



## **Court St. Thomas Aquinas #1949, Madison**

Please consider Court St. Thomas Aquinas #1949 of Madison for the Court of the Year Award in 2023.

I have only been a member of the St. Thomas Aquinas court for 2 1/2 years and have served as Regent for under a year. What I have learned in this short time is that the women in our court are amazing, spiritual, talented, and energetic women of great faith!

This is not of my making but of the previous leadership who built and maintained a vibrant, active membership ready for action to serve members of all ages in our court, parish and community. Since the last state convention in 2021, Court St. Thomas Aquinas #1949 has reached out with loving service through various activities, outreach, and events.

### **FUNDraisers:** (name formed from a past Regent)

What better way to celebrate Father's Day than to treat them with freshly baked desserts and snacks. Parishioners look forward to the Dessert for Daddies fundraiser which is a free will donation for special dads in our lives.

The Pumpkin Patch Craft and Bake Sale held in October has been a successful fundraiser over the last two years. CDA members are so generous with donating delicious baked goods and snacks as well as working at the bake sale. CDA works with the Newman club to serve a small breakfast and lunch for the workers and vendors. Vendors can sell crafts, direct sale items, jewelry etc., and it is open to the public. Almost the entire court membership contribute to this fundraising event in various ways. Craft vendors this year reported that they enjoy our low-key, affordable, and friendly atmosphere.

St. Thomas parishioners sure look forward to the December Annual Cookie & Candy Walk where CDA members commit to make cookies, candies, breads, snacks, and other baked goods and make them available for sale to the parish and public. Similar to our other bake sale fundraiser, this event involves many CDA members sharing time and talents. Any leftovers are used for coffee and rolls after mass the next day or are given to the St. Thomas School staff and teachers, Court Chaplain and Deacon, the Newman students or the Madison Master Singers who perform at our church.

### **Spiritual Enhancement Events:**

St. Thomas usually hosts a Lenten Retreat during Lent. It was not held in 2021 due to the pandemic and it was canceled in 2022 due to unforeseen circumstances with the

Beginning 2022, the Outreach Committee organized "Meals for Father" where CDA members provided the court Chaplain with meals throughout the busy weeks of the Advent and Christmas seasons. Father appreciated the meals.

Helping parish youth is important to our court. In 2022, CDA hosted a Confirmation Reception after the Mass and also provided special gifts for each person confirmed. We also give rosaries to the First Communion class; along with the KC's gift Bibles to the third-grade students; sponsor a \$750 CDA Scholarship for graduating high school senior girls in our parish; and assist our local Newman Club Advisor with suppers for the Newman students.

This year, several of our members volunteered to work at the Madison Food Pack, an organized assembly of packing meals for Nicaragua sponsored by Kids Against Hunger and Helping Kids Round First. What an emotional experience when 300+ community members unite to package over 87,000 meals in 6 hours.

Hurricane Ian hit Florida so very hard. Our court took no time at all to send a contribution at the request of the National CDA. This is part of the reason we do fundraising.

Each month, parish groups, including CDA, host special donation drives such as The Food Pantry, Domestic Violence Network, Thanksgiving Boxes, Seminarians and Boxes for Babies. There is an overwhelming response to these requests and is a huge way to show our commitment and support to the parish and community.

#### **Social Events:**

Members were truly ready for a social event in 2021 and the Christmas Party was a perfect opportunity for that. The group gathered at a local restaurant, played games, exchanged gifts and had some much needed fun. This was also held in 2022.

A revamped from 2021 Soup and Bingo night held in cooperation with the Knights of Columbus after a March Sunday mass was a great success. While this was not slated a fundraising event, the Fundraising Committee helped with the food donations, gift card donations, and working the day of the event.

After a short hiatus, the Marian Tea social is back and was held in 2022. It is such a calming and beautiful event, originally for recently widowed women, but now open to all in the parish and girls 6 or older. The committee prepares the luncheon and tea pairings, plus plans games for all to enjoy.

#### **Education:**

The St. Thomas Aquinas court sponsors the CDA Education contest each year and have excellent participation by students at St. Thomas School and those in the CCD program. Once winners are selected, the court hosts a reception for those who place in the local contest. The reception, which includes cake and ice cream, is held before the regular meeting in April.



speaker. Fortunately, due to early planning, it is once again on the schedule for March 18, 2023.

As in the past, at the start of each monthly meeting, there is usually a "mini-retreat" where the spiritual enhancement group provides a 15-minute interactive prayer activity followed by reflection. One example this year was when each person who had a rosary that was unique or had special meaning could share that with the membership. There was great participation, stories and memories. At our last meeting, the husband of a CDA member, with Father Urban assisting, did a presentation about his pilgrimage to the Holy Land last September. This was very spiritual and touching.

In June of 2022, The St. Thomas Aquinas court developed a court longevity program where members of the court were honored for milestone years of service. Each recipient received a purple rosary containing a small CDA charm and an additional charm for years of service. This first year, there were 23 members recognized; 4 for 10 years; 9 for 15 years; 1 for 20 years; 2 each for 25 and 30 years; 3 for 35 years; and 1 for each 40 and 50 years. As of February 2023, our current membership accounts for 728 total years of service to the Catholic Daughters. That is a true commitment by all!

During this 2022 election year, members of the court organized a very touching Patriotic Rosary ceremony in early November. This was such a meaningful way to prepare and pray for the upcoming election and those running for office.

The Memorial Service for Deceased Members was held in November and was a very special candlelight ceremony where deceased members of CDA were honored and remembered. This is usually held in conjunction with All Saints Day or All Soul Day.

The court also holds formal prayer activities such as a May Crowning Ceremony at the May meeting led by our court Chaplain.

#### **Outreach Activities:**

As in the past years, CDA hosted a Thanksgiving meal for the Newman students. The catered main dish is sponsored by CDA and members generously donate sides, desserts and drinks and volunteer to set-up and serve.

In 2021 and 2022, CDA coordinated with the Knights of Columbus to purchase and deliver poinsettias to the nursing home residents, the bereaved, and shut-ins. In 2021 50 poinsettias were delivered and in 2022 there was 40. From the thank you notes received, the recipients really appreciate and enjoy this gesture.

For the first time in 2022, the CDA Outreach Committee assisted the parish Faith Formation group helping with activities and watching children. About 40 families attended and there were 25 preschoolers and toddlers!!!

Each year for the Fall St. Thomas School Fundraiser, CDA organizes the "Cake Walk" activity by providing the cakes and running the game. This is particularly popular with the younger crowd although, this year, college students also participated.

**Leadership/Membership:**

Although our court has a Membership Committee, it is really up to each CDA member to personally recruit potential new members. St. Thomas was so fortunate the past two years to recruit 12 new members. After the mass on Catholic Daughter Sunday in October, speakers invite any women who wish to join the court to visit with a CDA member who is available after mass for questions. Potential members are invited with a personal invitation to attend the next meeting and to become a member. Current members are encouraged to sign-up for the committee in which they are most interested.

Despite the after effects of the pandemic, our membership was extremely active in all aspects of our Parish. Our members volunteer as Catechists, serve as lectors, extraordinary ministers, cantors, and sing in the church choir. Prayer warriors lead the parish in praying the Rosary before each meeting and for funerals as requested.

Members as of 3/1/2021: 50

Members as of 2/15/2023: 57

Membership changes:

Added: 12

Death: 2

Forfeited: 1

Resigned: 1

Transferred out to a different CDA court: 1

Transferred in from a different CDA court: 0

Renewal: 0

I appreciate your consideration of our application for Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court of the Year 2023.

Respectively Submitted,

Marilyn Halgerson

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Court St. Thomas Aquinas #1949, Regent