



**JOSEPHINUM  
ACADEMY**  
OF THE SACRED HEART



## Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, est. 1890

**FOR NEARLY 130 YEARS**, Josephinum Academy, or “the Jo” as students affectionately call it, has maintained a commitment to educating and inspiring young women in Chicago’s Wicker Park neighborhood. Josephinum is the city’s longest-standing all-girls Catholic high school.

In September of 1886, Mother Philomena Schmittiel, superior of the North American Province of the Sisters of Christian Charity, buried a small statue of St. Joseph in an empty field across the street from St. Aloysius Church in Wicker Park. This was the symbol of her intention to buy the property on Oakley Boulevard and build a school for girls that she would call St. Joseph’s Academy. When the building opened to students in September, 1890, a single Latin word, “Josephinum,” which roughly translates as “the house of Joseph,” was carved above the entrance.

After the tragic fire at Chicago’s Our Lady of Angels School in 1958, Josephinum built a new school next to the original building, which opened the following year. Today, Josephinum remains in the mid-century building designed by Chicago architect Michael F. Gaul who designed schools, churches, hospitals, and convents including St. Michael’s Church in Old Town and Misericordia Home.

Josephinum joined the religious of the Sacred Heart in 2011 and as a member of the Sacred Heart Network, is part of an international community of nearly 150 Sacred Heart schools worldwide.

**TODAY**, the Jo continues to educate Girls Without Limits, as the only all-girls independent college-preparatory high school in downtown Chicago. Josephinum serves a diverse student body from 47 zip codes across the city and 15 languages spoken at home.

More than \$2 million in scholarships and financial aid is awarded annually to students to attend Josephinum ensuring that a high quality, holistic, inclusive and empowering education is available to all. Over \$6 million in merit-based college scholarships were awarded to the class of 2021 from universities across the country including Cornell, Howard, Northwestern and Notre Dame.

*Josephinum is a school where girls are accustomed to having their voices heard and they regularly see women holding leadership roles, creating a model for a world young women want and deserve. They are prepared for college and beyond, ready to become the leaders our world needs.*

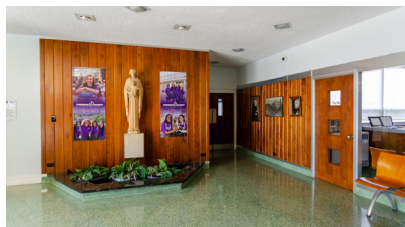


**Girls Without Limits**

# ENJOY THE TOUR

*Photos courtesy of Eric Allix Rogers*

Stepping into Josephinum Academy is like walking into a time capsule. The school is exceptionally well maintained and preserved, truly a gem that demonstrates that a trend can last long after its original intent.



**FOYER** – Typical of mid-century architecture and the subtle design used in educational institutions at that time, school buildings were designed and built to last. Common materials used during this era include terrazzo floors, aluminum frame doors and windows, pine paneling, and travertine walls. These materials were popular due to their durability and affordability.



**GYMNASIUM** – Like many neighborhood schools from this period, the gymnasium and stage are combined into one space. To accommodate evening and after school activities, a secondary entrance is located on Bell Street, complete with a ticket booth. The gym features a beautiful use of glass block, simultaneously welcoming natural light and respecting privacy. Now, the gym is home to the Jo Cougars basketball and volleyball teams, youth clinics, and school assemblies.



**CAFETERIA** – Use of glass block reflects a thoughtful design with overarching religious architecture apparent throughout the school. Repetitive squares of glass offer a lovely diffused effect. While sections of continuous windows open for ventilation and fresh air, the glass block provides both light and privacy. A similar effect is used in the gymnasium. Geometric elements resonate school design from this era.



**LIBRARY** – Of particular note on the southern exterior of the building is the beautiful use of a design element known as brise soleil, French for “breaking the sun.” This screen effect was used as an artistic way to filter sunlight so that enough penetrated to provide some interior lighting but blocking enough so that the interiors stayed comfortable and cool.



**KITCHEN** – Originally used for home economics classes, the kitchen is now home to the Jo's baking club and faculty lounge. The school's emphasis on home economics has trended through the ages to a current emphasis on sustainable food practices. Fresh vegetables and herbs are grown in the private courtyard on the south side of the building. This room also provides a good vantage point to see the Jo's softball field.



**FIELD** – Josephinum's softball field, funded by a Diamond Project Grant from Chicago Cubs Charities with support from the Big Shoulders Fund, opened with great fanfare in June 2018. The field is actually built on parts of the first school building's foundation. It is used by the Jo's softball and soccer teams as well as community groups.