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Prep school on Catholic honor list

Strake Jesuit among top 50 high schools in the nation

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When you're one of the best, sooner or later people will take notice. True to form, Strake Jesuit, an all-male Catholic high school, was recently designated as one of the top 50 Catholic high schools in the country.

The Catholic High School Honor Roll recently added Strake Jesuit to its list based on the school's demonstrated commitment to academic excellence, Catholic identity and civic education.

"I'm happy that we're being recognized for what we do everyday," said Principal Richard Nevle. "We didn't have to jump through any hoops for the award."

Advisory board member Gerard Bradley, law professor at the University of Notre Dame, said the Honor Roll will serve as a benchmark for all who are seeking an education informed by faith.

"It draws attention to schools that are contributing in extraordinary ways to the moral and intellectual formation of young people," Bradley said.

The primary goal of the Honor Roll, Nevle said, is to encourage schools to educate their students as effectively as possible, in a way that integrates Catholicism and prepares students for active engagement with the world.

"There are Jesuit, Dominican, diocesan and independent schools on this list," said project director Dr. Kevin Schmiesing. "It reflects the diversity of Catholicism in the United States.

"What is common to all of the schools is outstanding commitment to the educational mission of the Church."

The Catholic High School Honor Roll is an independent project of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty, an international research and educational organization

based in Grand Rapids, Mich. A national advisory board comprised of Catholic College presidents and noted Catholic scholars helped develop the list.

Catholic traditions taught

Nevle said Strake Jesuit is a private, Catholic, four-year college preparatory school for young men in grades 9-12. The school was founded in 1960 by the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, a religious order of priests and brothers also known as the Jesuits.

Located at 8900 Bellaire Blvd. in southwest Houston, the school resembles a small college, with various buildings spread around its 44-acre campus.

"We're a Jesuit school which has 450 years of experience in teaching and running schools," Nevle said. "Jesuit schools are centered around faith and strong academics. We challenge them in all areas.

"And, of course, there's tradition — 450 years of it."

Nevle cites the school's strong faculty and parental support as major factors in its program.

"We have a really strong faculty," Nevle said. "Good schools start with strong teachers. They love what they do and care about teaching students. Students take great pride in being part of this school. They help the school as much as the faculty."

A community commitment

One of the things that separates the Jesuit institution from other programs, said Nevle, is its dedication to community service.

"Strake Jesuit was one of the first schools in Texas to make community service a requirement for graduation," Nevle said.

He said each senior is required to complete 100 hours of community service to graduate.

The senior projects, he said, have taken students to soup kitchens, Native American missions and summer camps for special-needs children. Junior class projects have focused on poor and homeless residents of Houston, sophomores have collected holiday gifts for underprivileged children, and freshmen have visited the elderly in nursing homes.

"Our goal is for each person in our school family to understand the responsibility of putting faith into action, to experience the joy of serving Christ in the needy and poor among us, and to follow Christ's call to build a world grounded in faith and justice," Nevle said. "Our motto says it all — Men for Others."

Four other Texas schools were included on the Catholic High School Honor Roll: Antonian College Preparatory High School of San Antonio, Bishop T.K. Gorman Catholic School of Tyler, Monsignor Kelly High School of Beaumont and St. Therese Academy of Irving.

For more information on Strake Jesuit, visit www.strakejesuit.org.