

Growing DISCIPLES

Issue No. 10 | Fall 2024

WHY SUPPORT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

Supporting Catholic schools is a vital part of our mission to cultivate connections in Christ. By financially supporting Catholic education, you help pass on Catholic faith values, raise future leaders committed to our faith community, and provide parents with the opportunity to choose a faith-based educational experience for their children.

However, the cost of educating our students is significant. In the 2024-2025 school year, the educational expenses at many of our schools exceeded the \$7,826 provided by the state's Education Savings Accounts (ESAs). Additionally, many of our dedicated teachers are compensated below market rates, highlighting the need for continued financial support.

To ensure a strong future, we are investing in our staff, infrastructure, and financial sustainability. Your support is crucial to fulfilling our mission today and tomorrow. We encourage you to contribute through your parish, the Catholic Tuition Organization, or the Ignite! Capital Campaign.

For more information, contact the Stewardship Office at 515-237-5001. To learn more about Education Savings Accounts visit ESAsForIowa.org.



SUMMER STAFF TRAINING INSPIRED BY FAITH

The Catholic Schools Office hosted a workshop this summer to enhance the effectiveness of Front Office Teams and improve the overall experience for school families. This workshop offered team members the chance to reflect on their unique God-given gifts and talents and consider how these can best be utilized to serve the diverse needs of families within the school community.

The day began with a prayer session inspired by Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which speaks of the different spiritual gifts. Using a personality inventory, teams identified their individual strengths, allowing them to create a team purpose statement that aligns with their roles and responsibilities. This purposeful reflection led to the development of task lists and clearer role definitions, fostering discussions on new approaches to improve work efficiency.

This summer workshop marks the beginning of ongoing efforts to create even more efficient and effective Front Office Teams to create a welcoming, organized, and supportive environment that reflects the core values of the school community.

HOLY FAMILY UNVEILS NEW COMMUNITY SPACE

Holy Family recently unveiled an innovative outdoor learning space, community garden, and playground with a special ribbon-cutting ceremony and blessing featuring Bishop William Joensen. These additions have transformed the school's campus into a vibrant hub for education and community engagement.

The outdoor learning space is designed to provide students with hands-on learning experiences, fostering curiosity and creativity. Surrounded by nature, students can engage in various educational activities, from science experiments to creative arts, making learning both dynamic and interactive.

The community garden offers students, staff, and local residents a unique opportunity to cultivate and care for plants, promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship. The garden not only serves as a living classroom but also as a source of fresh produce for the school and the surrounding community, reinforcing the values of service and cooperation.

"This project will have far-reaching benefits, fostering community among our students, their families, and the broader neighborhood," said Paulette Theisen school administrator.



Holy Family, Des Moines



Holy Family, Des Moines

The new playground, equipped with modern, safe, and inclusive play structures, encourages physical activity and social interaction among students. This revitalized space supports children's holistic development by combining physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

These new facilities demonstrate Holy Family's commitment to innovative education and community involvement, enriching the lives of its students and strengthening ties with the broader Des Moines community.

For more than 40 years, Holy Family Catholic School has provided an education marked in excellence and rooted in the teachings of Christ. Supported by five parishes in the Diocese of Des Moines, Holy Family and its supporters are committed to providing an exceptional learning environment that celebrates the diversity of its students. For more information on Holy Family visit hfcsdm.org.

DOWLING RECEIVES MODEL PLC AT WORK® DESIGNATION

Dowling Catholic High School has been recognized as a Model Professional Learning Community (PLC) at Work® by Solution Tree for its sustained success in raising student achievement. Dowling Catholic's journey to Model PLC at Work® recognition began in 2016, and the school has now become the first Catholic high school in the country to be designated as a Model PLC at Work® school.

Model PLC at Work® schools acknowledge that the key to improved student learning is ongoing, job-embedded education for the adults serving those students. Only one in approximately 200 schools and districts throughout the US and Canada receives this recognition. Dowling Catholic is the second school in Des Moines to receive this honor. In 2022, [Holy Trinity received Model PLC at Work designation](#). This achievement places Dowling Catholic among just 19 schools and six school districts in Iowa with this distinction and only the fourth high school in Iowa to achieve this honor.

Learn more about the diocese's plan to move all its schools toward (PLC) at Work® designation [here](#).



PARTNERSHIP WITH IOWA WESTERN STRENGTHENS SAINT ALBERT ATHLETICS

Saint Albert Catholic is thrilled to announce a multi-year partnership with Iowa Western Community College to utilize the John and Harriet Wiebe Football and Soccer Complex. Construction of the facility began in April and is expected to be completed by late fall.

The John and Harriet Wiebe Football and Soccer Complex will become the new home for Saint Albert Catholic's football and soccer programs. Located just one mile from the Saint Albert campus, the Iowa Western complex will feature a premier artificial turf field, a massive video scoreboard, LED competition lighting, ample fan seating, a flat entrance from the parking lot into the stadium, and many other top-tier amenities.

"This collaboration opens up exciting opportunities for our student-athletes," said Pat Ryan, Saint Albert's Chief Administrative Officer. "The John and Harriet Wiebe Football and Soccer Complex will not only provide a safe and accessible environment but also a state-of-the-art facility that will elevate the quality of our competitions, benefiting both our athletes and fans."

Learn more about the impact of this collaboration [here](#).

THIRD ANNUAL BISHOP'S CELEBRATION A SUCCESS

The Diocese of Des Moines successfully hosted its third annual Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools on August 24 at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in West Des Moines. This event brought individuals from across the diocese together to celebrate the vital role Catholic Schools play in shaping the future of our students and the exceptional individuals who contribute to their success.

This year's theme—Encounter, Friendship, Communion—emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for students, families, faculty, and staff to experience meaningful encounters with Christ and one another. It reinforced the vital role of Catholic education in nurturing a deepening friendship with Jesus and guiding students to grow in communion with God. Through their participation in Mass, service projects, classroom activities, and interactions in hallways, playgrounds, and competitions, the schools are dedicated to fostering a spiritual connection that enriches every facet of student life.



Jane Brown receives the Teacher of the Year Award from Donna Bishop and Bishop William Joensen



Bishop William Joensen leads Mass at St. Francis of Assisi before the Bishop's Celebration

The evening highlighted outstanding honorees, including Ann Andersen, Shelby County Catholic – Administrator of the Year; Jane Brown, St. Augustin Catholic School – Teacher of the Year; Megan Kluesner, Sacred Heart Catholic – Volunteer of the Year; and Honorary Chairs Frank Harty of Des Moines, and Dennis and Connie Purdum of Creston. Their dedication to Catholic education exemplifies the spirit and mission of our schools.

A keynote address from the Schweizer family, known for their athletic achievements and deep roots in the Diocese's Catholic Schools, added a personal touch to the celebration. Olympian Karissa Schweizer, fresh from the 2024 Paris Olympics, delivered an inspiring pre-recorded message about the profound impact of her Catholic education.

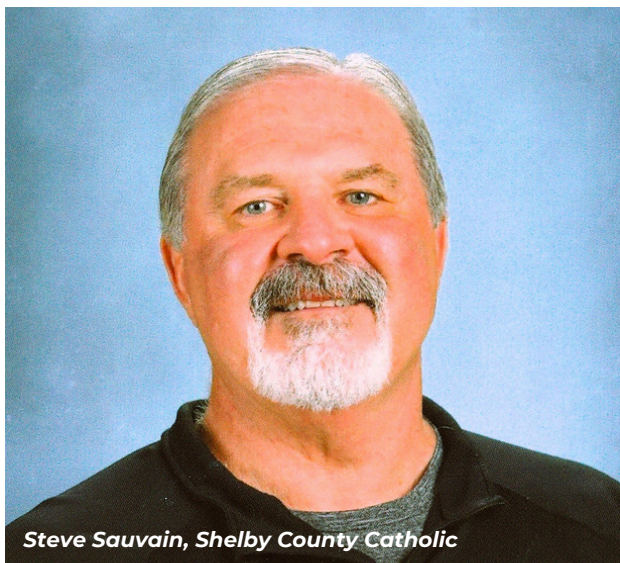
Additionally, over 250 attendees and 90 volunteers played a crucial role in the event's success, collectively raising funds to enhance programs across the diocese, directly benefiting every student. This celebration not only honored excellence but also strengthened the future of Catholic education in our community. Learn more about the Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools [here](#).

SHELBY COUNTY CATHOLIC WELCOMES STEVE SAUVAIN

Shelby County Catholic welcomed Steve Sauvain as its new school administrator this July. Sauvain holds a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education and Health, graduate work in Instructional Technology, and a Master of Education and Supervision.

His impressive 40+ year career includes serving as the Director of Education for the Harlan Community School District, where he successfully established a district-wide instructional coaching model, secured grant funding to expand STEM programming, and led a team of more than 30 educators. His past roles also include being a school administrator in K-8 and 9-12 settings, Area Education Agency director, athletic director, classroom teacher, and coach.

Please join us in welcoming Steve Sauvain as we look forward to a new school year filled with faith, growth and community under his leadership.



Steve Sauvain, Shelby County Catholic



St. Luke the Evangelist, Ankeny

A GROWING FAITH COMMUNITY

In recent years, many communities of faith are experiencing member attrition and decline. However, in the rapidly growing suburbs of Ankeny, St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church is experiencing unprecedented growth. A combination of demographic changes, strategic initiatives, and the church and school community's dedicated efforts drives this surge in growth.

The school has also played a vital role in drawing families to the church. It opened in 2015 with 45 students in grades K-3. This fall, it is poised to welcome 379 students in grades K-8, nearly reaching full capacity.

"Education has been the mission of the Church ever since Jesus walked the earth," said Fr. Ken Halbur. "While a school is not the primary mission of the Catholic Church, it helps us with our primary goal: to bring all people to Christ and thus to heaven."

Learn more about this growing faith community [here](#).

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools includes 16 schools serving 23 counties in central and southwest Iowa. Catholic schools in the Des Moines Diocese build Christ-centered, collaborative, inclusive partnerships with parents, students, and parishes to provide innovative academic excellence and inspirational faith formation. To learn more about the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools, visit dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools or email grow@dmdiocese.org.

Growing Disciples is a quarterly publication of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools Office. Content may not be reproduced without the expressed written consent from the Diocese of Des Moines. To submit a story idea, email grow@dmdiocese.org.



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