



JANUARY 19, 2025

# CATHOLIC TIMES

MAGAZINE OF THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

## Celebrating our schools during **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK**



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**HIGH SCHOOL RETREAT** — In November, boys from St. Anthony of Padua High School in Effingham went on an overnight retreat to Camp Ondessonk in Ozark. They met in small groups, listened to talks, found time for prayer, and worshipped our Lord at Mass in this beautiful outdoor setting.

*Submitted photo*

## SHAPING MINDS, BUILDING DISCIPLES

**CELEBRATING CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK - JAN. 26-FEB. 1**

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois are playing a vital role in shaping the spiritual, academic, and moral development of children. They provide an environment where faith and education go together. By integrating Catholic teachings into the curriculum, our schools are fostering a deep sense of spiritual growth, helping students to understand and live out the values and faith of the Catholic Church, becoming authentic disciples of Christ.

Beyond academic excellence, our Catholic schools prioritize the Mass, sacraments, giving of one's time,

talent, and treasure, and character development rooted in Catholic virtues. The strong sense of community within our schools nurtures students' relationships with God and with one another, encouraging them to live according to Catholic principles both inside and outside the classroom.

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week (Jan. 26-Feb. 1), read in the following pages how our school communities are building up the Kingdom of God. Thank you to all our principals, teachers, staff, students, and families for their hard work and dedication to Catholic education! ♦

# DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON AWARD

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON IS THE FOUNDER OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

NOMINATE A TEACHER WHO STRIVES FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, WITH A FOCUS AND COMMITMENT TO THE CATHOLIC MISSION

PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND PASTORS:  
SUBMIT A NARRATIVE OF THE TEACHER YOU WISH TO NOMINATE FOR THE ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON AWARD



Pictured is 2024 winner, Cheryl Valdahl, 1st grade teacher at Our Lady of Lourdes in Decatur with Bishop Thomas John Paprocki.

ENTRIES CAN BE SUBMITTED TO THE DIOCESE AT

[dio.org/schools/eas](http://dio.org/schools/eas)

SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE TO THE DIOCESE BY MARCH 10TH  
WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED LATER IN THE SPRING

## ST. TERESA HIGH SCHOOL – DECATUR



**WARMTH AND CUDDLES** — At St. Teresa, the Business Management class creates a socially responsible business each year. This year the business is called Warm and Cozy. The business is working on creating tie blankets to sell to the community. For every blanket that is sold they will donate two blankets to the children at Webster Cantrell. Webster Cantrell handles adoptions, foster care, youth shelter, counseling, etc. Webster Cantrell’s goal is to serve at-risk youth and families through a wide range of strength-based, trauma informed services. Since many of the children that arrive at Webster Cantrell have nothing except the clothes on their back, the goal is to provide each youth that arrives scared and many times traumatized, a soft tie blanket to provide a warm hug and something to call their own. In addition, wrapped inside each donated blanket will be a teddy bear donated by Operation Warm Fuzzy. Therefore, each child will have a warm blanket and gentle hug to greet them as they arrive.

## HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL – GRANITE CITY



**LIKE A FAMILY** — At Holy Family Catholic School we are a family through friendship, caring, and Christ. Starting at school and continuing throughout our community, we work on being not only messengers of Christ but also His Disciples, as we live His teachings and spread His word through our voices and actions. Students encourage each other to be good Christians by supporting each other in their everyday journeys of learning and growing. They come together to volunteer to help our community, whether it’s collecting for the less fortunate, giving to the food pantry, spreading happiness by performing for our community, for example, singing at the Golden Ages dinner and City Hall for the Christmas tree lighting, and passing out candy in the holiday parade. Their support of each other shows that they are not just students at a school, but a family based on friendship, love, and our faith.

## SACRED HEART-GRIFFIN HIGH SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

**Service club supports the poorest of the poor**

One of the hallmarks of a Sacred Heart-Griffin education is embracing the Christian virtue of service to others. As members of the SHG community, we realize that we are members of a neighborhood, a city, a state, a nation, and a world. Accordingly, we have, as part of our mission, made efforts to make altruistic contributions to persons in need in our neighborhood, our community of Springfield, in our nation, and in our world.

One of our newest international service endeavors involves one of our student-led clubs called the Our Lady of Nazareth Club. The mission of our club, which has 35 members from freshmen through seniors, is to support the poorest of the poor children who attend Our Lady of Nazareth Catholic School in Nairobi, Kenya.

Our Lady of Nazareth School began in 1992 in one of Kenya's largest slums, MuKuru. Living conditions in the area of the school are incomprehensible: open sewers, no potable water, one-room shanties with steel corrugated walls, and the bare ground as a floor. The streets in this area of half a million persons have no names or designations. Our Lady of Nazareth, sponsored and operated by the Marianist order of priests

and brothers, is an oasis where 1,900 students have a chance to better their existence by receiving an education as well as two nutritious meals a day. Our Lady of Nazareth is tangible hope and opportunity for children who come from loving families but lack the basic necessities of life.

The members of Our Lady of Nazareth Club at SHG are committed to supporting the students of OLN. Through fundraising and prayer, our students are making a real difference. A fall bake sale netted enough money to completely pay for three students to attend OLN for an entire school year. Future fundraisers are planned for the spring. Another component of our partnership with OLN is pen pals. Each of our students will be paired with a student at OLN to establish a communication link. Fun for the young students of OLN and the older students of SHG!

The richness of Catholic education is exemplified in being able to carry out the exhortations of the *Beatitudes* as part of our daily school life. The Our Lady of Nazareth Club of Sacred Heart-Griffin believes in the value of assisting children in need halfway around the globe. ✚

## ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER PRESCHOOL – CHATHAM

**St. Joseph the Worker Preschool thriving and shining**

St. Joseph the Worker Preschool in Chatham is in its 27th year of providing a quality religious educational program for our young children in the Chatham area. Our preschool has a 3-year-old class and a 4/5-year-old class. St. Joseph the Worker Preschool implements a curriculum where the students learn through playing. We also provide engaging religion lessons at a preschool level where the students learn to live and love like Jesus. The children look forward to daily visits from Father Joe Molloy who joins them for prayers, play, and story time.

St. Joseph the Worker Preschool offers a variety of unique learning opportunities. Our small class sizes, along with our teacher and two classroom aides, ensure special one-on-one and small group attention for all students. The classes attend field trips out of the classroom, take monthly trips across the parking lot to the

Chatham Public Library for story time, and welcome parents into the classroom for visiting and volunteer opportunities.

This past December, the preschoolers had an exciting lesson focused around the story *The Gingerbread Man*. After reading the story during class time, each student decorated a gingerbread man of their own. Their wonderful creations were then used to decorate the St. Joseph the Worker Preschool Christmas tree in the Chatham square for the Christmas in Chatham tree lighting event. Many of the preschoolers came to the event and were so proud to see and show off their decorated tree to loved ones.

If you are interested in enrolling your child in our program, please visit our website, [www.stjoschatham.org/Preschool](http://www.stjoschatham.org/Preschool), or contact the parish office at (217) 483-3772 for more information. ✚

## BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL – QUINCY



**GREAT GROTTO** — Our eighth-grade class has been planning, fundraising, and working toward improving the area around the Mary grotto since sixth grade. This fall, their hard work paid off. The eighth-grade students, along with parishioners, spent a couple of weekends clearing out, rebuilding, and adding benches, as well as making it handicap accessible.

## ST. DOMINIC SCHOOL – QUINCY



**BECOMING DISCIPLES** — During the 2024-2025 school year, St. Dominic School is studying the theological and cardinal virtues. Each month, one of the K-8 classes and their teacher leads the school's morning assembly to provide a lesson from the Bible, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, or the lives of the saints regarding the virtue being studied for the month. During Catholic Schools Week 2025, buddy classrooms will demonstrate our theme for the year: Becoming Disciples of Christ Through the Virtues. Our school-wide Bible verse is "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Philippians 4: 8.

## ROUTT CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL – JACKSONVILLE



**SUCCESSFUL CAN DRIVE** — Routt Catholic High School's National English Honor Society hosted a can drive for the local Jacksonville Food Pantry. The students, faculty, staff, parents, and friends donated 743 items, measuring 668 pounds.

## SS. PETER AND PAUL SCHOOL – COLLINSVILLE

### CELEBRATING ALL SAINTS DAY

— Third-grade students brought their confirmation saints to life in our celebration of All Saints Day. This annual project has become a well-loved tradition in our parish and highlights the beauty of Catholic education. Disciplines like theology, history, and art can combine in a way that is not only educational, but personal and meaningful for our students and their families.



## SACRED HEART SCHOOL – PANA



**SHS SCOOP** — Thanks to Miss Colleen Weddle, Pana-Sacred Heart now has a YouTube news report called *SHS Scoop*. The students report on school events, class projects, sports, weather, and even give a little lesson about the past called, “This day in history.”

## ST. LOUIS SCHOOL – NOKOMIS

**LET’S PLAY PICKLEBALL!** — Generous donors of St. Louis Catholic School in Nokomis made it possible for three pickleball courts to be added to the playground so that students could learn to play the popular game in P.E. classes, combining fitness and fun.



## ST. ANTHONY GRADE SCHOOL – EFFINGHAM



**SWEET VOICES** — St. Anthony Grade School students presented their Winter Concert at St. Anthony High School in the Enlow Center right before Christmas.

## ST. AGNES SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

**ROOTED IN FAITH** — St. Agnes School (represented here by a number of its students) is rooted in faith, honoring and continuing to serve and grow in knowledge. Happy Catholic Schools Week!



## ST. NORBERT SCHOOL – HARDIN



**LIVING ROSARY** — Students at St. Norbert School in Hardin created a *Living Rosary* for Grandparents' Day. In the *Living Rosary*, each student stands in the place of a bead of the rosary and leads the prayer when it's their turn. This form of saying the *Rosary* brings this beautiful prayer to life by involving all the students.

## ST. MARY SCHOOL – ALTON

**TOGETHER IN FAITH** — St. Mary School in Alton implemented their Faith Family Program this year to bring their student body together to actively live their faith. Students participate in adoration monthly within their designated Faith Family to pray for those in need and to connect with God. Here students are pictured offering their prayers to the Lord, written on the back of paper loaves of bread, as they pray together.



## ST. FRANCIS/HOLY GHOST SCHOOL – JERSEYVILLE

### Faith Family helps connections at school

By **DAPHNE SLUSSER**  
Student

There are many unique features about St. Francis/Holy Ghost Catholic School in Jerseyville, but one that stands out to me is Faith Family. Every month, all the students in our school meet together for a fun few hours of activities based around our Catholic faith. Each meeting begins with an all-school Mass, gathering all the students from both the Holy Ghost site (K-4) and St. Francis site (5-8). Then each Faith Family spends an hour together participating in various activities based on the current Church season.

In the past year, we've celebrated a pet Mass, attended an eighth-grade saint museum, and attended two Michael James Mette concerts! We also participate in "getting to know you" games so we can learn about each member of our family, which consists of one or two students from every grade level. Additionally, every faith family group is named after its own patron saint specially chosen by the family's eighth-grader leader.

As an older student, I see Faith Family as a great way to be able to connect more with the younger kids who I don't see often. Prior to instituting Faith Family days,

I didn't know very many students in younger grades. Now, I know many of them, and they know me! It's great to see them outside of school and say "Hi!" and have them say "Hello!" back. Making that connection with students I might not normally speak to is one of the best reasons to keep our Faith Family program going.

What I find most special about our school is the community. Since each class is so small, everyone knows everyone. For me, I like that I'm surrounded by people I've known for years who let me be myself and accept me for me. With 19 kids in my class this year, being a small group provides an opportunity for the teacher to work one on one with each student. It can be more laid back and less stressful. Even though all these elements work together to create a great school environment, one crucial piece is that while everyone knows each other, we also get along!

This school year has been a wonderful example of how beneficial the Faith Family program has become and how dedicated our teachers are. My class has become so much closer, while at the same time we are making new friends with other students in different grades. Jesus tells us that we will know each other by the fruits of our labors, and the fruits at SF/HG are bountiful and growing. 🌱

## ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST SCHOOL – CARROLLTON



**FOUR HOUSES — ONE FAMILY** — At St. John the Evangelist School we are enriching our Catholic identity through a virtue-inspired house system. Our four houses — House of Fortitude (*Fortitudo*), House of Justice (*Iustitia*), House of Temperance (*Temperantia*), and House of Prudence (*Prudentia*) — make up our one St. John family.

## CHRIST THE KING SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

**CELEBRATING ADVENT** — Christ the King School celebrates the first week of Advent with a special all-school prayer service. Students fill the manger with straw, each piece representing good deeds or kind words. Throughout Advent, they continue adding straw to the manger, sharing their kindness and goodwill.



## SACRED HEART SCHOOL – EFFINGHAM



**SPECIAL POTLUCK** — Sacred Heart students in grades K-8 take turns visiting our parish’s monthly “Young Hearts” Potluck. The students share something different each month, such as a song they have been learning, a recent class project, etc. When our seventh-graders visited, they sat with our “young at heart” parishioners and asked about challenges in life that have held them back from growing closer to God, and how they worked through those challenges. Many stories were told and much wisdom was shared. It was a great opportunity for both the young and old to learn new perspectives and grow in faith.

### Sacred Heart School is hiring a **Grade School Principal**

*Grounded in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, Sacred Heart Catholic School strives for excellence in education while preparing our students for a saintly life of service, leadership, and compassion for all.*

Applicants should:

- Possess at least a Master’s degree and have 3-5 years of relevant experience.
- Be a practicing Catholic with good moral character, enthusiastically living out the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Have a deep knowledge of various instructional methods and strategies.
- Be knowledgeable, professional, hard-working, and student-centered.

Position includes benefits & pension package

***With strong enrollment, robust fundraising, and engaged faculty, now is an exciting time to join the Sacred Heart School family!***

Qualified candidates should submit a letter of interest, copy of transcript, & resume to:

Sacred Heart Church, Attn: Billi Jansen,  
405 S. Henrietta St., Effingham, IL 62401  
or email: [b.jansen@sheff.org](mailto:b.jansen@sheff.org).



**SACRED HEART**  
Catholic School

## ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL SCHOOL – SIGEL

## Meeting our third Friday guests

On the third Friday of every month at St. Michael School you will see the student body head down to the gym for an all-school assembly. There they meet with a guest visitor from the community who is put on the “hot seat,” as they call it. The St. Michael School principal asks the visitor a variety of questions about their occupation, family, education, life events, etc. Then the fun really begins when the principal hands the microphone over to the students to ask their individual questions. As you can imagine, when you hand a kindergartner a microphone the questions become interesting, very quickly.

All in all, the visitors absolutely enjoy the experience, and the students learn many lessons. They learn about the many walks of life that they can choose from, the education required, the time and effort it takes, and

how to be successful. Most importantly they learn what matters most to people.

When asked about the most important thing in their life the visitor has the same answer 100 percent of the time. The answer is always “family and faith.” Nothing else in their life would matter without their wife/husband and children and their love for the Lord. Yes, they work and have hobbies, but the people in their life and the Lord are what makes life special.

The visitors to St. Michael School come from all walks of life: electricians, lawyers, mechanics, agricultural specialists, insurance agents, farmers, construction companies, marketing specialists, printing companies, and CEOs of multimillion dollar operations. ♦

## ST. FRANCIS SOLANUS SCHOOL – QUINCY

## Implementing structured literacy approach at St. Francis

Many teachers and researchers have raised concerns about the balanced literacy approach, particularly its effectiveness in teaching young children to read. While balanced literacy combines phonics-based instruction with whole language strategies, some argue that its emphasis on exposure to literature and implicit strategies may not provide enough structured guidance for foundational reading skills.

These concerns have led teachers at St. Francis Solanus School in Quincy to shift toward more structured, research-based approaches, such as structured literacy, which includes systemic phonics and aligns with the science of reading. Teachers at St. Francis Solanus School were dissatisfied with the long-term results of using the balanced literacy approach with their young students. Training opportunities and grant money became available to help teachers begin to implement the structured literacy approach in kindergarten through second grade in August of 2023.

In June of 2023, seven teachers were offered the chance to attend the Institute for Multisensory Education’s Comprehensive Orton Gillingham Plus training. They wanted to learn more about using structured literacy through this 30-hour training. As the name implies,

this method teaches students early reading and writing skills through speaking, listening, and touching using the principles of the Science of Reading. This research-based method is proving helpful to all types of learners. It is especially helpful for students with dyslexia.

In May of 2024, teachers in third through eighth grade who taught literacy took the Institute for Multisensory Education’s Morphology Plus training. Morphology is the study of words and how they go together. Grant money and support from various organizations have helped with funding the training. The Community Foundation, serving West Central Illinois and Northeast Missouri, Literacy Advocates of West Central Illinois, Tracy Family Foundation, and the Regional Office of Education 1 have helped get all offered financial or support in implementing the program.

St. Francis Solanus School has been featured in stories through the local media. The school was recently mentioned in an article in the *Journal of the Institute for Multisensory Education* and is scheduled to be mentioned again in a future article. It is hoped that the school can implement a full reading curriculum based on a structured literacy approach in the coming years. ♦

## OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE SCHOOL – BETHALTO



**SCARVES FOR STELLA** — The second-grade class at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic School in Bethalto is selling scarves made by their teacher, Miss Bernadette Friedel, to raise money for “A Heart for Stella.” Stella is a 5-year-old girl from Jerseyville who received a heart transplant last July after being hospitalized for 254 days. By engaging in service projects and outreach programs, our school helps students understand their responsibility to care for others, especially those who are suffering or less fortunate. It fosters a sense of solidarity and the idea that everyone has a role to play in building a better society.

## ST. PETER SCHOOL – QUINCY

**HOUSES AT ST. PETER** — Students at St. Peter are part of a House System that is made up of a mixture of grades K-8. Each student is a member of one of the 10 Houses at St. Peter. Each house is identified by a saint and a specific color. We have various activities each month for students to participate in a house activity. We have celebrated with house lunches, Masses, a Thanksgiving feast, assemblies, and special activities in which they have the opportunity to learn more about their house saint and one another. New this year, we have house key holders. The house key holders are chosen representatives from grades 6-8 who assist with the planning and the activities. Our House System is a great opportunity for our 425 K-8 students to build relationships across grade levels, celebrate their Catholic identity by learning and studying about the 10 house saints, and creating leaders based on our Catholic values.



## ST. MARY SCHOOL – MT. STERLING



**ROSARY TIME** — Every Friday, we pray a decade of the *Rosary* with Father Aaron Kuhn. This allows us to educate the students about the *Mysteries of the Rosary* and teach them another prayer to bring them closer to God.

## ST. ALOYSIUS SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

### Embracing vocations: ‘I have called you by name, you are mine’

At the heart of the St. Aloysius 2024-2025 school year is the theme: “I have called you by name, you are mine.” These words remind us that we are each known, loved, and created by God for a special purpose. This year, our students are called to reflect on how God’s call shapes their lives, especially when it comes to vocations.

For our students, understanding vocation is about realizing that God has a unique plan for each of them, and He is with them every step of the way as they grow and discover their talents and gifts.

Students are reflecting on the many ways God calls them to serve Him and others, whether it is through the priesthood or religious life, marriage, or to a career where they can help others and make the world a better place.

The faculty and staff at St. Aloysius School also model vocation in their own lives. They show students how to live out their faith through everyday actions. Teaching is not simply a career; it is a ministry. Teachers are called to nurture the minds and hearts of students, to

inspire them to discover their own gifts and to show them how their talents can be used for the greater good. Through the theme “You are mine,” teachers are reminded that they are not only shaping academic knowledge but are forming individuals who will one day answer God’s call.

During this school year, students have explored vocations through prayer, discussion, and service. Mrs. Janet Kehoe leads the students at First Friday adoration each month. Students spend this time in quiet reflection, listening for God’s call and praying for vocations. As they pray, they are reminded that God knows them by name and loves them uniquely. Our seventh-grade students participated in a vocations rally, each class attends a monthly Mass dedicated to vocations in our school chapel, and religious communities visit our students. These experiences open their hearts to the many ways people are called to serve God. ✠

## QUINCY NOTRE DAME SCHOOL – QUINCY

Quincy Notre Dame students, staff, and families collected over \$8,000 to purchase non-perishable food items during its annual Fall Food Drive, sponsored by the QND Kindness Club, to benefit Quincy Catholic Charities. On Nov. 12, QND held its 3rd Annual “Canstruction” event and each of the 16 Houses had to use their food items to build a structure within a 30-minute time period. Judges scored the structures based on ingenuity, attention to detail, and first impression. It was a fun way for students to show their Raider Pride and give back to the community.



## MARQUETTE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL – ALTON



**IMPORTANT WORK** — Marquette Catholic High School students spend time at St. Mary Catholic School in Alton reading to students as part of their Serviam Program through the Community and House System. This kind of outreach, especially to younger students, is an important part of their mission to make better disciples and apostles of the students.

## ST. PATRICK SCHOOL - DECATUR



**BIG HEARTS** — This fall St. Patrick School joined other area schools to participate in the WSOY Food Drive. The food drive, which took place on Oct. 4, raised over \$800,000 and 23 million pounds of food, which filled the empty food pantry shelves of local communities. St. Patrick School in Decatur tied for first place among local schools by raising over \$57,000! For those efforts St. Patrick received \$5,000 as a cash prize. “We are proud of the big hearts our little school has when it comes to serving those in our community,” stated principals Amy Yusko and Jerry Spain. “We are the little school that could — and we do — year after year!”

## ST. BONIFACE SCHOOL/ST. MARY SCHOOL - EDWARDSVILLE



**NET TEAM** — The seventh- and eighth-graders from both St. Boniface and St. Mary in Edwardsville came together for a NET Ministries retreat this year. With the NET team, these students prayed, played, discussed, and worshiped around the theme “Never Alone” — focusing on the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**St. John School, Carrollton • 2025 Daily Drawing**

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**Enter Daily Drawing for just \$25.**

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*Winners names returned to drawing.*

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*Carrollton, IL 62016*

**A Winner  
Every Day!**

## ST. MARY SCHOOL – TAYLORVILLE

### November and December made up ‘season of giving’

It started in November with a food collection for the food pantry. Then, students brought items to pack shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. St. Mary School packed 90 shoeboxes to be sent to other countries around the world.

In December, we had a bake sale and students paid \$5 to participate in “dress down” days. Over \$1,500 was raised to buy toys for “Santa’s Workshop” toy give away.

We did some singing, too. The children’s choir sang Christmas carols at the December CDA potluck. On Dec. 12, the students performed a dress rehearsal in the afternoon and an evening show to a standing room only audience at the annual Christmas Program. This

year’s program was entitled “Jingle Bell Beach” – a singing competition between three groups: the Starfish, the Snowflakes, and the Electrons. Each class was featured in a song.

We wound down the semester by making placemats and ornaments, along with giving fuzzy socks to be delivered to Taylorville Estates, Taylorville Care Center, Hickory Estates, Hi Point Memory Care, Meadow Manor Rehabilitation, and Taylorville Terrace. Each resident received a gift bag filled with goodies.

Finally, on Dec. 20, classes had one final party to celebrate Christmas with their classmates before having a couple weeks off for Christmas break. ✦

## FATHER MCGIVNEY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL – GLEN CARBON

### Cardinal Glennon Guild Junior Board, ambassadors important to FMCHS

The Cardinal Glennon Guild Junior Board at Father McGivney Catholic High School led a successful coat drive this November. The students collected 427 coats for children and 44 coats for adults. Principal Joseph Lombardi explains, “This program beautifully highlights the alignment of the Glennon Guild Junior Board’s activities with Father McGivney Catholic High School’s core values. It emphasizes how these students are not only embracing but actively living out the pillar of Charity by using their leadership skills to make a meaningful impact. Their efforts serve as a testament to the school’s mission of fostering a culture of life through practical service.”

The board consists of students who want to make a difference in the lives of patients at Cardinal Glennon Children’s Hospital and the community. Through their leadership and volunteerism, they will continue to put on fundraising events like the coat drive throughout the school year in an effort to raise funds for patients, families, and our community. The McGivney students volunteered their free time to attend meetings in St.

Louis and planned every detail of this initiative from start to finish.

FMCHS is proud to have 10 members on the Junior Executive Board and four ambassadors. The board includes the following students: Savanna Brown, Alanna Douglas, Joey Feldhaus, Lilly Forneris, Elizabeth Guehlstorf, Shea Guinn, Sophia Mineman, Caroline Rakers, Riley Ramsey, and Gracelyn Ratchford. The ambassadors include the following students: Maddie Beck, Avery Grenzebach, Izzy Wade, and Morgan Zobrist.

The FMCHS Faith Formation Director, Julie Scheller, leads the group of students in their efforts. Scheller explains, “I want to give a huge shoutout to our amazing McGivney Glennon Board and ambassadors who organized this coat drive. These students planned every detail of this project and offered countless hours of volunteerism to make this initiative a huge success. Their hard work and compassion are a true testament to living out their faith in everyday life. We are so proud of their dedication to serving others and making a difference in our community.” ✦

## OUR LADY OF LOURDES SCHOOL – DECATUR

### FOSTERING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

— At Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School, fostering community involvement is a tradition we cultivate throughout the year. From supporting charitable causes to welcoming visitors



into our school, we take pride in sharing moments of faith and fellowship with others. This Nov. 11, we were honored to celebrate Veterans Day alongside many veterans and special guests. Our students performed an array of tributes to the armed forces, and Father Mark Tracy, Chaplain of the Army National Guard, shared his moving reflections on service and sacrifice. Other memorable highlights this year were our Grandparents' Day celebration and a special assembly honoring OLOL alumna and 2024 Paralympic Gold Medalist, Noelle Malkamaki. These moments reflect the heart of our school community.

## OUR SAVIOUR SCHOOL – JACKSONVILLE



**MASS PARTICIPATION** — Olyvia Braner, Karsyn Smith, and Josslyn Buchanan read the petitions for Mass, as the the second-graders in Mrs. Paitra Gibson's class each had a special part to read. At Our Saviour, every grade level (K-8) has an opportunity to read and present in Mass. The students practice and prepare for their special opportunity. They do a great job and are always excited to be a part of the Mass.

## BLESSED SACRAMENT SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

### ST. PATRICK SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD

**FAITH BUDDIES** — This past fall, Blessed Sacrament School's sixth- and second-grade Faith Buddies worked together to create decorated pumpkins.



**BLESSED BY SISTER ANGELENE** — Sister Angelene Biderbost, Springfield Dominican Sister and religion teacher at St. Patrick Catholic School, poses with a group of her students. Sister Angelene is the only religious sister currently teaching in the Springfield Catholic schools. Prior to teaching religion this year, she taught phonics for seven years at St. Pat's.

## ST. PAUL SCHOOL – HIGHLAND

### Building a stronger student: The St. Paul Catholic School experience

St. Paul Catholic School offers a unique educational experience that combines academic excellence with spiritual growth, creating an environment where students thrive intellectually, emotionally, and morally. At the heart of our education is a strong foundation of faith, community, and preparation for life beyond the classroom.

At St. Paul, faith is deeply integrated into every aspect of school life. Religious education is not limited to the study of Scripture, but also within our Church practices and implemented in our everyday life. Each grade rotates in hosting our weekly school Masses, not only to enrich their faith, but to practice public speaking as early as first grade, interacting regularly with their faith leaders, and growing closer to our Lord within His home. Students also organize prayer services, *Rosary* rallies, and reenact the *Stations of the Cross* during Lent. This culminates with the Passion of Christ on Good Friday, inviting the community to join and reflect. This instruction extends to how students live their daily lives, encouraging them to practice kindness, compassion, and integrity in everything they do.

Our sense of community is rooted in respect, service, and collaboration. Teachers and parents work together to create a supportive environment where students feel

safe and valued. This fosters confidence, allowing students to explore their interests while knowing they have a strong support system behind them. Inspired by God, students actively give back — organizing food drives, creating handmade cards for nursing homes, and making care packages for soldiers and hospital patients. These amazing students even go as far to coordinate fundraising initiatives focused on cancer research and children’s hospitals.

Academically, St. Paul offers a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for success in higher education. Students engage in a wide range of subjects, from STEM to the arts, while also participating in extracurricular activities that help them develop important life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication. The majority of our graduates are currently on the honor roll and rank at the top of their class at their respective high schools, demonstrating St. Paul provides an education that nurtures both the mind and the soul.

St. Paul aims to prepare students not only for academic success but for a life of service, responsibility, and faith equipped with the tools they need to navigate the world with purpose, positivity, and compassion impacting in their communities today and beyond. ✠

## ST. JOHN NEUMANN SCHOOL – MARYVILLE

**SUPPORTING RELIGIOUS VALUES** — At St. John Neumann we are committed to nurturing not only our academic excellence but also spiritual growth. Coming to St. John Neumann this year is the excellent and exciting program, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. This experience involves both children and adults in which religious values of childhood, primarily those of the contemplation and enjoyment of God, are predominant. Our program starts with our 3- to 6-year-olds (7- to 14-year-olds to come) who receive and enjoy the announcement of God’s love through Jesus. The setting is an atrium where materials are used to make the mystery of God concrete to the child. The relationship they develop with Jesus is assisted by the adult, but is directed by the Holy Spirit within the child. All Crusaders embody the faith in many ways including weekly Mass, time in our chapel for prayer, retreats, and service. Our staff serve as models of faith, inspiring students through their own commitments to God and community. Both students and staff enthusiastically strive to learn their faith, love their faith, and live their faith.

ST. JOHN NEUMANN  
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(618) 345-7230

## LITTLE FLOWER SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD



**SNOW FUN!** — Little Flower Catholic School students joyfully play in front of the church during the first snowfall of the year.

## ST. MARY SCHOOL – BRUSSELS



**SPIRIT OF THE SAINTS** — St. Mary School in Brussels celebrated All Saints’ Day in style! Students embodied the spirit of the saints by creatively dressing up, honoring their examples of faith and virtue. After Mass, parents and community members were invited to the school to hear each student give a presentation on the saint they chose to research and learn about.

## HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL – DECATUR



**SPREADING JOY** — We are proud to share that our Holy Family Choir participated in this year’s WSOY Community Food Drive, spreading joy through music while supporting an incredible cause. Their performance added a festive and uplifting spirit to an event dedicated to helping those in need. We are grateful for the opportunity to showcase our talented students and contribute to our community’s efforts to make a difference!

## ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL – NEWTON



**HELPING OUT** — St. Thomas the Apostle Newton’s Civics Club, under the direction of teacher, David Stork, gives back to the community by cleaning up the trash and leftover candy on the parade route after the annual Fall Festival Parade. This is a great way to help out our city workers and keep the town of Newton clean. Way to go, Saints!

## ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL – EFFINGHAM

### St. Anthony High School introduces theology electives program

St. Anthony High School launched an innovative theology curriculum this fall designed to transform how students learn about and engage with their faith. The new theology curriculum introduces elective options for upper-class students. “Our intent for the program is to get students excited about developing a relationship with Jesus and to realize that to be Catholic is to be fully alive,” said teacher Ben Zuber.

“Our vision for theology isn’t just a checkbox to complete — it’s about helping students genuinely engage and invest in their faith in order to create a deeper relationship with God. Ultimately, we want students to leave high school with a foundation of faith and understanding that the traditional Catholic faith is reasonable, and they will always have a ‘sense of home’ with Jesus and the Church,” said teacher Sean Hussey.

The curriculum includes strong foundational courses for underclassmen while introducing specialized electives for juniors and seniors. All students begin with core courses or “pre-requisites,” including Sacred Scripture and Introduction to Catholicism. These essential building blocks give students the theological framework they need for deeper exploration.

The new elective program is designed with the students’ interests and spiritual journey in mind. Upperclassmen can select courses that align with their individual curiosities. Current semester-long offerings include Catholic Apologetics, Moral Apologetics, New Testament Scriptures, Discovering the Saints, and Modern Media through the Catholic Lens. There is also a year-long course, Discipleship, which is discipleship-intensive. This small-group class is held off-site in a similar style to the Effingham CEO program. It includes Catholic habit-building activities such as early morning Mass, adoration, daily prayer, and Scripture reading.

“We’re approaching these classes like college-level courses and hoping to inspire students in ways that we have once been inspired ourselves,” notes Hussey, who teaches the apologetics tracks and discipleship elective. Zuber adds, “We also want to offer students a variety of ways to find Jesus and experience Him. By giving the students the choice to choose their own path to explore Jesus, they are active participants in their faith journey and become more invested in the material and the discussions.”

One of the more interesting concepts of the new elective program is the emphasis on Catholic apologetics, or discussions. “In today’s world, our students need to understand not just what they believe, but why they believe it,” said Hussey. “We’re giving them the tools and courage to engage in meaningful conversations about their faith while also respecting different perspectives.”

The new theology curriculum also incorporates contemporary issues through courses like Modern Media Through the Catholic Lens, where students analyze current events and popular culture from a Catholic perspective. This approach helps students encounter modern day events and commentary and evaluate their position using their Catholic Faith foundation.

For next year and beyond, the theology department is committed to adapting the program based on student interest, participation, and feedback. They expect the program to continue to expand in order to meet the ever-changing needs of the students. ✦

## ST. ELIZABETH SCHOOL – GRANITE CITY



**FOOD COLLECTION** — St. Elizabeth students accepted the challenge and brought in over 740 canned goods to donate to the local food bank. Before the cans were donated the students gathered with their faith families for creation challenges.

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