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Peace Students Named St. Catherine of Siena Scholars

Three Queen of Peace seniors defended three years of independent research to become St. Catherine of Siena Scholars at the 10th Annual Catherine Congress on April 29. The Catherine program, unique to Queen of Peace and similar to a college-level independent study, is an innovative academic opportunity for Peace students to collaborate with a mentor and engage in rigorous research above and beyond their normal course of study.

“A student who takes on the challenge of the St. Catherine of Siena Program here at Queen of Peace is an uncommon woman,” said Joyce Cruse, St. Catherine of Siena Scholar Coordinator.

“St. Catherine of Siena, through her short life, demonstrated a few traits that I think our scholars embody – persistence, resistance and a strong relationship with God,” principal Mary Kay Nickels said. “St. Catherine never chose the easy way, and our scholars have resisted taking the road most traveled.”

The three seniors presented topics that varied greatly. Sara De Van questioned whether it is ethical to utilize fetal tissue to create medical vaccines and cosmetic treatments.

“I will always keep this project with me throughout my life,” De Van said. “I have been shaped as a scholar since I now know that I do not need to conform to societal thinking, but I can rather be a leader and defend what is right.”

Erin Kolasinski explored the causes and effects of childhood obesity and how the subject is influenced and viewed by society. Nicole Sedlacek examined how teenagers are affected by stereotypes, as well as how those stereotypes can be prevented.

As part of the 10th Anniversary of the St. Catherine of Siena program, Cruse invited the past scholars to attend the Congress. Following the oral defenses of the three seniors, a plaque – inscribed with the names of each of the past 63 scholars – was dedicated at a special ceremony. Alum attendees included Kaitlin Shine '02, Erin Foley '03, Vickie Paprocki Danaher '03, Cara Gorman '04, Elizabeth Boyle '05, Traci Turner '05, Pamela Nisivaco '06, Nicole Paprocki '07, Erin Hecker '08, Cynthia Wojtaszek '08, Tara Becker '09, Abigail Point '09, Emily Boyle '10 and Marcella Perez '10.

Students are accepted into the Scholars Program on the basis of a 3.8 grade point average, reflective essay, teacher recommendations and an interview. To earn the St. Catherine Scholar distinction, candidates must be involved in the program for at least three years and successfully defend their projects by the time of graduation. Projects must be interdisciplinary in nature, linked to one of the five Dominican values or Catholic Social Justice Principles and attempt to answer a significant question with societal implications. Candidates also work side-by-side with community mentors as they conduct research, analyze data, write reflections, prepare their oral defense, and execute their action plan.

The St. Catherine of Siena program, dedicated to one of the first woman saints to be declared a Doctor of the Catholic Church, demonstrates Queen of Peace's encouragement of students to question the status quo and commitment to excellence inside the classroom and beyond.

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Photo caption:

Three Peace seniors defended three years of independent research to become St. Catherine of Siena Scholars at the 10th Annual Catherine Congress on April 29. Pictured from left to right – Principal Mary Kay Nickels, President Anne O'Malley, Erin Kolasinski, Nicole Sedlacek and Sara De Van.



Photo Caption:

A special plaque was dedicated to Queen of Peace's alumnae St. Catherine of Siena Scholars at the annual Catherine Congress on April 29. Pictured standing (left to right: principal Mary Kay Nickels, St. Catherine of Siena Scholar Coordinator Joyce Cruse, Cynthia Wojtaszek '08, Erin Hecker '08, Abigail Point '09, Vickie Paprocki Danaher '03, Nicole Paprocki '07, Erin Foley '03 and president Anne O'Malley. Seated (left to right): Cara Gorman '04, Emily Boyle '10, Marcella Perez '10, Elizabeth Boyle '05, Traci Turner '05, Pamela Nisivaco '06 and Kaitlin Shine '02.

