Students celebrate Our Lady, Queen of Peace through Rosary poster contest

SCRANTON – A total of 1,400 young artists from Catholic elementary schools around the Diocese of Scranton used crayons, markers and other art supplies to express their faith as they all recently participated in the inaugural Our Lady, Queen of Peace Rosary Poster contest.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade at all 15 Diocesan Catholic elementary schools were invited to create original artwork around the theme, "Our Lady, Queen of Peace: Bringing Peace to Our Families, Our Communities and Our World."

The initiative was designed to encourage students and their families to pray the Rosary during October, the month traditionally dedicated to the Holy Rosary, while helping children grow in devotion to the Blessed Mother.

"We wanted to create an initiative for our kindergarten through fifth grade students to inspire a love and devotion to our Blessed Mother," Charlene Haggerty, Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools, said. "We want students to realize and recognize that they can be instruments of peace not only in their homes but in their schools and communities and that Our Blessed Mother is a role model for peace."



A small sample of the 1,400 pieces of artwork submitted by Catholic school students for the inaugural Our Lady, Queen of Peace Rosary contest. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

Judging of all the posters took place Oct. 8 at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Scranton, where staff members of the Diocese faced the challenging task of selecting winners from all the submissions.

"I think they did so wonderful," Tina Petcaugh, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Vicar General, who served as one of the judges said. "You can just see that they love Our Lady in what they created. The artwork is fantastic."

Winners were selected in three grade-level divisions – kindergarten and first grade; second and third grade; and fourth and fifth grade – in categories including Best Overall Poster, Most Creative Poster, Best Use of Color, Best Theme Connection, Best Representation of the Rosary, Our Lady Queen of Peace and Honorable Mentions.

Winning students will be invited to a pizza party with Bishop Joseph C. Bambera in the near future.

Selected winning posters are featured in this edition of *The Catholic Light*, while other winning entries are available to view on the Diocese of Scranton's website.

"We just hope that students will learn to pray the Rosary, not only for themselves but with their families, so that they can draw closer to Christ through the Blessed Mother," Haggerty added.

Best Overall Poster



Wynter Freeman
Grade 1 • Wyoming Area Catholic School

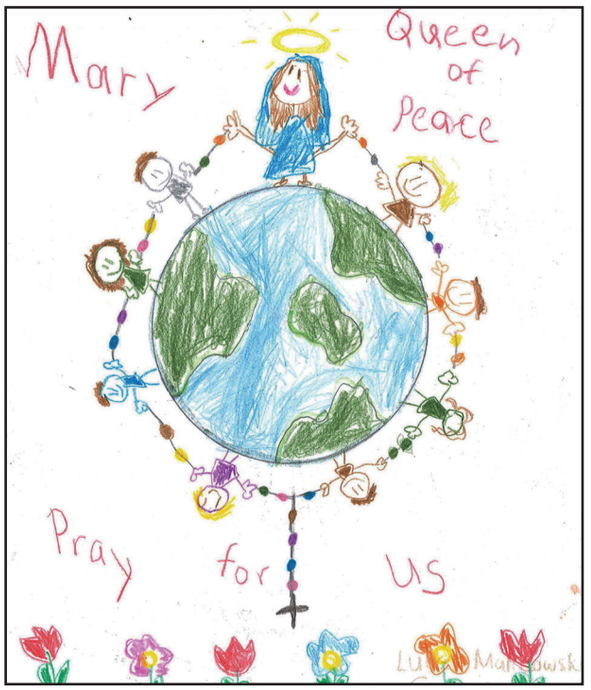


Colette Wallace
Grade 2 • Our Lady of Peace School



Olivia Zhang
Grade 5 • Saint Clare/Saint Paul School

Best Theme Connection



Lucas Malinowski
Grade 1 • Wyoming Area Catholic School



Sonnetta Augelli
Grade 2 • La Salle Academy

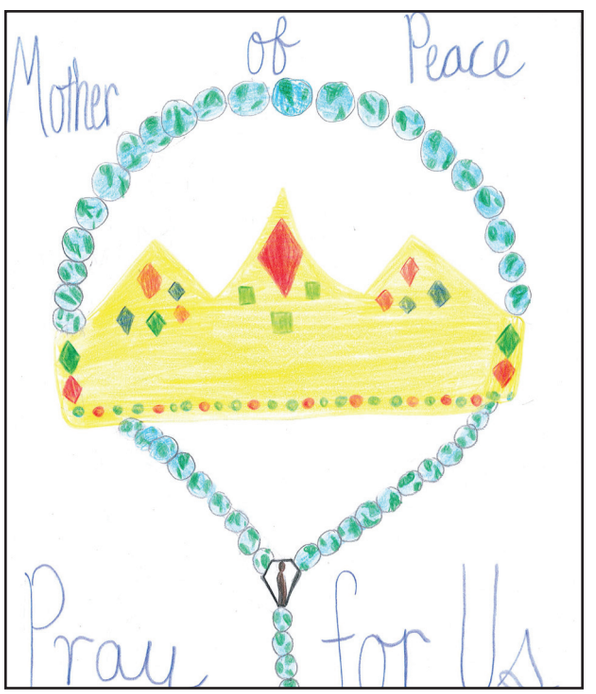


Sophie Ogrodzinski
Grade 5 • Notre Dame Elementary School

Best Representation of the Rosary



Delaney McGlynn
Kindergarten • St. Nicholas/St. Mary School



William Sammon
Grade 3 • Holy Rosary School



Kedrick Kowalski
Grade 4 • Saint Jude School

Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School turns Fridays into opportunities

WILLIAMSPORT – While there were no traditional classes held at Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School on Friday, Sept. 25, 2026, the school campus was still filled with first responders, emergency medical personnel and plenty of students.

It was the first 'Innovative Friday' at the Williamsport Catholic school as its new four-day academic model takes shape.

This year, students in grades 6 through 12 now attend classes Monday through Thursday, with extended school days to meet required instructional hours. Fridays are reserved for enrichment, tutoring, field trips, career exploration, service opportunities, and other experiences that extend learning beyond the traditional classroom.

For the inaugural 'Innovative Friday,' the school hosted an Emergency Preparedness and Safety Day, bringing together representatives from University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), South Williamsport Fire Department, Loyalsock Volunteer Fire Department, Williamsport Bureau of Fire, Clearview Asset Protection, NOAA Weather Safety, PPL, Pennsylvania State Police, Williamsport Police and the Lycoming County Emergency Management Agency.

Students were encouraged to visit each agency's outdoor station, learning everything from CPR to electrical safety, while also having the opportunity to tour emergency vehicles.

"Students don't have to be here today and yet they're here, they're having fun and they're learning about things," Dr. Chad Greevy, Assistant Principal and Curriculum Director, said. "You don't have to learn always in a school setting."

The optional nature of the day was what made it significant.

Seventh-grader Zale McPherson appreciated the flexibility the 'Innovative Friday' schedule provided. After missing school earlier in the week, she was able to use the day to make up tests, quizzes and homework without sacrificing additional classroom time.

"I think it's a really good opportunity," she said.

McPherson also enjoyed the chance to socialize with classmates, describing the day as a "different kind of learning experience."



PPL employees show off the safety gear they use during the first 'Innovative Friday' at Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport on Sept. 25, 2026. (Photo/Eric Deabill)

For ninth-grader Audrey Blenman, a new student who said the four-day schedule was one reason she chose Saint John Neumann, the first 'Innovative Friday' allowed her to experience something new.

"I want to be an engineer, so I'm not sure if there is a connection," Blenman said after donning a hard-hat and getting a first-hand lesson in electricity from a PPL lineman. "It is something different."

Since announcing its new four-day school week, Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School has seen a 20 percent increase in enrollment.

"I absolutely love it. All the staff and students are so nice," Dalila Morales, a brand-new eighth grader, explained. "You can really count on everyone in this school. They always have your back."

The school even incorporated an incentive into their first 'Innovative Friday.' Students who visited each participating agency could have a card signed and they became eligible for prizes, including tuition vouchers, gift cards and school merchandise.

Principal Alicia McNamee said the response to the day exceeded her expectations.

"We are over the moon with the attendance and the feedback and the amount of community partners willing to come out and support us," she said.

The school's 'Innovative Friday' calendar is filled through the fall semester, and administrators are already developing opportunities for the spring.

"We have so many companies, businesses and individuals willing to partner with us, we almost don't have enough Fridays," McNamee added.

Students have also offered ideas for upcoming 'Innovative Fridays,' including learning American Sign Language and touring local hospitals.

"We're offering students a lot of opportunity. We are not just in tune with what the students need, we're starting to learn what their passions are," Dr. Greevy said. "The list of ideas that they have for 'Innovative Fridays' is incredible."

