

# JOSEPHINUM ACADEMY OF THE SACRED HEART

# CONVERSATION PIECE

*Fall 2023*

**MAKAYLA IS TAKING  
ADVANTAGE OF ALL THE  
JO HAS TO OFFER**

*Page 6*

**#Girls  
Without  
Limits**

**Josephinum Academy  
of the Sacred Heart**



**WITH ONE YEAR LEFT  
AT THE JO, ALY IS  
MAKING THE MOST OF  
EVERY MOMENT** *Page 7*



# Letter from OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Josephinum Academy community,

Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart has proudly educated and empowered young women in Chicago since 1890.

Our diverse learning community is dedicated to a holistic approach to education, preparing our students to be globally minded and use their voices to bring about change within their communities. Even during uncertainty, Josephinum continues to offer an outstanding college-preparatory high school experience with significant opportunities for innovation, creativity, and community engagement.

It's an honor to watch students step into their God-given potential and become the leaders, visionaries, and changemakers of tomorrow—and it's my great joy to share an inside look at some of these moments through the pages of this Conversation Piece.

I hope you are as inspired as I am by the students, faculty, alums, volunteers, and staff that make up the Josephinum Academy community, and I hope their stories and reflections remind you just how special The Jo is.

Thank you for supporting us, encouraging us, and being part of our community. We are grateful for you and excited for all that is ahead.

With hope and celebration,



President Richard McMenamin

# What's Happening at JOSEPHINUM ACADEMY

## JOSEPHINUM STUDENTS ARE PAVING THE WAY

By Colleen Schrantz, Principal

One of the things I love most about Josephinum Academy is how the school creates opportunities to let students' inherent leadership shine.

We're a small school, and this environment really allows students to dig in and find their voices. The pandemic dampened that experience for a season, but we're thrilled to see that students at The Jo are expressing their leadership skills more than ever, through new activities, clubs, sports, and more! Here are a few of the moments that have exemplified that for me:

We're leveraging technology, teaching digital art, and offering AP computer science. In our computer lab, we have 3D printers and new Macs equipped with graphic design software. We got a Cricut Machine for our school clubs to make their own promotional materials. Our Makerspace is growing—students can familiarize themselves with hands-on engineering, math, and science right here at The Jo. Last year, we initiated a dedicated STEM Day, where a Northwestern graduate student, Raymonde Council, came to inspire our students by speaking about being a female in the world of engineering. In addition, students worked in teams to make kites, animatronic hands, and more!



Acclaimed actress and Golden Globe winner Regina Taylor led a Masterclass for Josephinum students as they produced an incredible performance. She observed their classes, provided feedback, and took students' education to the next level, and we are so grateful for the time and expertise she shared with our community.

A common coming-of-age activity is learning how to drive. In addition to learning how to operate a vehicle, students also grow in independence, trust, and responsibility. Students were so excited to learn that driver's education would be coming back to The Jo, and we had great participation in the course!

In the last few years, we've tried several approaches to service-learning. Today, our students are expected to serve their community a minimum of 10 hours a year so that they complete 40 hours by graduation. Last year, we re-instituted all-school service days—and last fall, we visited Feed My Starving Children to make meals for those less fortunate. Together, we packed 97 meal boxes for families in need—which equals 20,952 meals that can feed 57 children for an entire year! This fall, we are partnering with the Chicago Parks Foundation and can't wait to see our immediate impact.



Building on the success of our Josephinum Ambassador Council (JACs), students requested a more established Student Government. They were looking for ways to make an impact and wanted exposure to how organizations work—and Student Government met that need. Last year, we held elections, complete with campaigns, and selected representatives from each class. The elected officials led service projects, organized spirit weeks, and hosted cultural events—and we can't wait to see how this year's leaders build on the foundation they created!

**"I feel so comfortable here. Teachers are really supportive, and so are the students." - MaKayla, Class of 2026**

Last year, we offered several cultural clubs—from the Black Student Union (BSU) to Fuerza Latina (which translates to Latina Strength) to Asian Cultural Club and the Ukrainian Student Union. I loved seeing students' creativity shine as they showcased their unique cultures—including fashion shows, slam poetry, music, food, crafts, and spiritual identity. The entire community—clubs and allies—inclusively celebrates our diversity.

In addition to clubs and courses, we introduced two new sports last year: cheerleading and cross country. For a few years, our students have been asking for a cheerleading team—and it turns out it's just what we needed. No matter when or where they show up, the spirit that travels with the cheerleading team is contagious. They had a great first season—and this year, we've expanded cheerleading into a year-long activity so they can bring this energy to all of our sports! Most importantly, they are helping us build up our positive school culture.

Our new cross-country team has provided girls the opportunity to get out of their comfort zone—pushing individuals to challenge themselves from week to week and grow. Many members of the team broke their personal records several times during the season. We're excited to invite even more young athletes to step out of their comfort zone and try

something new.

In each of these moments, I have been impressed and inspired by students' leadership. They have cast the vision for so many of the programs we've added, and their enthusiasm has ensured each activity's success. It's so important for our students to realize their capacity, root themselves in their strengths, and challenge themselves to grow. They are learning to take risks, set bold goals, and do the work to bring those dreams to life.

We are excited to continue to inspire and empower our students—connecting them with powerful women in a variety of fields, showing girls at The Jo what is possible, and expanding their network and dreams beyond anything they might have imagined.



# OUR IMPACT

**134** Students

**45** Zip Codes

**20** Clubs and Activities

**7:1** Student-to-Teacher Ratio

**750** Service Hours

**\$2.4M**  
Scholarships and Financial Aid

*These statistics are reflective of the 2022-2023 school year*



# New ADVENTURES

## MEET MAKAYLA MCQUARTER, CLASS OF 2026

When MaKayla McQuarter arrived at Josephinum Academy this fall to begin her sophomore year, she was amazed by how many opportunities the school offered. As a transfer student, MaKayla immediately jumped in—and she’s loving every minute of her experience so far.

“I like to try different things,” she explained. “When I saw Black Student Union, I had never seen anything like that before. Same with the Law Society. It was really different—things I had never seen anywhere else. I decided to join those clubs, and I like them.”

This desire to get out of her comfort zone also motivated MaKayla to transfer to The Jo. After spending her freshman year at a co-ed school, she came to Josephinum Academy to have access to more clubs and classes, and to challenge herself academically and socially.

As she explained, “I like to test myself—my intelligence, my creativity. And I thought I could do that here. I liked the environment, too.”

“I feel so comfortable here,” she continued. “Teachers are really supportive, and so are the students. When you’re in class, if people are confused, people like to help each other. Teachers greet you when you arrive. And during teaching, they want to make sure you actually understand the assignment—that you see where they’re coming from. They don’t leave us stranded to figure it out. Teachers here are really cool.”



When she’s not in class, MaKayla is part of the Black Student Union, participates in the Law Society (led by Ms. Torres, who is also featured in this Conversation Piece!), and plays on the volleyball team—a sport she’s enjoyed since middle school.

She’s also a graphic designer, creating social media graphics and brands for friends and neighbors.

“It’s my business,” she said. “I’m an entrepreneur. I got into it in sixth grade, and I found my passion.”

MaKayla hopes graphic design will always be part of her life, but professionally, she’s interested in law. “I love to write. I love to debate. I love to defend people,” she said. “I’d love to be a defense attorney. Defending people makes me feel good.”

As she pursues this big dream, she’s building the skills she’ll need at Josephinum Academy—and she invites other students to do the same. “If you are a fan of opening up to new things and trying to get out there, Josephinum will bring you out of your shell,” she explained. “The community, your peers, your teachers—they make you so comfortable. It’s so warm here. And if you want to join sports or clubs, they have cross country, volleyball...and so many clubs that will most definitely catch your eye. It’s really different. I’ve never seen that before, and it’s so good.”

“In the next few years, I want to get more involved in the community here. I want to do more things with people in the school. I want to try more things. And really, I wouldn’t change anything about The Jo.”

# Finishing STRONG

## MEET ALY TORRES, CLASS OF 2024

Senior Aly Torres vividly remembers her Josephinum Shadow Day when she was an eighth grader.

“I actually fit in here,” she remembered thinking. “I saw people who look like me. Everyone was so welcoming—asking me about my life. It wasn’t just ‘this class is like this, and this class is like this’—they were actually having conversations with me.”

From that moment on, she knew that Josephinum Academy was the place for her.

“[The Jo] is very diverse,” she explained. “We’re Hispanic, African American, Ukrainian. We’re from different areas, so we have different experiences. Even different religions are here. You can find your community in such a small school because we’re all from all over the place.”

Aly immediately got involved with a variety of activities at Josephinum. As a freshman, she joined Baking Club. Then, as a sophomore, she applied for the Sacred Heart Network Student Advisory Committee—and she was selected as a Josephinum representative. For the last three years, Aly has represented The Jo on a committee of students from Sacred Heart schools across the country. Here, in this group, Aly has also found community and a place she belongs.

“We build community,” she explained. “We have people from all over. We plan events. We do Instagram takeovers for our schools. It’s great to get to meet with other students.”

Last year, as a junior, Aly found yet another community that has transformed her Josephinum experience: the cross-country team.

“It was a new sport last year,” Aly said. “It allowed me to form friends really fast with different people. There was someone in my grade I’d never talked to before, and now we’re really good friends because of cross country. And I made friends with other kids in different grades, too. They feel like my family—I see



them every day after school. They’ve definitely made a difference in my life. I’ve become more comfortable with myself because of them.”

“In other sports, you have a team. In cross country, you’re really just against yourself. Your teammates are there to support you. They understand your pain—and they’ll help you push yourself.”

This same team mentality—supporting one another and helping each other push toward goals—is something Aly has experienced in her classes at The Jo. Now, as she looks toward graduation at the end of this school year, she is feeling motivated to pursue her dream of becoming a child psychiatrist.

“I want to study psychology and human and family development,” she said. “Then, I want to take that major and go to med school to become a psychiatrist, specializing in children and adolescents.”

Ultimately, she wants “to help kids feel understood. And I want everyone to have a psychiatrist they can relate to, so we need a diverse range of experiences and education in medicine.”

For now, though, Aly is focused on fully enjoying her senior year and the community she has built here at The Jo. “I just want to continue making memories with everyone. It’s my last of everything, you know? My last first meet of the season, my last homecoming ... I just want to make the most of everything.”



# Dreaming BIG

## MEET SOPHIA TORRES, CLASS OF 2018

When Sophia Torres graduated from Josephinum Academy in 2018, she had big aspirations.

“I was focused on law at the time,” she remembers. “I had the opportunity to go to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and I was always intrigued by human behavior. I studied sociology and legal studies, with minors in criminal justice and Chican@/Latin@ Studies (CLS).”

Sophia excelled at UW Madison, in large part thanks to the preparation she received at The Jo.

As she explained, “At Josephinum, I learned to raise my hand. I wasn’t afraid to challenge my teachers. I wasn’t afraid to make friends with people I never thought I would make friends with. Going from such a small student size [at The Jo] to UW Madison, which has more than 40,000 students—it didn’t intimidate me.”

Now, this is her hope for her own students.

After completing her degrees, Sophia returned to Chicago and joined the faculty at Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, first teaching pre-algebra and psychology, and now as part of the theology department, leading courses in world religion, Catholic social teaching, and ethics.

For Sophia, it’s the perfect place to combine her interests, build her experience, and give back to the community that gave her so much.

“At The Jo, I was heavily involved in a lot of things—debate club, Spanish club, co-captain of the softball team, volleyball...” she recalls. “I really enjoyed my time here because I was surrounded by empowered teachers. The teachers were so passionate about their work, and I can still reach out to them now. And because of the class size, I still talk to people from high school every day. I live across the street from my high school best friend. Josephinum is

very communal—it’s always been like that.”

Now, Sophia is proud to bring that same passion, encouragement, and support to her students.

“I want to challenge my students,” she shared. “I want them to be able to make their own opinions about the content we create. I’m excited to watch them throughout the year as they grow and feel more confident about the work they’re submitting. And with classes like ethics and Catholic social teaching, I want them to be able to speak out when they want to voice their perspectives and experiences. I want them to not be afraid because everyone’s perspective matters.”



“I see myself in these hallways. I see myself in these classrooms. Josephinum amplified my voice, so now I can do the same for my students. Although the faculty might have changed, the culture is still here.”

As Sophia fans the flames of her students’ goals, she also has big dreams for her own future, too. She’s currently pursuing her master’s in sociology

at DePaul and still has a deep interest in law. She’s sharing this interest with her students by advising The Jo’s Law Society, a new club available at Josephinum Academy this year.

“I still have a lot of aspirations!” she said with a laugh. “It can be hard to focus. Law is still in my future, I think—I would love to go to law school and practice law in Chicago with a criminal defense focus. I’ve always been interested in paving pathways for formerly incarcerated individuals. And my biggest goal is to be a professor.”

“Ideally, at the end, I would love to be a professor and own a book cafe—a thoughtful environment

where anyone can come in and read and see people; strangers, community members... it would be a pit stop for anyone in the neighborhood. It’s ambitious, but with time, everything happens.”

But for now, Sophia is fully focused on her role at The Jo.

“Josephinum is the perfect place for me to start giving back to my community and implement my own teaching philosophy at the ground level,” she shared.

“I tell my students, ‘I don’t think we’ll ever regret being at Josephinum.’ Josephinum is unique. I know because I was part of it. And now I get to give back to the same community that supported me.”

# Getting INVOLVED

## MEET DAVE AND NANCY O’NEILL, JOSEPHINUM BOARD MEMBERS

When Dave O’Neill considers Josephinum Academy’s work and impact, one word comes to mind: “Heroic.”

Dave and his wife Nancy serve on Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart’s Board of Directors, providing guidance to school leadership, supporting fundraising efforts, and helping to ensure the school’s long-term success. Dave chairs the Finance Committee, where he leverages his professional background, and Nancy plays a crucial role in Josephinum’s growth as Development Chair.

Nancy got involved with Josephinum first, when two friends invited her to join the board about seven years ago. She immediately experienced the unique community at The Jo, noting, “Our board is small, but mighty—and very committed to educating young women in Chicago.”

She was so impressed, she invited Dave to join her.

“Chicago has been my home since 1985,” Dave explained, “but it can be easy for me, at my age, to float above what’s really going on in our city.



Through my work at The Jo, I have experienced a sense of grounding in the real Chicago. It’s been extraordinarily valuable for me to be in the Wicker Park neighborhood, to meet our students, to hear their stories and the challenges that are inherent in their lives. It gives me a touchstone with our city that I don’t think I would have otherwise.”

He believes that “education, without question, is the answer to the generational problems that are confronting our city. The fact that these families are taking this incredible step is inspirational—and everybody feels that around The Jo. Everyone in our community—students, families, staff, and leadership—wants to do their very best work to make sure it is a worthy investment.”



Dave and Nancy have seen this play out in the passion, commitment, discipline, and heart that each member of Josephinum’s community brings to their work—from teachers working tirelessly to educate in creative, engaging ways; to students studying with focus and enthusiasm; to school leadership developing strategies to further the mission. Everyone is bringing their best—and together, we are helping support not only our own community, but all of Chicago.

*"I have gotten much more out of The Jo than I have given." - Dave O'Neill*

For the O’Neills, the celebration of this collaboration and the highlight of every year is graduation. “I am not an emotional guy by nature,” Dave shared. “I’m a ‘cold hard facts’ sort of guy—a numbers guy. But any time I attend a Josehinum graduation ceremony, it brings me to tears. It is such an achievement for these young women to graduate high school.”

“It’s difficult at times for some of us to appreciate the barriers these young women have had to overcome—and it’s truly touching to see the joy, the

sense of accomplishment, the raw emotion that is present on that day, not just for the girls, but for their families, too.”

And the O’Neills are quick to remind you that you can get involved with this community, too.


“We are in need,” Dave explained. “The school can benefit—we can materially benefit—from whatever time or talents or resources you can bring to The Jo. We need funding, we need volunteers, we need support—and when you participate in any of these areas, you’ll meet other impassioned supporters.”

Nancy added, “If someone were to ask me why I have stayed on the board for several years, it usually comes back to making a difference for our students. If Dave and I can help make a difference with one student, then our efforts are worthwhile.”


This is what the O’Neills experienced firsthand, and it’s why they invite more people to find their own way to invest their time, talents, and treasures—or a combination of all—into Josephinum.

“I have gotten much more out of The Jo than I have given,” Dave said. “If you spend a couple of hours at The Jo, you will grasp very quickly how you are changing a life for the better.”


## STATEMENT OF OPERATING ACTIVITIES FOR FY23




**596**  
Donors gave in FY23



**905**  
Gifts



**\$3,145**  
Average gift amount



**2M+**  
In donations

Tuition & Fees	\$204,000
Development	\$2,295,000
PPP/ERC	\$889,000
Total	\$3,388,000
Expenses	\$3,320,000
Net	\$68,000

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