

FORTY YEARS OF *Christian Service* at Jesuit High School

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JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL LAUNCHED

its formal Christian Service Program in the 1985-86 academic year. The program aimed to offer students a real-world experience of being in relationship with people on the margins of society. The 65-hour service commitment became a formal graduation requirement, reflecting the importance of service to one's community.

In the 40 years since, Jesuit's Christian Service Program has evolved, but its mission remains the same: service-learning. Students are expected to reflect on their service, gain an understanding of those who are pushed to the margins of society, and witness how society does and doesn't take care of its most vulnerable members. The most effective teachers are the people whom students come to meet at their service placements – campers with disabilities, elderly residents in assisted living homes, Portland's houseless, youth in low-resourced communities — people who have experienced marginalization and injustice firsthand.

"My experience at Evans Creek Retreat profoundly transformed my understanding of integrity, compassion, and human dignity," said Zoe Anderson '25. "Through interactions with campers, I learned valuable lessons about resilience and the

human spirit. ... The universal lessons I learned about human value and dignity have strengthened my commitment to creating a more inclusive society."

HISTORY & EVOLUTION

The precursor to the Christian Service program was a service elective, in which seniors served at an agency four mornings a week and met in the classroom once a week for discussion. Recognizing the potential for broader impact and with input from other Jesuit schools, the administration tasked Mike Hughes '79 with starting the Christian Service program in 1985. Mike was a theology teacher at Jesuit and had taken the service elective as a student. His experience working with developmentally disabled people had been "very transformational."

From the start, students were required to complete 65 hours of service work, track their experience in a journal and write a final paper. They also needed to work in relationship with people who are marginalized.

"There are things we need to learn, and the best way to do that is to be in contact with those on the margins, who are living it day in and day out," said Greg Moore '84, who led the program from 1992-2005.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Greg Moore '84 (bottom) in Mexico on the annual Los Embajadores trip, where students spent a week immersed in the lives of a migrant farmworker community near Tijuana. The Los Embajadores trip was the first international immersion trip offered to JHS students.

Scarlett Luce '26 (middle) at Easterseals Camp Stand By Me. This summer camp has drawn JHS students for more than 30 years.

In the 2000s, Jesuit began partnering with Seeds of Learning, a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing educational opportunities in rural El Salvador and Nicaragua. Through this partnership, volunteers spent the week working alongside local communities, building or improving schools and learning centers while also fostering cross-cultural relationships.

A group of students in the early '90s served at St. Michael's Mission in Inchelium, Washington.





Jesuit High School Food Drive, past and present. (Pictured above – the 2017 Food Drive. Pictured right – a Food Drive in the '70s.) Students spend two weeks in December collecting, sorting and delivering food to local families and food banks. Now in its 56th year, the Food Drive is a much-loved event on campus that involves the entire school. Last year, students and community members delivered food to around 385 local families and area food banks.



The classroom component of the Junior/Senior project took some time to formalize. In 1991, the semester-long Peace & Justice course, where students could examine injustices and Catholic Social Teaching, became a requirement.

In 2007, service requirements expanded to freshmen and sophomores. Recognizing the importance of a classroom connection, freshman and sophomore theology courses integrated service-learning projects, requiring eight hours of service each year. Each project focuses on a different principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Freshmen focus on “caring for our common home” while sophomores explore “options for the poor and vulnerable.”

Another valuable addition to the Christian Service program was Jesuit’s participation in the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice (IFTJ). The IFTJ draws more than 2,000 people annually to Washington, D.C. for the nation’s largest annual Catholic social justice gathering and advocacy day. Scott Powers, Jesuit’s Christian Service director from 2005-2019, served on the board of the event’s organizers, the Ignatian Solidarity Network. Jesuit began sending a group of students and staff regularly to IFTJ in 2005 and sends over 20 students each fall.

In 2019, Andrea Casey ’97, who had served as an associate director with Scott Powers, was named director of the newly branded Arrupe Center for Justice, an umbrella for Christian Service, ecological justice and global networking. Emily Schmidt joined as associate director in 2021.

In recent years, under Casey and Schmidt, the Arrupe Center has expanded partnerships with other Jesuit ministries and high schools in the Jesuits West Province, resulting in increased opportunities for students to participate in social justice advocacy. In-house collaboration with Jesuit Learning Support, DEI, Student Activities, and Counseling has also expanded, providing more personalized support to students and other mission-centered programs at Jesuit.



TOP: Jesuit began partnering with Courts for Kids in 2011 to help build sports courts alongside community members in countries such as Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Cambodia, Panama, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.

BOTTOM: Brayden Baluyut '26 (right) at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp. Many students complete their Christian Service with local agencies during the summer.

PARTNERSHIPS & IMMERSIONS

Since 1985, Jesuit has established long-term partnerships with local, regional and international agencies, many of which still thrive today. Overnight camps for people with disabilities like Easterseals Camp Stand By Me, Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp, and Upward Bound Camp continue to draw JHS students in large numbers. Newer summer day camps for youth with disabilities like Camp Yakety Yak and Bustin Barriers have emerged and consistently attract students. Programs like Portland Tennis & Education were established to better meet the needs of children and families with limited economic resources. Many long-term relationships with local assisted living communities like Raleigh Hills Assisted Living, Marquis Autumn Hills, Cedar Sinai, and West Hills Village continue to flourish.

As student interest in cross-cultural engagement has grown, so have Jesuit's service immersion offerings. Jesuit has partnered with various ministries and agencies to offer intensive service experiences, both domestically and internationally, over the past 40 years. Early immersion trips included The Portland Plunge in downtown Portland's "Skid Row" area, and Los Embajadores in the migrant farmworker communities of Tijuana, Mexico. International opportunities expanded in the 2000s, including partnerships with Courts for Kids in developing countries like the Dominican Republic and Guatemala and the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Mexico.

CHALLENGES

For a program rooted in being in relationship with others, the Covid-19 pandemic posed significant challenges. While some schools waived their service requirements, Jesuit adapted, reducing the hours but maintaining the expectation to serve. Organizations reimaged their programming, and students went on virtual desert walks at the Mexico border, attended karaoke night with neighbors with disabilities through The ARC over Zoom, and held supply drives.

"Students came to us with several donation ideas," said Andrea Casey. "In addition to our annual Coat & Blanket, Toiletries, and Food Drives, we held a boots and jeans drive for Kino Border Initiative, socks and undies drive for Rose Haven, diapers and wipes drive for With Love Club, and many sack lunch drives for Blanchet House."

Jesuit students, families, faculty and staff packed more than 10,000 portable meals during the first few months of

the pandemic for Blanchet House. Students also collected supplies for care kits to help people in the cold weather. In 2021, Blanchet House recognized Jesuit with a Founders Award for their efforts.

As the pandemic led to ever-shifting circumstances, Andrea Casey worked with students to adjust their plans as conditions changed. She designed an alternative Christian Service project for students to participate in the virtual Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice in 2020. About 400 JHS students participated, and many other Jesuit schools adopted this model. Such creative alternative options allowed the program to continue its mission of service amid unprecedented challenging circumstances.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Arrupe Center team continues to look for opportunities to partner with other programs on campus. In the fall, they presented at Freshman Community Day, introducing students to service as a critical component of a Jesuit education by engaging in simple acts of service like making sack lunches and tie-blankets to support Portland's houseless community.

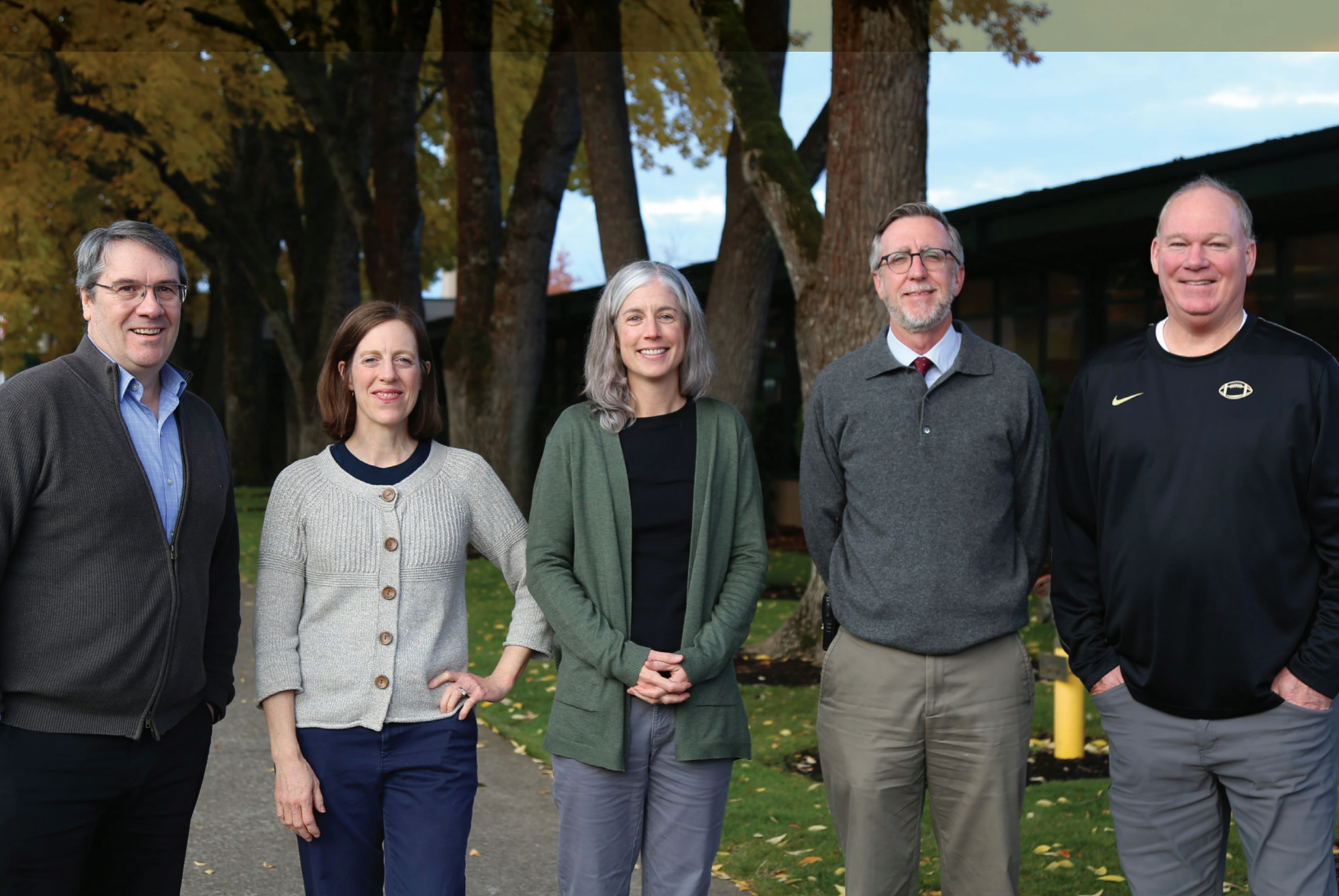
There's also growing participation in regional advocacy summits with support from Jesuits West, which has prioritized connecting schools in the region for collaboration and advocacy. Last February a group of 11 students attended the NW Ignatian Advocacy Summit, advocating for salmon restoration and ecological justice alongside students from other Jesuit high schools in the Northwest.

Going forward, the Arrupe Center team hopes to explore service projects related to sustainability and environmental justice. They also hope to expand local immersion offerings.

"Every year, as needs change, we are responding to those needs. First Friday Feast (where students pack sack lunches every month) was a response to the question: How can we support our neighbors experiencing food insecurity year-round, and not just during Food Drive season?" said Andrea Casey.

LASTING LEGACY

While the Christian Service program will continue to evolve, the mission remains the same: to form people for others who are committed to doing justice. Through



The Christian Service directors and associates, past and present: Greg Moore '84 (director from 1992-2005); Emily Schmidt (associate, 2021-present); Andrea Casey '97 (former associate and director, 2019-present); Scott Powers (director, 2005-2019); and Mike Hughes '79 (director, 1985-1992). The former directors continue to serve our campus: Greg as theology teacher and Liturgy Band leader, Scott as vice principal, and Mike as Campus Ministry associate.

service-learning, students connect with people on the margins and delve into the systems that keep some people there.

Greg Moore “saw it as our students cracking open and seeing how people in our society who haven’t been given much thought can offer so much wisdom.”

The impact of the Junior/Senior project is immediately apparent: Many students continue their service work beyond the required amount of hours. The class of 2024 averaged 134 service hours per student.

However, the relationships students develop in service are what matters and how these relationships affect them going forward.

“I read a lot of student reflections, and I see a lot of seeds planted, even for kids who don’t have an immediate

transformation. You never know how it will resonate with them and how that experience might steer them later in life,” said Andrea Casey.

“Hopefully it’s a *kairos* moment for them, and that it becomes a consolation for them at some other point when they need it, or inspires them to do something else,” added Scott Powers.

“Volunteering at (Camp Rivendale) made me realize that I am interested in being a teacher and that I possibly want to be a teacher to kids who have disabilities,” said Noemi Alcaraz ’26.

Through service-learning and the Christian Service program’s enduring legacy, Jesuit students are empowered to learn from marginalized communities and work toward more just social systems, not only during high school but throughout their lives.