

New administrators take reins at local private schools

By Dan Adkins
Georgetown News-Graphic

So there he stands, Dan Mardell, the new principal at St. John Catholic School – as well as chief cook and bottle washer.

Well, OK, he may not cook or wash dishes, but the fact that he has broom in hand just a few inches from the outdoor stairwell he is painting with wood stain shows his duties range from the high to the low.

“Our parents help out quite a bit. Some of them have gone to get some more stain,” Mardell tells a visitor.

Meanwhile, a few miles away, Rick White is supervising the last touches of cleanup at Providence Christian Academy, where he assumed the post of headmaster in mid-July.

“We’re a very small and tight-knit school community,” said White, who arrived in Georgetown after a 30-year career in Christian education.

Both men are new faces in Georgetown, and both have assumed the helm of religious schools.

Both men hail from the southwesternmost United States: Mardell worked taught in and administered public schools in Roswell, N.M., for 25 years before moving to Paris, Ky., in 2001 and teaching middle-school science, while White served in Christian schools in southern California until recently.

“That’s the first question they asked: Why would you come to Kentucky from southern California,” White says, recalling his interview with PCA’s governing board.

It was pretty simple, he says. California’s tax burden, its precarious financial condition and its cost of living had more than counterbalanced the weather and lifestyle.

For Mardell, St John School’s attraction in part was returning to an experience of his younger years.

“I taught my very first year in a Catholic school in Minnesota,” he said. A visit to see friends in New Mexico led to applying



Above, Dan Mardell, the new principal at St. John Catholic School worked last week to stain an outdoor staircase at the school. Below, new principal Rick White takes a break from helping prepare Providence Christian Academy for the first day of classes.

successfully for a teaching post there.

Retiring after 25 years, Mardell and his wife moved to central Kentucky to be closer to her mother.

His goals are simple.

“I want to keep advancing St. John’s strong academic and social environment,” he said.

White’s vision calls for PCA to achieve its goal of adding a Christian high school to its program. Currently it offers pre-school to eighth-grade classes.

He also wants the school to win national recognition, in part by incorporating more technology into its instruction methods.

“My vision would be to continue the great tradition of learning established by my predecessors,” White said.



New principals in place at Preschool, Garth, Lemons Mill

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The tots at the Scott County Preschool Center, as well as students at Garth Elementary and the new Lemons Mill Elementary will have a new principal this school year.

Earlier this summer, Jennifer Smith was named principal at the Scott County Preschool Center, where she has been an administrator since 2008.

The center, she asserted, has a critical role in the school district.

“I believe preschool is so important to setting a strong foundation for academic success. Although preschool programs offer opportunities for pre academic skills, such as pre-writing, pre-reading experiences, there is so much more to it than that,” Smith said.

“Students are provided opportunities to learn and practice appropriate social skills, work in small and large group settings and communicate both with peers and adults,” she said.

“I started with Scott County in August of 2003,” Smith said. “I was hired as the early childhood specialist/ teacher for Scott County Even Start, a family literacy program that included early childhood education, parent education, adult education and Parent and Child Together.”

She moved to Western Elementary School in 2005 as a preschool teacher.

Three years later, she went to the Preschool Center, helping develop programs and the curriculum, as well as providing support to staff, students and parents.

The center’s total staff numbers 42, with 11 lead teachers and 11 full time instructional assistants. Ten instructional assistants are housed at the Scott County Preschool Center, while one is located at Northern Elementary.

“There are several other instructional assistants that support the classrooms with higher numbers of children,” Smith said.

Other new principals are taking reins at Scott County public schools this year include:

- Suzy Armishaw, who assumes the helm at Garth Elementary School after having served as principal of Northern Hill Elementary in Edmund, Okla., for the two previous years.

Scott County Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning Matt Thompson describes Armishaw as “a strong instructional leader.”

- Lori Beth Mays, formerly an assistant principal at Eastern Elementary School, who becomes the first principal at the brand-new Lemons Mill Elementary School.

Eastern Principal Ed Denney called Mays “driven and motivated to be successful, and this will help her to be an incredible principal.”

- Though not new to the job, Dwayne Ellison was named principal at the Ninth Grade School during the last school year.

Ellison was named interim principal at the school prior to the beginning of classes a year ago. The “interim” tag was removed in May.



Smith



Armishaw



Mays

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