



Leonardo Da Vinci Inspires Saint Viator Eagle Scout Project



Bishop George Rassas congratulates Koehler on building a new science lab at St. Colette.

Saint Viator Senior John Koehler of Rolling Meadows knew he wanted to give back to his Catholic grammar school in searching for an Eagle Scout project. What he didn't foresee was the role Renaissance inventor Leonardo Da Vinci would play.

Koehler sought the advice of Principal Valerie Zemko at St. Colette School in Rolling Meadows in brainstorming for a project. Together, they came up with a long held wish list item for the school and an interest of Koehler's: a science lab.

"We've been wanting to develop a separate science lab for nearly 10 years," Zemko said. "But it took John to get it going."

Last spring, Koehler presented his ideas to St. Colette's school board and Parents' Club members. Incorporated in his designs were elements from Da Vinci's Golden Ratio, using proportions to make the lab aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Koehler and Scouts from his troop organized and carried out the room's basic construction, installing cabinets, book shelves, new floors and student work stations for their lab work, before Master craftsman Eddie Fiscu completed the trim and finished carpentry.

"I wanted St. Colette students to have a dedicated science lab," says Koehler, who plans to major in engineering at the University of Illinois in Champaign. "It allows for more interaction among students and a better work environment for doing experiments."

Construction took place over the summer, in time for students to use the science lab this school year. Bishop George Rassas arrived earlier this month to bless the new facility and help St. Colette officials launch their 50th anniversary year.

He christened the lab, "Da Vinci's Workshop," acknowledging its design principals and ability to offer St. Colette students a "renaissance in education."

"It has helped propel us into a new direction with our science curriculum," Zemko added, "one with more design and application than just learning basic facts."

Specifically, she sees the Da Vinci's Workshop engaging the next generation of students through exposure to a broad range of skills, including mathematics, science, technology, art, engineering and design.

Saint Viator Principal Eileen Manno sees Koehler's leadership in bringing the workshop to life, exemplifying another form of learning, that of service learning.

"This is a young man that exemplifies everything that is positive in our young people," Manno says. "His concern for the academic enrichment of the students at his grade school and his desire to provide for others, reflects his dedication to the values we believe are important in life."