

Fall 2024

ACADEMY CONNECTION

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC ACADEMY
DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH



Welcome



A message from our President, Mrs. Natalie Newville:

The start of a new school year brings a unique sense of excitement! Fall is my favorite season, and I always look forward to the festivals, sporting events, and (usually) cooler weather. Getting back into the school routine is something my family and I anticipate each year.

This school year has been full of positive momentum across our campuses. Our Fine Arts students have been hard at work on the Fall Musical, and several students have even advanced to District Choir! Our athletic teams are having strong seasons, with some high school sports moving into the postseason. Students have also attended grade-level retreats, deepening their faith and strengthening community bonds. Each grade is now preparing for the Festival of Arts in the spring, and our teachers are collaborating to create a seamless learning experience. It's truly an exciting time to be part of our Catholic schools!

This fall, the SJCA Board has started a feasibility study, a key step toward launching a capital campaign for our Catholic schools. You may be invited to participate in a focus group or a one-on-one conversation with our consultants. Thank you in advance for helping with this important initiative. We also invite all families to participate in our survey, accessible via the QR code to the right.



In addition, each of our elementary campuses will be undergoing the accreditation process this spring. If you've received a survey request for your campus, I encourage you to take the time to complete it. Your feedback is essential in helping each campus grow and improve.

We're looking forward to the 3rd Annual Prayer Breakfast, held on January 29th. The Most Reverend Bishop Johnston will once again join us, and our featured speaker is Lamar Hunt, Jr. Sponsorships and tickets are available now, and I hope you'll make plans to join us!

Natalie Newville



St. Joseph Catholic Academy
3529 Frederick Ave.
St. Joseph, MO 64506

President:
Natalie Newville

Controller:
John Hapak

Special Education:
Sherry Russell

Admin. Assistant:
Michelle Ide

Athletic Director:
Kasey Waterman

Academy Updates

Each campus hosts unique events that highlight its individual spirit, but what truly makes our Academy special is the unity that comes when all our Catholic school students come together to share in each other's traditions. No matter which school a student attends, they build meaningful connections with peers across campuses through shared activities and athletics.



Grandparents



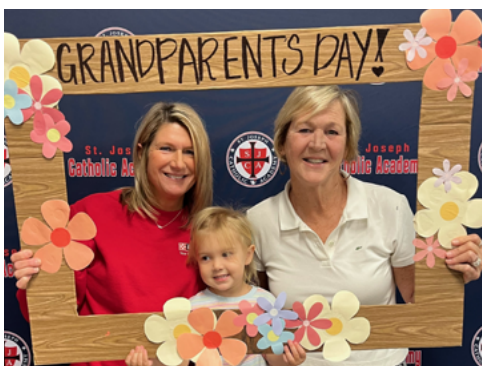
Grandparents play a special role in the lives of our Catholic School Scholars, and each campus was excited to celebrate with them over the last few months.

LeBlond grandparents attended a Mass with their grandkids. There was a fun video created by the Broadcasting class, and a Legacy Photo with grandparent alumni and current students. This year, the Student Experience Committee also planned a brunch, where students were able to take photos with their grandparents and enjoy a yummy breakfast provided by the St. James Cafeteria staff. The homemade cinnamon rolls were of course a fan favorite!

St. Gianna grandparents were able to visit the center and enjoy treats with the students. Cathedral grandparents attended an afternoon Mass with their grandchildren, and then were able to visit the book fair sponsored by Blessings and get photos taken by Long Photography. Students were able to take their grandparents on a tour of the school as well!

St. Francis hosted a Senior Citizen Day, where grandparents and members of the parish attended Mass with the 7th and 8th graders, and then had a catered lunch! They were entertained with music performed by the 1st-6th graders after lunch.

St. James' Grandparents Are The MVPs! They began the day with Mass, and then enjoyed donuts, juice, and coffee. Scholars gave their grandparents a tour of their classroom and took pictures together!



Fine Arts



All-District Choir Auditions were held on Saturday, September 15th at MWSU. Four LB singers Auditioned: Julia Aberer (freshman soprano), Dylan Marmaud (senior tenor), Brody Cathcart (junior tenor), & Gracie Ide (junior mezzo).

Dylan & Brody were selected as members of the 2024-2025 Northwest Missouri High School All-District Honor Choir. A total of 190 singers from 27 high schools were chosen.

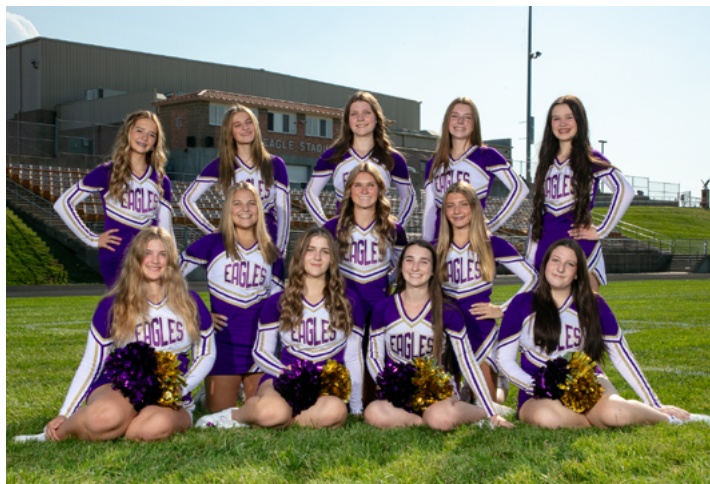
The All-District Choir rehearsed and performed at Platte County High School on Saturday, October 26th.



Athletics

The Eagles have had a great kick off with Fall Athletics! With the coordinated middle school program, scholars from each campus are able to participate in team sports together. By the time our scholars reach high school, they've been playing together for years, and it shows. LeBlond has had multiple Final Four appearances and championships! With our smaller school sizes, athletes have more opportunities for participation and our sportsmanship is a point of pride!

The Middle School Cheer team had their first season, cheering for Middle School football and performing at the SJCA Tailgate.





SJCA is exploring adding girls softball to the Middle School Athletic program for Fall 2025. Girls who will be in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade next year will be eligible.

Interested? Complete this form:



Special Education

The St. Joseph Catholic Academy is providing more opportunities for students with special needs, thanks to a grant from the FIRE Foundation and the hiring of a special education coordinator, Sherry Russell. Since the 2024-25 school year began, Sherry has been working with students, parents, teachers and principals, crafting accommodations to ensure that all students in the Academy succeed.

“Having a person dedicated to inclusive education within the Academy was our ultimate goal,” said Natalie Newville, president of the Academy. “We were thrilled when we found out we received the grant.”



Nataile said the Academy was able to hire Sherry because the FIRE grant pays half her salary.

According to its website, FIRE was founded in 1996 by a “group of parents who shared a common dream; for their children with special needs to attend their parish schools with siblings and friends.” Since FIRE’s founding, more than \$7 million has been granted to schools in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph “to support inclusive Catholic education.”

Sherry came into the Academy special education coordinator position with a broad background of teaching in both public and charter schools in New Mexico. She had taught in the St. Joseph School District since moving to St. Joseph in 2018.

Her connections with the school district have been helpful, Sherry said, because she works closely with the district for student testing, resources and programs. She said she also works closely and meets with other special education coordinators at Catholic schools in the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese.

Since she began her duties, Sherry has been creating student education plans for Academy students with a broad range of learning disabilities, and helping to connect parents and teachers with resources. The Academy also has several students who are English Language Learners, and Sherry is helping them with accommodations, as well.

“A lot of my job is being open to figuring out what students need,” she said, “and getting that information to parents and teachers.”

Along with the funding, Sherry said, FIRE also provides multiple resources to the Academy, such as books and technology. The foundation is also paying for her to take online courses to learn about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) from Notre Dame University. She noted that FIRE will support Academy teachers to take the courses, as well. “UDL teaches how to meet students where they are; it’s a whole different way of teaching and learning.”

Becky and Bill Rippe are parents of three current St. Francis Xavier School students, and thanks to the FIRE Foundation, their youngest son, who has Down syndrome, will be able to attend kindergarten next fall at St. Francis Xavier because FIRE is funding a paraprofessional for him. Becky said when he was three months old, she began her research to figure out how he could attend the same school with his siblings, and she discovered FIRE.

“I contacted them and told them I wanted him to go to school with his siblings, and they told me, ‘that’s what we’re here for,’” Becky said. “I’m just so excited for him to be included and learn about God, and to have his siblings there to pave his path.”

Becky, who serves as a Friend of FIRE liaison, is happy to see so many Academy students already benefiting from the hiring of Sherry and the FIRE grant, and is looking forward to seeing how many more students will be helped in the future. Natalie said the Academy will submit reports to the foundation and re-apply for funding each year.

“This has been a great opportunity for the Academy,” Sherry said of her position and the support from FIRE. “We are figuring out what students need and how to get them where they need to be.”

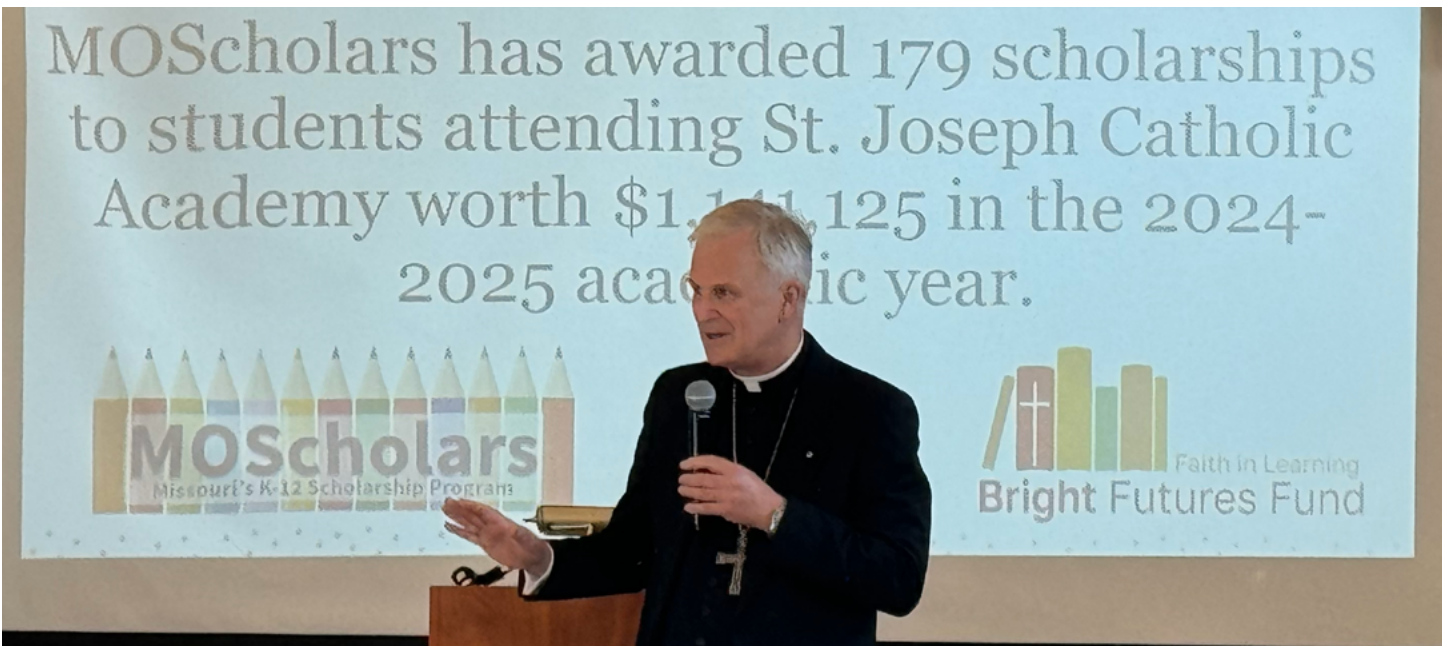


High Five Mondays

Throughout October, LeBlond seniors had the chance to visit their alma maters, meeting with current students to offer encouragement and start their week on a positive note! “High Five Mondays” brought together elementary and high school students, creating a fun and meaningful opportunity for interaction. Many of our younger students look up to their high school role models, and this new tradition fosters connections that inspire and uplift both our young and older scholars alike.



MO Scholars Reception



Catholic school advocates gathered at the MO Scholars Reception with Bishop James V. Johnston to gain deeper insights into the program and explore ways to bolster its impact.

For the 2024-2025 school year, the Academy welcomed over 170 MO Scholars, generating more than \$1 million in tuition support. These scholars include students from legacy families and new families who recognize the value of Catholic education in shaping their children's future and fostering community values.

The MO Scholars program is funded through the Bright Futures Fund, which allows individuals and businesses to redirect their Missouri tax payments directly to support Catholic education.

The impact of this program is already evident. At the start of the summer, one hopeful student expressed to school staff that they had been praying for the chance to attend a Catholic school. When they learned they had received MO Scholars funding, their dream came true. This transformative effect on Catholic education is only possible with community supporters utilizing the Bright Futures tax credits, underscoring the powerful role of faith and generosity in shaping educational opportunities.

For more information, visit BrightFuturesFund.org.



SJCA Homecoming



SJCA families and alumni gathered for the annual tailgate before the Bishop LeBlond Homecoming game—a cherished tradition that brings the community together. Alumni generously provided food, and dedicated volunteers planned the event, complete with music, fellowship, and spirited cheers from the Middle School Cheerleaders.

In the days leading up to Homecoming, the Homecoming Royalty visited each elementary school, building excitement and sharing what they love most about being LB students. The elementary students were thrilled to reconnect with these older students, some of whom once walked the same halls.

A heartwarming new tradition was introduced at halftime. Seniors passed on their school spirit to Kindergarteners by presenting them with Eagle Medals, creating a special moment that continues each year.



St. James Auction



St. James had a night under the Big Top, raising critical funds for their school during the annual auction! Attendees enjoyed tasty fried chicken and fun themed cupcakes while bidding on fun baskets and experiences!

The Cause for this year's event was to "Cool The School" by raising \$25,000 to replace old air conditioner units with more efficient units that also have heating capabilities.

If you would like to help St. James reach it's goal, you can mail or drop off donations at St. James!

Pastoral Perspective



A message from our Pastoral Coordinator, Fr. Stephen Hansen:

What a joy it has been to have a school at my parish assignment as a priest for the past 6.5 years! Fr. Armentrout, who served as an Associate at the Cathedral and St. Mary's and taught for 2.5 years, is now a full-time teacher and chaplain at Bishop LeBlond. This continuity is such a gift for the children.

I write on the memorial of St. Albert the Great (November 15), the teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas and the patron of students. St. Albert once said, "The greater and more persistent your confidence in God, the more abundantly you will receive what you ask." What a privilege it is to help your children grow in their confidence in God!

St. Albert also reminds us: "It is by the path of love, which is charity, that God draws near to man, and man to God. But where charity is not found, God cannot dwell. If, then, we possess charity, we possess God, for 'God is Charity.'" Perhaps he is teaching us that true confidence in God is rooted in His love.

Of course, God's love is not only for the children but for all of us. Pope St. John Paul II once said, "The greatest attribute of God is Mercy." We, along with the children, are called to have confidence in God's mercy—to love and to forgive as He does.

Thank you for entrusting your children to the St. Joseph Catholic Academy!

Alumni Updates

Jocelyn (VanVickle) McGrath, St. Francis Xavier and 2009 Bishop LeBlond alumna, was awarded the 2024 Professional Excellence Award from Mosaic Life Care in St. Joseph, MO.

On behalf of the Academy family:
Congratulations, Jocelyn!



The Class of 1974 hosted their 50th Class Reunion in September. Members of the class attended Mass in the LeBlond Chapel with Fr. Armentrout, and were able to take a tour of the school with members of the LeBlond Choir. For some members of the class, it was the first time they had been in the building in 50 years! They enjoyed visiting the parts of the school they remembered, and seeing the new areas as well.

Upcoming Events:

The Bishop LeBlond Holiday Tournament will be held on December 27th, 28th, and 30th. Help us cheer on our Golden Eagles and catch up with old classmates!

Graduate? Get a promotion? Get married or have a baby?
Click or scan the QR code and send us your life updates for the next issue of the Academy Connection!



St. Joseph Catholic Academy

PRAYER BREAKFAST

AND FUNDRAISER

PRESENTED BY



BISHOP JAMES V. JOHNSTON, JR.



LAMAR HUNT, JR.



Join us for the St. Joseph Catholic Academy's signature fundraising event! Enjoy breakfast and conversation about the SJCA's impact on Catholic schools in our community, and learn how you can be part of this important initiative!

**Doors Open at 7:00am
Program Starts at 7:30am**

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025
OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE**

**4503 Frederick Ave, St
Joseph, MO 64506**

SPONSORSHIPS

\$800: Business Sponsor

\$500: Table Sponsor



Tickets \$50



Save These Dates

December

- 5th: St. Gianna's Christmas Program (at Cathedral)
- 7th: LeBlond Placement Test for 8th Graders
- 7th: Cocoa with Santa at St. Gianna
- 8th: Breakfast with Santa at St. Francis Xavier
- 11th: LeBlond Christmas Concert
- 17th: St. Francis Xavier Christmas Program
- 18th St. James Christmas Program
- 19th: Cathedral Christmas Program
- 23rd-31st: No School
- 27th, 28th, 30th: LB Holiday Tournament



January

- 1st-6th: No School
- 11th: Vertin Classic Basketball Event at LB
- 20th: No School
- 24th: MS/HS March for Life at LB
- 25th: Cathedral Trivia Night 80s, 90s, 2000s theme
- 23rd-25th: Catholic Classic Basketball Tournament
- 26th-1st: Catholic Schools Week
- 29th: SJCA Prayer Breakfast and All-Academy Mass

February

- 14: No School
- 17th: No School
- 27th: Cathedral Kindergarten Round Up
- 28th: Cathedral Mardi Gras

