

The Notre Dame Doors Were Open for Admissions Open House!

Traditionally, Notre Dame hosts an annual Open House on an autumn Sunday afternoon, when more than 450 students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades would come to visit the campus for the first time. Current students usually would help act as hosts and tour guides. Teachers would come in to have classroom demonstrations. And administrators would hold information sessions. At the end of the afternoon, parent volunteers would bake thousands of cookies and be on hand to give them out and answer questions of the visitors. This tradition obviously did not occur in its usual grand manner this year, due to the pandemic and restrictions on large gatherings. Most other schools who hold similar events hosted them virtually this year. Not so *Chez Nous*. Not to be daunted, Director of Admission Bob Grote, along with Grant Specialist and Admission Associate Penny Grote and other school administrators, strategized tirelessly to determine if a safe in-person admission Open House would be possible. Their tenacious efforts paid off, and on a cold crisp October Sunday, the Notre Dame's doors opened to welcome 8th graders interested in attending the school next year.

Of course, the safety and health of the guests were the top priority and thus this year's afternoon was drastically different (with no cookies at the end, alas). Numbers were substantially reduced, and strict COVID-19 precautions were put in place. Here are a few highlights:

- ND hosted four sessions with limited numbers, all of which practiced safe social distancing and entrance protocols (including temperature checks). Reservations had to be made in advance as each session had very limited seating, with seats spaced out in the Dolan Center. The students visiting were allowed one parent to accompany them. The sessions included brief presentations by Sr. Virginia O'Brien, SU, President; Ms. Jackie Brilliant, Principal; and Ms. Karina Vargas, Vice-Principal, in the Dolan Center. The

presentation was followed by a 30 -minute tour of Notre Dame's classrooms, labs, art studio, computer lab, chapel, library.

- Each student and parent had their own ND student tour guide to lead them through the school. This created a nice, personalized experience for each of our guests, and allowed for proper social distancing. Each group was brought in through one entrance and exited through another, eliminating the potential of bottle-necking.
- Notre Dame masks were given as a souvenir.

Although ND missed having the refreshment tables and the presence of Notre Dame parents who always enthusiastically greeted guests, our ND faculty, staff and students provided a *Chez Nous* welcome that left our guests with a sense of the warmth of the ND community.

In addition, there were over 400 students who signed up for the school's Virtual Open House which launched on our website at 2:00 p.m. that day. This had been pre-recorded earlier in October, since we knew we would not be able to accommodate the usual 1000 guests! (To view, here is link for ND's Virtual Open House: <https://youtu.be/sl99ytbyXCU>)

All in all, the day was a huge success with many guests complimenting the school for its organized, informative, and safe afternoon visit.