

## SMA High School New Family Guide

### IT'S ON THE CALENDAR, SOMEONE MENTIONED IT, BUT WHAT IS IT?

This guide is intended to help new High School parents navigate the SMA calendar by providing a short description of some of the major High School events. Please keep in mind that the list below is not exhaustive and that events may be added to the calendar throughout the year. We are also working to reimagine some of our events during these unusual times and they may look a little different but will still capture the essence of what makes our High School experience so unique and special. Be sure to check the SMA calendar, found at [stmarys.academy](http://stmarys.academy), frequently in order to stay informed. If you ever have any questions about an event you see on the calendar, please stop by the High School office and ask High School Administrative Assistant, Lillian Forward, [lforward@smanet.org](mailto:lforward@smanet.org) about it. She knows everything! Another great source of information is Academy Parents, the St. Mary's Academy Parent Association. As a parent or guardian of an SMA high school student, you are already a member of Academy Parents. The current board members of Academy Parents are listed in the parent directory. Feel free to contact any of them for information about upcoming events – even those not sponsored by Academy Parents!

**High School Fall Sports Tryouts and Practices (early August):** Tryouts and practices for fall sports begin a few weeks before the first day of school. Athletes need to have all of their athletic forms completed and turned in to try out for a fall sport. Please check the calendar for the exact date and plan to be back from summer vacations by then if your High School student would like to participate in a fall sport. All athletic consent forms are found in the Forms Portal that will be sent out in July. Contact information for SMA staff and coaches is on the team pages of [stmarys.academy](http://stmarys.academy) if you have any questions.

**High School Orientation:** Each student signs up for an orientation appointment with her advisor on one of the two orientation days. Students and parents meet with their advisor to discuss key ideas in preparation for the start of the school year. Students and parents will also be part of a mandatory virtual presentation about SMA's technology practices by the IT staff to ensure laptops are ready to go for the first day of school. Please stay tuned for the format and details of the orientation days.

**High School Student Retreat:** In the years past, all High School students go on an overnight retreat for team-building activities. This Fall we will not be going on an overnight retreat but will have various community-building activities for our students.

**9<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents Back to School Night:** For parents only. Here is your chance to learn more about the curriculum and meet some of your child's teachers as well other 9<sup>th</sup> grade parents.

**Hopper Family Golf Tournament:** This is an event for adults and is held annually in September. The funds raised at the Hopper Family Golf Tournament benefit technology, performing arts, and tuition assistance at SMA. To support the Golf Tournament you can become a sponsor and/or sign up as an individual player. Players and volunteers enjoy a very fun post-game reception. Helping out with the tournament is a great volunteer opportunity! Watch for school-wide emails, mailings and announcements in Wildcat Weekly for details.

**New Parent Dinner and Breakfasts:** A High School New Parent dinner is held for all parents of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and parents of new 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in August. This is a great way to meet other new High School parents and kick off the school year. If you can't make it to the dinner, there are also two New Parent breakfasts that will cover similar information. Look for information in July/August.

**Late Start:** Each Wednesday of the month, school begins at 9:05 am for High School students, allowing teachers to attend early morning curriculum meetings. Many students arrive on late start days at their normal drop-off time and do homework or socialize before school starts.

**Academy Parents Board Meeting:** Academy Parents is the parent association that supports the mission of SMA through volunteering. Every parent and guardian of an SMA student is automatically a member of Academy Parents, and no additional sign-up or payment of dues is required. Each month a special guest speaker comes to talk to parents about his or her role at SMA and to answer parent questions. Speakers include the principals of the Lower, Middle and High school, President Bill Barrett, the Director of Admissions, SMA's athletic director, and more. These meetings are very casual – no need to RSVP and you can come and go from the meeting to fit your schedule. Attending Board Meetings are great opportunities to meet fellow parents and to learn about what is happening in your SMA community. Watch for the monthly Academy Parents email for information about the guest speakers and meeting dates, as well as the Wildcat Weekly (weekly SMA email newsletter).

**High School Conferences:** Students and parents together attend formal conferences twice a year in September and February. Parents, students, and teachers share successes, challenges, and plans. Online sign up for conferences begins several days in advance of the meetings. You will be sent a sign-up invitation via email.

**Father and Daughter Dance:** This is a night for all high school students to bring their dads or another special family member to SMA for a fun night of dinner and dancing.

**SMA Prayer Group:** The SMA Prayer Group meets the first Wednesday of each month at 9:15 a.m. in the High School Chapel. Parents are welcome to attend. For additional information, contact [Adriana Williams](#).

**Mass:** Times and details vary throughout the year. Parents are always welcome. Please check with the office for details.

**High School Community Service Day:** The High School Community Service Day occurs during the fall semester. Students and teachers take a break from classes to participate in pre-arranged volunteer hours at organizations around the Denver Metro Area. Advisory groups do everything from sorting food and goods, to gardening, to visiting elderly members of the community.

**Fall Festival:** This is an Academy Parents-sponsored event scheduled on the first Sunday in October. All families, including siblings not at SMA, are invited. Come enjoy carnival games, bouncy houses, pumpkin decorating, prizes, delicious food and more. Look in the Wildcat Weekly and Academy Parents newsletter for details.

**Snack Attack:** Several times a year, Academy Parents organize a fun Snack Attack surprise for the High School girls. These events are set up in the High School Forum by High School parent volunteers, and are festively-themed snack overload events! For Halloween, the High School Forum is filled with pumpkins and cobwebs, and the girls enjoy huge bowls of popcorn, green and orange frosted cupcakes, and bags of Halloween candy. Just before Christmas break, the girls enjoy delicious frosted cookies and a hot chocolate bar with all the toppings on tables decorated with candy canes and colorful ornaments. Please keep an eye out for an emailed signup and volunteer to bring in treats and / or to set up, serve, or clean up. Volunteering for Snack Attack is a really fun way to meet other high school parents and to see your daughter and her friends in their natural element!

**BINGO Night:** Bingo Night is an Academy Parents sponsored event. Fun for the whole family, the evening includes BINGO, pizza and a Halloween costume contest with prizes. High School girls are the judges for the costume contest.

**Fall Ball:** The Fall Ball is SMA's equivalent of a homecoming dance. Students dress up, many go to dinner or parents host dinner for a group of friends, and all students have the option of bringing a date. Students enjoy a night of dancing, a themed-driven photo booth, and a night to bond with their new classmates at St. Mary's Academy.

**Grandparents' Day:** Held annually in November, grandparents are invited to enjoy breakfast together and performances by SMA students. Grandparents will then accompany their grandchildren to classes for the morning. Make sure you have provided a mailing address for your child's grandparents so they receive a written invitation in the mail.

**All Academy Sing-A-Long:** This event is for students only. It's a special time for the entire Academy to sing Christmas songs together.

**Diversity Day:** Every year, for the past seventeen years, St. Mary's Academy hosts an annual Diversity Day. This day is a full day of activities and speakers whose purpose is to immerse students in an environment that enhances their understanding of diversity issues in the world, their community, and their

school. There are two keynote speakers and several breakout sessions. There is also an international food fest, talent show, and fashion show (the students are encouraged to participate in each of these), and afternoon entertainment. By understanding diversity in its many forms, not only on this day but especially on this day, students learn what it really means to be inclusive and equitable, acting as true global citizens.

**Mother Daughter Tea:** Freshman girls host their mothers or another special family member for tea in the High School Forum. Students dress up, and photos are taken of the students with their guests.

**Community Days:** These are two days during which High School students participate in team-building activities with their grade.

**Senior Seminar:** Senior Seminar is an annual event that brings SMA alumnae back to campus to share their experiences about the transition from SMA to college and to offer advice to the senior class. The morning opens up with a young alumnae panel for a question and answer session and then finishes with an alumnae guest speaker sharing her story about life after SMA.

**Junior Retreat: Building Bridges to Understanding and Acceptance:** Senior mentors serve as small group facilitators, as students listen to each other's stories. How do we cross over to new understandings in life? In what ways does learning about the challenges of others impact how we view and treat each other? How can we be bridge builders for more compassionate living?

**High School Prom:** This annual formal dance (typically scheduled in March) for juniors, seniors, and their guests, kicks off the spring season! Dress up, enjoy a catered dinner, and dance the night away. SMA girls typically ask dates from other local high schools, but it's fine to go with a group of friends, too. Parents, get your cameras ready!

**Presentations of Learning:** Each spring, all 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders participate in a powerful rite of passage called "Presentations of Learning." These culminating projects ask students to consider their place in the world, while improving their public speaking skills and learning to develop well-constructed multimedia presentations. Students begin months in advance with several written assignments that allow for revision and reflection. Actual presentations are delivered to a panel of community volunteers, teachers and members of the senior class. This is a great volunteer opportunity. You will be impressed! Please note that the format of Presentations of Learning may be altered in 2020-2021.

**Ring Ceremony:** The Junior Ring Ceremony is a longstanding tradition that occurs each year in the spring. The ceremony symbolizes the mantle of school leadership being handed to the junior class by the senior class. Each junior is individually recognized by a senior with a statement of gratitude, advice, and well wishes for the upcoming year. The class ring that each junior has ordered is then presented to them by a senior. (Please note: It is not mandatory that a class ring be purchased to be a part of the ceremony.)

**Senior Retreat: Transition: Reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future:** The morning is devoted to class memories. A senior gives a talk about shared memories, leading to a discussion and the

creation of a class book, which will reside in the SMA Archives. In the afternoon, another senior gives a talk focused on looking forward. Discussion on transition issues moves into the creation of individual paper quilt squares which are the future dreams of seniors which will then be displayed at the Baccalaureate Mass.

**SMA Gala:** Held the last Friday in April each year, the Gala is an adults-only night of dinner and drinks and a fantastic fundraising auction. Gala proceeds benefit tuition assistance and program resources. To support the Gala, you can become a sponsor, purchase a ticket to attend the Gala, donate an item to be auctioned at the event, and/or volunteer the night of the Gala. This is a not-to-be-missed event! Contact Lea Frank if you are interested in getting involved!

**May Crowning:** During this ceremony, the entire student body and faculty honor Mary for her example of compassion and love for the marginalized of society. May Crowning is a ritual that celebrates and affirms what Mary represents and that she continues as an example for each of us. The May Crowning is followed by a ritual where the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students give a small gift to each of the seniors to remember the relationships that were formed with the seniors during their high school years and to wish them well for their future endeavors.

**Last Dance:** The Final Dance, sponsored by the Robotics Team, is usually held on the first Friday in May from 7pm until 9pm in the high school forum. The members of the robotics team choose a casual theme and host the dance for St. Mary's Academy students and their dates, should she choose to bring one, from other schools.

**SMA Annual Fund:** The cornerstone of SMA's annual fundraising effort is the Annual Fund. Each year the fund is allocated to the greatest areas of need at St. Mary's Academy. SMA strives for 100% participation from its faculty, staff, Board of Trustees, and parents and 10% participation from its alumnae and grandparents.

**Trips:** There are no required trips for high school students other than local community building retreats, which are included in tuition. However several optional travel opportunities are available to high school students, including trips to France, Spain, China, Washington D.C., New York, El Paso, and the Loretto Motherhouse in Kentucky. The cost of those optional trips is not included in tuition. Information about a number of those optional travel opportunities can be found on the Parents page of the SMA website.

## PUBLICATIONS / RESOURCES

**St. Mary's Website:** Where to find summer reading lists, information on travel opportunities, medical forms and more. This page contains resources and other pertinent information for parents.

[stmarys.academy](http://stmarys.academy)

**Directory:** A hard copy of the directory is distributed to parents the first week of school. An online version is also available on the SMA website. The directory contains lots of useful information such as contact information for students, parents and staff, lists of board members of SMA, Academy Parents and board of trustees, and a list of all students by grade.

**SMA Apparel:** SMA apparel is available for order online. You have the option of having the items shipped to your home or picking them up at SMA in the Advancement Office. Watch for the link to the online store in Wildcat Weekly and on social media.

**Wildcat Weekly:** A weekly Wednesday bulletin emailed newsletter, full of important dates and information. Make it a habit to read this publication weekly to avoid missing events and deadlines!

**Academy Parents Newsletter:** A monthly emailed newsletter full of information about upcoming Academy Parents events. It includes information about Academy Parents monthly meetings, as well as events such as BINGO, Fall Festival, tennis round robins and more.

**Impact Report:** Once a year, in the fall, an annual report is published and reports on the previous fiscal year's events and activities and provides a financial summary.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Thanksgiving Pies:** Academy Parents organized event. Parents will be asked via email to bring a pie to school to donate just prior to Thanksgiving break. Parent volunteers are at carpool drop off and/or pickup to receive the pies. Each staff member then gets to choose a pie to take home and enjoy during the Thanksgiving holiday. In addition to needing pie donations, parent volunteers are also needed to help with collecting, wrapping, and labeling the pies. It's a great way to show appreciation for SMA's wonderful staff, and an easy and fun way to meet other SMA parents.

**Conference Meals:** Academy Parents organized event. Parents provide delicious meals and snacks for our hard-working high school teachers during parent / teacher conferences. The main dish of the meal is catered and is paid for through the Annual Fund thanks to your donation. Please keep an eye out for an online sign-up to bring in small snack items and drinks to complement the meal or to help with set up or clean up.

**Employee Appreciation Luncheon:** Academy Parents organized event. Academy Parents provides a catered lunch for all SMA employees as a well-deserved thank you for all of their hard work on behalf of our kids. Many parent volunteers are needed for the day of the event. Please keep an eye out for details in the Academy Parents monthly newsletter. The event is paid for with funds donated to the Annual Fund.

**SMA Gift Policy:** St. Mary's Academy employees (faculty and staff) may not accept cash gifts, gift cards, favors, services, or tickets from SMA students or parents. This policy is established to avoid the impropriety and the implied or actual influence upon an employee's impartial judgment towards students and their families. **Group gifts from more than one family are not allowed**, as such gifts place parents in the difficult position of soliciting funds from other parents. The SMA Annual Fund generously provides for employee appreciation throughout the year including a cash Christmas gift and an employee appreciation luncheon. The most effective way to support SMA employees is to make a gift to the Annual Fund. This ensures equitable treatment for all SMA employees and needed resources in the classroom. While St. Mary's Academy families' appreciation for faculty and staff is greatly valued, the community's observance of this policy is essential to establishing equity and integrity within the school community. Please remember that handwritten notes and/or a personal sharing of genuine appreciation is always welcome.

7/24/2020