

6th Grade Explores Historic Scientific Discoveries at UW

The sixth grade class at Holy Rosary traveled to UW last week for a special lecture about the newest hominid on the block. Dr. Elen Feuerrigel, a paleoanthropologist from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, presented information about *Homo naledi*, a recently discovered ancient human-like species. Feuerrigel, a member of a specially selected all-woman team, helped to extract more than 1700 fossils from the Dinaledi Cave system, 80 feet below ground. Dr. Lee Berger headed the exploration and research project, sponsored and documented by National Geographic. Deposited deep at the bottom of the cave were specimens of at least fifteen individuals ranging from young to old, making this site one of the richest fossil caches ever discovered.

Following a long investigation of prehistoric man and the archaeological evidence of evolution, the students with their teacher, Malia Santucci, enjoyed seeing cast replicas of several hominid skulls, like the famous *Homo habilis* "Lucy", and other examples of early mankind including *Australopithecus*, *Homo erectus*, and *Homo sapien*. Feuerrigel, a strong supporter of STEM education particularly for girls, called the students' interest and detailed questions impressive. Santucci wanted her class to meet an expert in the field and make an authentic connection between lessons in the classroom and the cutting edge research happening in the real world.

