

May 19, 2019

Dear Mike Landgraf and Lynn McIntyre

We wanted to share a very special experience we had over Spring Break thanks to a teacher going the extra mile, and a St. Monica's alum who was willing to share her time and talent with us.

Over spring break this year the Bell family headed to California where we split our trip between Disneyland and the beaches of the LA area. However, on one of our beach days we headed up to Pasadena for a tour of Jet Propulsion Laboratories (JPL). We were fortunate enough to get a tour from Emma Bradford the daughter of Michael Bradford.

This wasn't a coincidence, I was talking with Michael about a week before our trip and when Spring Break came up I told him we were going to be in the LA area. He mentioned his daughter worked for JPL and may be able to give us a tour. My first question was. What is JPL? Well as some, or many, may know JPL is a federally funded research and development center managed for NASA by Caltech. JPL is the leading U.S. center for robotic exploration of the solar system and has 19 spacecraft and 10 major instruments carrying out planetary, Earth science and space-based astronomy missions. In other words, this place is a big deal.

Emma was a great guide. She gave us a bit of history of the place, showed us Mission Control, models of the satellites, a Mars rover, we got to see the clean room where assembly takes place, and an area that replicates the surface of Mars to troubleshoot the rovers. She let us know what it's like to work there and how much she really enjoys it. We asked about her background where she went to school. She graduated from Xavier University in Ohio and through a friend interned at JPL where she now has worked for 5 years. She is also a St Monica School graduate and not only that had her Dad, Mr. Bradford for 4th grade science.

Oh, the places they'll go! It is so awesome to see someone from our small corner of the world be in one of the elite places of science. We love St Monica's and the clear mission: "We, St Monica Parish School, are a Catholic community of learners. We are disciples of Christ whose lives are rooted in faith and service. We are committed to challenging the intellect and inspiring individual potential in an environment of growth, passion and possibility. We learn, live and love through Jesus." In a society that puts down faith a lot of the time it is great to see one of our former students shine. Makes me wonder about how many others are out there – I have a feeling it is many - and what a special network that would be for our community.

Thanks for your hard work,

Aaron Bell & Leslie Barbi