow ERCBNA School Guadeloupe Regional Middle School (GRMS), where they helped to complete a number of projects on campus and hosted a barbecue for GRMS students and staff members. Led by Brothers Stephen Casey, Tim Smyth and Tom LeJuene, the students and staff on the



Above: Students and staff members from Bishop Hendricken (RI), Brother Rice (MI), Catholic Memorial (MA) and Iona Prep (NY) pose for a group picture at Guadeloupe Regional Middle School during the first week of the Brownsville immersion program. This group was the first of three that spent a week each learning about the realities of the immigration crisis that is occurring at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Brownsville Immersion Program experienced firsthand the immigration crisis that has been and continues to occur at the U.S.-Mexico border. The following schools were involved this year:

- Week 1:** Bishop Hendricken (RI)
Brother Rice (MI)
Catholic Memorial (MA)
Iona Preparatory (NY)

- Week 2:** Bergen Catholic (NJ)
St Thomas More (BC)

- Week 3:** Vancouver College (BC)

Mike Kotsopoulos, a Theology teacher and Asst. Director of Communications at Catholic Memorial chaperoned the trip for the second year in a row. Mike also writes for the Boston Globe, and the article he wrote about the Brownsville Immersion program was featured in a recent issue. Thank you to Mike for his beautiful reflections on the program!



Above: Students from Bergen Catholic (NJ) and St. Thomas More (Burnaby, BC) pose for a photo while working during the second week of the 2019 Brownsville Immersion Program. **Below:** Students from Vancouver College pose with Brownsville Bishop Daniel Flores (right-center) during the third week of the 2019 Brownsville Immersion Program.

An Education on the Border

Alongside student groups from three other Christian Brothers schools, the CM students immersed themselves into the lives of those seeking asylum throughout the Lower Rio Grande River Valley in Texas. According to Mr. Michael Kotsopoulos, the trip's faculty leader, they left Texas with educated minds and hearts.

To read Mike's story featured in the Boston Globe, [Click Here](#)

Week of the Peacemaker at Iona College



During the week of November 3-8, Iona College hosted its annual Week of the Peacemaker. This year's event, titled, "Guns and Roses: A New Dialogue on Violence in the USA" focused the week's events on gun violence. The week's events included a variety of different panels and talks with a variety of students and professors that centered around gun violence in the United States and beyond. Examples of some sessions this year included: "In the Mirror: Gun Violence and Police in America and American Music;" "Vice Marketing: How Marketing Principles Explain Gun Proliferation" and "Weaponizing Arms and Bearing Rights: Legacies of Guns in Early America." The week's events provided Iona College's community with the opportunity to learn about and explore gun violence from a variety of different fields of study.

This year's keynote address was delivered by Jaclyn Corin, a first-year student at Harvard University. Jaclyn is a graduate of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida and was a firsthand witness of the shooting of her peers on February 14, 2018. Jaclyn is one of the lead organizers of the March For Our Lives Movement against gun violence and has remained a committed activist during her first year of college.



Marjorie Stoneman Douglas graduate and witness to the Parkland, Florida shooting, Jaclyn Corin delivered the keynote address of the 2019 Week of the Peacemaker at Iona College.

**TO READ MORE ABOUT THE EVENTS OF
[THE 2019 WEEK OF THE PEACEMAKER CLICK HERE](#)**



Mission Frère-Haiti Update



Over the last two years, Haiti has unfortunately suffered from another stretch of political unrest and violence which has caused more bloodshed and heartache for a country already ravaged by a 2010 earthquake. Over the last few months, the ERCBNA Mission Frère-Haiti program has worked to support a number of important initiatives serving the great needs our brothers and sisters in Haiti. The ERCBNA Mission Frère-Haiti program made a \$400.00 donation to COHH Inc. (Center of Hope Haiti) to support their work in educating children in Hinche, Haiti. COHH recently held their 15th Annual Gala, which also raises funds to support COHH's school in Hinche. To see a video from the Gala, please click here: [COHH VIDEO](#).



The Mission Frère-Haiti program also made a \$400.00 donation to the Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Fund. ER CB

Tyrone Davis works as the Executive Director of the Archdiocese of New York's Office of Black Ministry. The Pierre Toussaint Scholarship Fund is a program that Br. Tyrone oversees which provides high school graduates from diverse backgrounds with funding to offset the costs of higher education.

To learn more about the current situation in Haiti, please click here: [Haiti](#)

ACTION 2019

- Brother Tim Smyth



For four days in September (19-22) forty-nine students from 18 ERCB schools in five countries (U.S., Canada, Peru, Argentina, Uruguay) came together for the 50th annual ACTION Leadership Workshop held at the Newark Diocesan Retreat Center. As described in the ACTION brochure, this workshop provides students with:

- A deeper sense of the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice
- A stronger living of the Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education
- Advocacy awareness
- Communication skills
- An awareness of individual giftedness
- Community building skills
- An enhanced sense of self-esteem
- Cross-cultural experience
- Time for prayer and reflection
- New friendships, especially within the Edmund Rice Network



ERCBNA Advocacy Coordinator Sean D'Alfonso address students during the ACTION workshop. This session focused on how students can work to advocate for others upon returning to their own schools.



Above: Students pose for a group shot at ACTION 2019. **Below:** Students participate in one of the many small group activities throughout the weekend.

2019 Climate Strike



Between September 20th and 27th, more than 4,500 protests in 150 countries were held to demand government action on climate change.

These events were part of the School Strike for Climate Movement organized by climate activities Greta Thunberg (pictured right). September 20th was the largest of the strikes, with more than 4 million people participating, including more than 250,000 in New York. On September 20th in neighboring New Jersey, ERCBNA



schools and students were at the ACTION Student Leadership Retreat, participating in the climate strike in a different way.

Christine Chana, an Iona Prep Chemistry teacher and Co-Moderator of the Human Rights Club, led a hands-on session on carbon dioxide pollution and its effects on water.

Students learned about the harmful effects carbon dioxide has when absorbed by water, and the ramifications for an already warming planet. Students also created posters showcasing their beliefs on climate change, their thoughts on which pollutants contribute most, and the ways in which they believe we can begin to address climate change.



Above: Iona Prep's Christine Chana leads a session on climate change. **Below:** Students on the ACTION retreat create climate change action posters.



“Movember” at Catholic Memorial

- Michael Dermody, Catholic Memorial

As a part of “Movember” here at Catholic Memorial we celebrated a Campus Ministry Knight Day where we took a day off of classes to promote Men’s Health as a school. During the opening assembly, four faculty members presented talks which shared a personal experience of becoming or being a man of faith and character. These talks lead into a video on men’s mental health and well-being, shown through the perspective of professional athletes, which set the tone for the day of reflection in action on our aspiration to form men of faith and character, and the importance of taking seriously men’s health and well-being.

After the opening assembly, students participated in activities at three different stations, which focused on: Health and Wellness, Masculinity and Emotional Wellness, Men’s Health Facts and closed with a Thanksgiving Prayer Service. These stations included activities such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness; incorporated films centered on mental health; and included interactive activities the CM students brought back from the 2019 ACTION Workshop.



Students from Catholic Memorial practice yoga, one of a number of sessions held during their Movember Men’s Health Day.

All Hallows Bronx Parks Advocacy Day

-Brother Jim Hamilton, All Hallows



On Saturday, November 16, twenty All Hallows students, accompanied by Brother Jim Hamilton, participated in an advocacy day at Joyce Kilmer and Mullally Parks, which are adjacent to All Hallows. The day was sponsored by “The Bronx is Blooming,” (BIB) a non-profit group that works with local volunteers and the NYC Parks Department to bring improvements to the Bronx parks. The BIB enlists volunteers for work days and they also encourage youth to advocate for more park space and to be aware of various environmental challenges facing our world. Our day began with a short promotion and discussion about maintaining parkland and how our specific project of mulching the trees in the parks will help to keep trees and plants healthy. After mulching approximately seventy-five trees in the two local parks, our group leader from BIB gathered the All Hallows team together to remind us of the value of our hard work and effort. She also encouraged the students to continue to be advocates for more healthy and clean park space in our neighborhoods. Most of the All Hallows students mentioned how they never realized the amount of time and hard work needed to properly maintain our parks. The group hopes to continue to be involved in future “Bronx is Blooming” projects.



Students from All Hallows spent a November day learning from Bronx is Blooming, a local non-profit that helps to improve Bronx Parks. All Hallows students learned how to advocate for local parks and participated in service activities at two local area parks.

Serving and Advocating at Tampa Catholic

- Jina Masters, Tampa Catholic



Tampa Catholic High School has been extremely busy doing our best to embody the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice. The students have participated in a blanket drive, a baby supply drive, a canned food drive, and a toy drive. Although temperatures in Florida don't get anywhere as low as our Christian Brother schools in Michigan or Rhode Island, our homeless neighbors still get chilly for a month or two and Crusaders collected close to 50 blankets to be distributed as needed. Our baby supply drive benefitted Foundations of Life Pregnancy Center in order to support young mothers in need. The canned food drive efforts were donated to a local food pantry that assists struggling families in making ends meet. Our toy drive supported a brand new non-profit called CelebrateBirthdays.org. Volunteers puts on birthday parties for foster children in Tampa and children referred to them by school social workers. Crusaders hope to continually advocate by bridging the gaps of society through helping organizations that promote preferential option for the poor.

Tampa Catholic also recently participated in a number of other important ministries, including a local toy drive benefitting Children's Cancer Center families, and babysat children at Metropolitan Ministries. It's practical opportunities such as these that help to bring to light the first of the Catholic Social teachings, "Call to Family, Community and Participation".



Above: Tampa Catholic students collected items for young mothers in need. **Below:** Tampa Catholic students collected and wrapped toys during a recent toy drive.

BERGEN ANSWERS THE CALL



For the last ten years, Holy Name Medical Center has run Hôpital Sacré Coeur in Milot, Haiti. Each year, during the Christmas Season, Holy Name holds drives for clothes and toys that are sent down to children in the Milot community. This year, however, due to political unrest and violence that has gripped the country, all that was asked for was food, which the New Jersey based Grains of Hope group has provided to the tune of 90,000 meals during past years. Typically, it would take 3-4 days for Grains of Hope to package the meals to be sent. This year, however, thanks to the help of the Bergen Catholic family, including, students and alumni, more than 50,000 meals were packed in a single day! As Bergen alum and Holy Name CEO Mike



(Above): Bergen Catholic's gym is packed with volunteer preparing food. **(Below):** Bergen Catholic students package meals (photo credit NorthJersey.com)

Maron described, “the spirit of brotherhood, respect for each other and for those in need demonstrated by our students, parents, faculty and staff on Saturday was incredible. I am blessed beyond measure to have had the good fortune to witness it firsthand. This will forever be etched as one of my proudest moments as an alumni and parent of alumni.”

To read more about the event, [CLICK HERE](#) (NorthJersey.com)

ADVOCACY SPOTLIGHT

2020 Advocacy Coordinators Workshop Save the Date



Dates: October 1-4, 2020

Location: Franciscan Retreat Center, Tampa, Florida

Cost: \$390.00/person

More details to follow in early 2020

UPCOMING EVENTS



MARCH FOR LIFE
WASHINGTON D.C.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2020



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
USA

JANUARY 26-FEBRUARY 1, 2020



EDMUND RICE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CONGREGATION CHAPTER
LIMA, PERU

MARCH 1-31, 2020



ANNUAL SCHOOL LEADERS MEETING
BROTHER RICE HIGH SCHOOL, BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

APRIL 20-23, 2020



ADVOCACY LINKS



Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province Website

The ERCBNA Province encompasses Canada, Dominica and the United States- with strong links to the Latin American countries of Peru, Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay. Click below to view the latest news from the ERCBNA Province.

[ERCBNA Province Website](#)



Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)- Justice and Peace Alerts:

An association of the leadership of men in religious and apostolic institutes in the U.S. The link below is to the CMSM publication "Justice Alert," which highlights areas where justice is needed and proposes direct action through advocacy. The ERCBNA Province is a member of CMSM.

[CMSM ALERTS](#)



Carbon Rangers:

An e-newsletter published by Bro. Kevin Cawley, CFC, ERI Team and Executive Director of the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona College. Carbon Rangers creates awareness for climate change and advocates for responsible environmental stewardship.

[Carbon Rangers](#)



Consortium of Edmund Rice Schools

This is a link to the School Network, which comprises schools from the ERCBNA Province and the Latin American Region. This link contains information regarding schools and the various programs and activities in which the Office of Educational Services (OES) is involved.

[Edmund Rice Schools](#)



Edmund Rice Latin America (LATAM):

The link below is to LATAM, the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers' Newsletter in Latin America. The Latin American Region and North American Province work closely together to promote justice in the Americas. Click below to see the great work being done in Latin America

[LATAM](#)



Edmund Rice International (ERI):

Click below to access the most recent issues of Edmund Rice International's newsletter. This newsletter highlights the various areas of advocacy that ERI is involved in at the U.N. and beyond. Mission Frère- Advocacy works in concert with ERI.

[ERI](#)



Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders:

EREBB advocates for the rights of children to receive quality Catholic school education and brings together Edmund Rice Christian Brother Schools from around the world. Click below to access their website.

[EREBB](#)



Smart Justice Network of Canada:

Brother Michael Maher works with this organization to bring awareness to the criminal justice system. Brother Maher and his colleagues advocate for both offenders and victims through Restorative Justice, which advocates for the criminal justice system to address the harm(s) done through mechanisms of support, accountability and healing. Click below to learn more:

[SMART JUSTICE](#)

CONTACT US



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