

# COMMUNIQUE

THE MAGAZINE OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

Fall 2024



*SJ Cadets & Chaperones During a Service Trip to Appalachia*





*SJ Seniors, Ella and Kelli, Help to Replace the Floor of a Home in Appalachia as Part of a Summer Mission Trip*



St. Joseph High School is an independent Catholic college preparatory community that educates and motivates young women and men to live purposeful lives as ethical leaders committed to the common good of all.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



“  
*Together, we are  
not just preparing  
students for the world  
as it is, but for the  
world as it should be.*  
”

Greetings from St. Joseph High School! We have begun this new academic year with great focus. This edition of the Fall 2024 Communiqué is particularly important because it highlights our ongoing strategic initiatives and the exciting vision of our Capital Campaign, thereby emphasizing the transformative journey that St. Joseph High School continues to passionately pursue. We are *On A Mission For More!*

Our 2024-2026 Strategic Priorities, carefully shaped by our dedicated leadership team, focus intensely on advancing the mission of St. Joes with fidelity and sustaining the immeasurable impact of a Catholic, co-educational, college preparatory education. Under the prudent stewardship of our Board of Directors (BOD), we have embarked upon a path of intentional forward progress which includes a Capital Campaign to better support students and serve all aspects of our ambitious vision. In this issue, you will find compelling stories of our community's strength and the generous donors who help to make our vision a reality. More specifically, we have highlighted the significant enhancements to our school facilities, designed to better support both current and prospective academic and extracurricular programs as well as our commitment to increasing financial aid, making the transformative experience at St. Joseph High School attainable for more families and their children.

A comprehensive facilities assessment commissioned by the BOD in 2023 identified crucial areas requiring immediate attention—ranging from the academic wing to a student dining and gathering space; dedicated art and performance spaces; and a combination auxiliary gymnasium and auditorium. This summer, we completed the “as new” renovations of our student restrooms, customized select science labs, and implemented upgrades to our technology infrastructure to enhance the efficiency of daily operations. Moreover, we are actively fundraising for exciting new construction. These efforts are not just about physical transformation; they are pivotal in how we shape the educational experiences of our students, preparing them for collegiate success and the challenges of tomorrow.

As we continue to propel St. Joseph High School into this era of expected educational excellence, your support remains indispensable. Strategic Plans and Capital Campaigns are more than just blueprints for growth—they are a reaffirmation of our commitment to nurturing young minds in a Catholic environment that proudly reflects our high moral standards and expectations. We are grateful for your continued partnership in this noble endeavor. Together, we are not just preparing students for the world as it is, but for the world as it should be.

In Faith & Fellowship,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DJK', written over a horizontal line.

David J. Klein  
President



# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

At St. Joes, our Leadership Team and Board of Directors often hear from students and alumni that there is something truly special about our school—and that is precisely our aim. Our mission is to deliver excellence across all aspects of education: spiritual formation, academic rigor, community building, counseling services, athletics, performing arts, and a wide array of extracurricular activities. We strive to graduate students who are not only well-prepared, but also poised to make a positive impact on the world. However, achieving this vision requires more than just ambition; it demands continuous improvement. That's why we are committed to enhancing every facet of our institution—through exceptional faculty and staff, state-of-the-art facilities, and robust financial aid programs.

This kind of progress is intentional, often evolving gradually and consistently over the years. However, there are moments when advancement occurs in significant leaps, and we are in the midst of one of those exciting periods. Our *Onward, With Purpose* Capital Campaign aims to elevate our campus to new heights, supporting our mission in a transformative way. With a \$15 million fundraising goal, we plan to build a new multi-purpose facility that will substantially enhance spaces dedicated to community building, athletics, and the performing arts. This addition will also allow us to repurpose existing areas, improving labs and other academic resources to better serve our students' educational needs.

The Capital Campaign also seeks to raise over \$3 million for financial aid. As our peer institutions become increasingly competitive with their financial aid offerings, it's essential that we keep pace. To better serve middle-class families, we must focus on becoming more affordable; and to extend our reach to lower-income families, we must uphold our Catholic mission of generosity. By expanding financial aid, we can ensure that a St. Joe's education remains accessible to all who seek it.

We are currently in the "quiet phase" of our campaign, focusing on engaging potential major donors. If you are one of those donors and we haven't had the chance to connect with you yet, we encourage you to step forward! In the coming months, we will expand the campaign to involve our entire community, offering everyone the opportunity to contribute. I invite you to join me in supporting this exceptional initiative, as we work together to elevate St. Joes to a yet higher plateau.

With warm regards,



Christopher Wilson  
Chairman of the Board of Directors



“

*By expanding financial aid, we can ensure that a St. Joe's education remains accessible to all who seek it.*

”



## Unleash the Potential for More: The *Onward, With Purpose* Capital Campaign

While St. Joseph High School remains a steadfast provider of educational excellence in Fairfield County, it has become clear that we must create the spaces to further allow our students to excel on all levels. The *Onward With Purpose* Capital Campaign will focus on transforming our footprint with new construction, renovating our current academic wing, and increasing accessibility through financial assistance. Our immediate pathway to success involves ongoing fundraising efforts, the completion and Board of Directors' approval of schematic design documents currently in progress, Diocesan authorization to initiate construction, and a celebratory groundbreaking ceremony. These steps mark our planned strategic forward progress and the vibrant future of our beloved St. Joes. We ask you to join us in partnership and continued support as we advance onward — stronger, together.



REAR ENTRANCE VIEW



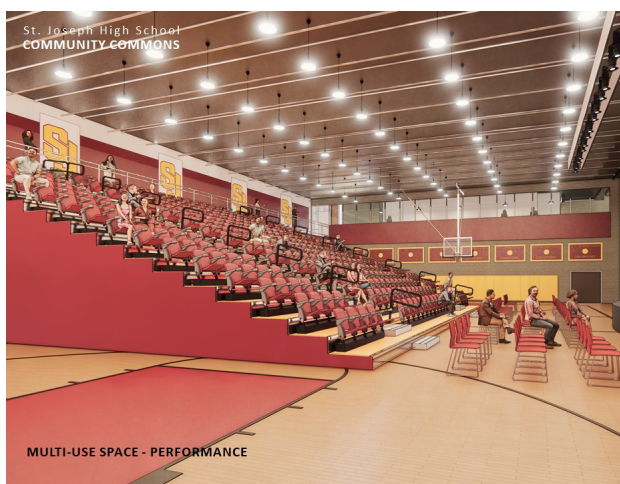




# The Future of St. Joes

In the past dozen years, St. Joseph High School has made strategic investments in our facilities expansion, modernization, and renovation. The addition of the O'Keefe Media Center (2012) and Health & Wellness Center (2017) has given us the opportunity to expand curriculum and extracurricular offerings. However, to properly prepare our Cadets for collegiate success and beyond, there is a need to expand our footprint even further.

The primary goal of the *Onward, With Purpose* Capital Campaign is to integrate a 25,000-square-foot addition onto the back of the existing St. Joseph High School building. This new space will provide our students with a Student Commons and Dining Facility; Flexible Arts and Athletic spaces; new locker rooms; and meeting spaces. As these areas are added, other spaces within the school can be transformed and repurposed to further enhance our students' educational experience.



## Flex-Space: Gymnasium and Auditorium

Between athletic games and practices, all-school Masses and events, orientations, and pep rallies, St. Joseph High School's gymnasium is always in use.

The *Onward, With Purpose* Capital Campaign will provide us the opportunity for a flex-space that includes an auxiliary gymnasium (with updated locker rooms and athletic meeting spaces) that can also be transformed into a dedicated theatre/performing arts space with retractable seating for 500.

St. Joe's Drama Club is the largest club on campus with more than 100 students producing a fall play and spring musical each year and drawing audiences to sold-out shows. This addition will enhance performances and improve artistic offerings for our students and the greater SJ community.

Learn More at [sjcadets.org/capitalcampaign](https://sjcadets.org/capitalcampaign)



## New Student Commons & Dining Facilities

As St. Joseph High School continues to thrive, the demand for functional and flexible meeting spaces has outgrown our current facilities. With the addition of the Freshman Success Program, which provides personalized counseling and supportive programming activities for our 9th-grade students, as well as the rapid growth of student-led clubs, community service projects, and flexible space needs, our bustling campus can no longer be contained within the existing Student Commons. These programs are vital to the success and engagement of our students, but our current Commons space is now in high demand, making it clear that an additional communal space is necessary to accommodate our expanding needs.





The *Onward, With Purpose* Capital Campaign will address these challenges by providing our students with an expansive, comfortable Student Commons and modern Dining Facilities designed to serve approximately 300 people. This much-needed enhancement will not only provide space for dining and gathering but also create a community-focused environment where students can thrive both academically and socially.

Furthermore, the redesign of our current dining areas will allow us to reimagine those spaces. We are currently evaluating “test fit” options to repurpose those spaces into an Art Studio and STEM/Innovation Center—two programs that have grown significantly due to increased student interest. These programs are now too robust for their current locations, and this transformation will ensure they have the dedicated, dynamic environments needed to expand and flourish.

## Tuition Assistance

One of our key strategic priorities is to ensure that a St. Joseph High School education remains affordable and accessible to any student who is called to join our community and embrace the Cadet spirit. Rooted in our Catholic mission, we are committed to making a St. Joseph education attainable for all families, regardless of financial circumstance.

Over the past five years, we have demonstrated this commitment by increasing need-based financial aid from \$1.3 million to \$1.9 million annually. However, in light of rising demand and the needs of our community, we recognize that more must be done.

Currently, more than half of our students rely on financial aid to access the transformative education we provide. A significant goal of this campaign is to raise additional tuition assistance funds, which will enable us to extend financial aid to both current and prospective families. This will not only ensure that St. Joseph High School remains competitive within the private school market but also uphold our mission of making a high-quality, faith-based education attainable for all who seek it.



*The O'Brien Family Circa 1982 from L to R:  
Seated: John, Tom.  
Standing: Cathy, Mary Beth, Tom,  
Clare, Jim*



# A Legacy of Faith:

## *Tom O'Brien '76 Establishes a Scholarship in Loving Tribute of his Parents' Dedication to Catholic Education*

When St. Joseph High School opened its doors in 1962, the mission was clear: to create a long-standing tradition of Catholic education and excellence that would last well into the future. A school where *Privilege and Responsibility* would echo throughout the halls and be engrained in the heart of each graduating Cadet. More than 10,000 alumni have since crossed the commencement stage and each year brings new stories of how SJ graduates pass on their love for Catholic education to the next generation, leaving a lasting legacy of faith and inspiration. The story of Tom O'Brien '76 and his family are one shining example.

Tom is one of five O'Brien siblings who have attended St. Joseph High School. He, along with Mary Beth '77, Jim '79, John '81, and Cathy '85 were all enrolled at St. Joes by their parents, Tom and Clare O'Brien. "In fact, from kindergarten through college, our parents invested in more than 80 years of Catholic school tuition," remarks Tom. "They held a strong commitment to that belief; a belief that led me to St. Joes."

It is this conviction that has prompted Tom and his wife, Sharon, to establish the Tom & Clare O'Brien Scholarship, a heartfelt tribute to the legacy of his parents, whose commitment to Catholic education shaped not only their own lives, but the lives of their children and countless others.

Tom O'Brien and his siblings grew up immersed in a rich tradition of faith and education, where Catholic schooling wasn't just encouraged—it was a family expectation. Their father, a Bronx native, attended Regis High School and Manhattan College, while their mother studied at St. Aloysius High School and St. Elizabeth's College. For the O'Brien family, education was the foundation of their faith, a value passed down through generations and experienced firsthand by Tom and his siblings.

"For me, the road to St. Joes was a winding one," says Tom. "Our family moved to Trumbull from upstate New York in 1972. At the time, I was halfway through 8th grade and I was enrolled in St. Catherine of Siena School. When I started at St. Joes, I didn't really know anyone, which made for an awkward beginning."

"Getting involved in sports was my entry into acceptance, but in hindsight, I realize that St. Joes was a welcoming community no matter a student's interest. I formed friendships with people like Betsy (Graham) Sorrentino and Bob Mastronardi. I was inspired to learn from teachers like Brother John Byrd, Father Tom Lynch, and Mr. Green. I had terrific coaches, such as Father Richard Shea and Sister Madeline. And I was supported by an outstanding guidance counselor, Mrs. Caliendo. In short, I could not imagine a better or more complete high school experience than the one I received at St. Joes, and it has prepared me well to face life's challenges."



The Tom & Clare O'Brien Scholarship is established in recognition of Tom's parents' sacrifice in giving their five children an academically superior, faith-based education. This award of a full four-year tuition scholarship will be given annually to an academically talented student with demonstrated financial need who will benefit from a St. Joseph High School education.

*Circa 1973 from LfR:  
John, Mary Beth, Cathy, Tom and Jim*

Tom's parents imparted a set of values that led to an unwavering commitment to Catholic education. Their belief in the power of a faith-based education created a strong foundation for their children's academic and moral development. As Tom notes, "I grew up thinking you *had* to go to college. I didn't think there was an option. Grammar school to high school; then high school to college—that was the expectation."

This expectation was realized with remarkable success: Tom's siblings attended prestigious Catholic universities, including Georgetown, Villanova, Notre Dame, and Fordham. "We've got an 80% success rate," Tom jokes.

The Tom & Clare O'Brien Scholarship is about more than just financial support—it is an example of the values their family cherishes. The O'Brien Family's commitment to Catholic education is only matched by their dedication to giving back to those in need. Tom and Sharon are active supporters of various nonprofits, including those focused on providing medical and dental care to underserved communities. This spirit of service is mirrored in their decision to offer tuition assistance to SJHS students ensuring that future generations can benefit from the same

high-quality education that shaped their own lives.

As Tom looks forward, he hopes that the scholarship will not only help deserving students access an incredible education but also inspire them to give back.

"Education has the potential to provide an opportunity that you might not have otherwise," Tom explains. "We want to help someone who is deserving not get lost in the shuffle, with the hope that they'll pay it forward one day."

"It has been almost 50 years since I graduated, and I am very grateful to my parents for sending me and my siblings to St. Joes. My wife and I have been extremely fortunate and, in many ways, our success can be tied directly back to the 'leg up' we got in high school."

Tom's father has since passed, and his mother is in her 90s. In honoring his parents through this scholarship, Tom is not just preserving a family tradition but also extending a legacy of faith and education that will impact future generations to come. It's a legacy built on a steadfast commitment and a testament to the values that have guided the O'Brien family through decades of change and growth.

*Circa 2020 from LfR: Cathy, John, Jim, Mary Beth, Tom*



*At the 2024 Homecoming Game! LfR: Jim, John, Cathy, Tom, Mary Beth*

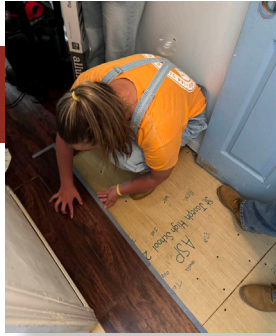




*Eleven Peer Ministers alongside faculty and staff chaperones, visit Appalachia on a Summer Mission Trip.*

## **God First. Others Second. I Am Third.**

*SJ Cadets Take a Week-Long Service Trip to Appalachia to Assist Those In Need*



When most high school students picture how they'll spend their summer break, they envision family vacations, beach days with friends, and catching up on much-needed sleep. However, for a group of eleven St. Joes Cadets, their ideal summer included a week-long service trip to Fayetteville, West Virginia – a journey that would not only transform homes for the families they served but leave a profound and lasting impact on their own lives.

Organized in partnership with the Appalachian Service Project (ASP), the trip had one mission: to provide high-quality home repairs to families living in rural Appalachia. The trip was spearheaded by Deacon Jeff Font, Director of Campus Ministry, who first heard of ASP through a student in his Peer Ministry class.

"I really wanted the kids to experience a different environment and understand the challenges those in need often face," Font explained. The trip was open to all Peer Ministers who were eager for the chance to give back.

"Over the past four years at St. Joes, I have tried to make the most of my 'mission for more' by remaining in service to others," said Senior student, Monika Tokar. "When this opportunity came up, I jumped at the chance to serve someone beyond the borders of my own community and be a part of something bigger than myself."

The group hit the road on July 14, and after a 9-hour car ride they arrived at the Midland Trail Community Center which would be their home for the next week. The days were long – beginning at 6:45am with a daily devotional. After breakfast, students would prepare sandwiches for lunch and then head to their respective worksites. The Cadets were split into two work groups: one group was tasked with repairing a rotting front porch; the other group worked to repair the flooring in the home of a single mother and her 15-year old son.

The trip wasn't without its challenges. While ASP provided students with the necessary materials, tools, and instructions,

many Cadets had very limited experience with construction work.

"Students in my group had never done flooring before and they were worried that the learning curve would be too great," remembers Chaperone Jessica Clarke, Assistant Director of Admission. "However it was a great way for us to learn and work together to get the job accomplished."

Beyond the physical challenges, there were emotional ones. Some of our students came face to face with the realities of stark poverty for the very first time. Clarke recalled the impact upon arrival at the work site for the first time. "The housing conditions in which they were living were substandard and for some of the students it was something they had never seen before."

Despite the difficulties, the students quickly realized the deep significance of their efforts. After one group completed the replacement of a tin roof, a storm hit that same evening. When they returned the next day, they found the homeowner overwhelmed with emotion; for the first time in years, her home was dry.

"The situation had become so desperate that she was ready to abandon her house due to the constant leaks and disrepair," Font shared. "Her gratitude was truly moving."

At another site, a homeowner — filled with joy — was finally able to use her new front porch (the home's main entry) to greet her grandchildren, something she hadn't been able to do previously. Through their tireless efforts, the Cadets didn't just improve the living conditions of the families they served—they also gained life-changing insights that will stay with them forever. For Monika Tokar, one of the most powerful lessons was realizing that "to serve with a full heart means helping those in need without judgment or expecting anything in return. This realization transformed my perspective on the entire project, and it's something I will carry with me for the rest of my life."



# A Beacon of Radiant Light

*Honoring Tracy (Huckabee) Leska '87 as St. Joes Prepares to Host the Olympic Torch She Once Carried*



St. Joseph High School is deeply honored to host Tracy's 2002 Olympic Torch. Once this remarkable piece of her history is displayed, we will invite our entire community to experience the torch's light, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to share in the inspiration it represents.

Tracy (Huckabee) Leska '87 embodied resilience, the strength of true friendship, and a legacy that continues to inspire all who knew her. Her life was a testament to perseverance, having bravely fought an eight-year battle with leukemia before passing away in May 2006 at just 37 years old. Born and raised in Monroe, Tracy's journey was defined by her deep connections and unyielding spirit. Her story, shared by her best friend of 27 years, Anita (Place) Morrell '87, is a powerful reminder of the impact one life can have on so many. "I first met Tracy in elementary school after my family moved from New York," says Anita. "Her laughter was infectious. We quickly became inseparable, especially during our time at Chalk Hill Middle School and later at St. Joseph High School. The bonds we formed in those years were unbreakable."

Throughout her high school years and beyond, Tracy's life was defined by her remarkable strength and resilience. At just 29, newly married, and filled with hopes of starting a family, she received the life-altering diagnosis. Yet, despite the challenges, Tracy faced her illness with unwavering courage, refusing to let it define her.

One of the most profound moments in Tracy's life came when she was chosen as an Olympic Torchbearer for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Her husband, who stood by her side through every step of her battle, had written a heartfelt nomination letter to the Olympic Committee, leading to her selection. "She was absolutely thrilled when she found out," recalls Anita. "It was a powerful recognition of her enduring spirit."

On December 26, 2001, a radiant and smiling Tracy carried the Olympic torch through Hartford, a fitting moment for someone whose spirit shone as brightly as the flame she held. This marked the last time the torch passed through Connecticut, making the occasion even more significant. For Tracy, the torch was more than just a symbol of her perseverance—it represented her enduring legacy of light, hope, and strength. Recently, after the passing of both of Tracy's parents within six months of each other, the Torch, a cherished remembrance of their daughter, was bequeathed to Tracy's mother's cousin, David Sicon, to tend to its care. With a desire to ensure that Tracy's legacy would not be forgotten, David inquired if the Torch could find a new home at St. Joseph High School, a place that was instrumental in shaping Tracy's life. "For me," says Anita, "this gesture is incredibly emotional and meaningful. Tracy may not have been able to have children of her own, but in a way, her spirit will continue to inspire future generations at the school that meant so much to the both of us."

She continues: "As St. Joes prepares to honor Tracy by displaying her Olympic Torch, I am reminded of the many memories she and I shared. From school dances and festivals, to late-night phone calls discussing the day's events, our time at St. Joes was filled with joy and a sense of community that I will never forget. Tracy and I were often mistaken for sisters, a comparison that always made us smile. We were not part of any particular clique; we were just friends who floated through school, hoping to connect with everyone and spread positivity wherever we went. St. Joes was more than just a school to us; it was a family. The friendships we formed there, the connections with our teachers, and the sense of belonging we felt have stayed with us throughout our lives. Tracy's resilience and strength, I believe, were deeply rooted in the experiences and values we gained during our time at St. Joes."

The 2002 Olympic Torch, which serendipitously carried the theme "Light the Fire Within," is a perfect symbol of the way Tracy lived her life. She was a source of light for so many, and now, as her torch is displayed at St. Joes, her legacy will continue to inspire students, faculty, and alumni for years to come. We honor her not just by remembering her achievements, but by living our lives with the same joy, courage, and love that she did, and by striving to spread positivity and laughter along our journey.

*Below:*

*Tracy (Huckabee) Leska and Anita (Place) Morrell throughout their friendship.*





# A “TESTI”MENT OF LOVE:



## High School Sweethearts, Matthew '15 and Jacqueline (Marconi) Testi '15 Tie the Knot at a Wedding Filled with SJ Alumni

### Q. Why did you choose to attend St. Joes?

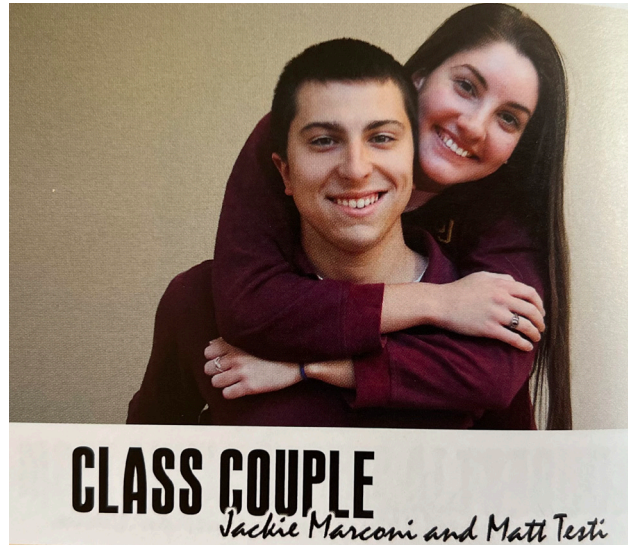
*Jacqueline:* Not only did we want to attend St. Joes because of its academic reputation and excellence in athletics, but it also was a strong family tradition. Fifteen of Matt's family members attended St. Joes starting with Beth (Testi) Tiberio '78 and currently Gianna Testi '26.

*Matt:* And both of Jacqueline's older siblings - Kristin (Marconi) Carlone '05 and Matt Marconi '09 inspired her to attend SJ as well. We also wanted to continue our Catholic education after graduating elementary and middle school from St. Lawrence in Shelton (me) and St. Jude in Monroe (Jacqueline).

### Q. What activities were you a part of during your four years at SJ?

*Matt:* We were both Student Ambassadors as well as members of the Spanish National Honor Society. Jacqueline was elected to Student Council and a member of the National Honor Society.

*Jacqueline:* We also played on sports teams. Matt was on the football team his freshman year and I was on the soccer team until my junior year. I also played 4 years of basketball and was a member of the 2015 Class M Girls' Varsity Basketball State Championship team. Woohoo!



### Q. Who were your favorite teachers? Or classes?

*Both:* Some of our favorite teachers were Mr. Eng, Mrs. Dennin, Mr. Forde, Dr. Walsh, Mrs. Broderick, Ms. Gallagher, and Mrs. Nelson.

*Matt:* I loved Chemistry taught by Doc Marino.

*Jacqueline:* And I loved Anatomy taught by Dr. Walsh.

### Q. How did the two of you first meet? What were your impressions of each other?

*Matt:* We met freshman year in 2011 in Mrs. Nelson's Period C Spanish class and were assigned as partners for multiple assignments. I thought Jacqueline was very beautiful and smart.

*Jacqueline:* I enjoyed the ways Matt made me laugh and honestly... I couldn't keep my eyes off of him!





### Q) What are your favorite SJ memories together?

*Jacqueline:* One of our favorite memories was watching the 2012 Varsity Boys Basketball team win the championship at Mohegan Sun on March 17, 2012. After the team won, Matt officially asked me to be his girlfriend and the rest is history! From there, we enjoyed meeting at our lockers in the morning and in between classes. We loved attending dances together like Spring Fling, Homecoming, Junior Ring, and our Senior Prom. We were even nominated by our peers as ‘Class Couple’ as a senior year superlative.

### Q) Did you both attend college together or go to separate schools?

*Jacqueline:* After we graduated in 2015, I attended Stonehill College and Matt went to the University of Rhode Island. While we definitely shared a lot of FaceTime calls. We also tried visiting one another as much as we could with our schools being a little over an hour away. Freshman year was especially difficult because we weren’t allowed to have our own cars on campus.

*Matt:* We each had to take the Rhode Island Public Bus, the train, and an Uber to visit each other. The true challenge was when Jacqueline studied abroad in Italy for five months during her junior year.

*Jacqueline:* Matt flew by himself to visit me for a week in Italy after we were separated for so long. Regardless, we’re grateful for being able to have our own college experiences and the distance only made our relationship grow stronger.

### Q) Tell us about the proposal!

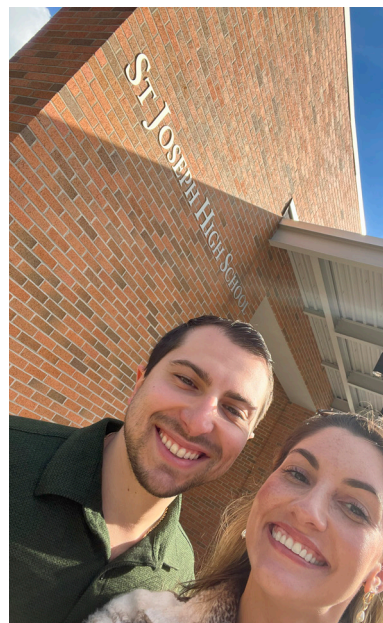
*Jacqueline:* Less than a month away from our 10 year anniversary, Matt finally popped the question during a Marconi family trip in my favorite place - Walt Disney World! Matt proposed at Disney’s Riviera Resort (my favorite) on the ultimate “Twosday” 2/22/2022. Surrounded by family and Disney magic, I immediately said “YES!”

### Q) What did most of your family and friends say about the two of you being high school sweethearts?

*Both:* Our family and friends were incredibly supportive. Some were definitely shocked that we were able to stay together this long, but they saw us grow up together from 14 years old to now 27 years old and believed we were meant for each other.

### Q) Tell us about your wedding!

*Jacqueline:* We got married on October 22, 2023 and it was the most magical day, straight out of a fairytale! We had a Catholic ceremony at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception and then celebrated the reception at Aria in Prospect, CT. We were surrounded by family and friends including twenty-five SJ alumni. We love how many people joined us to celebrate our love story.



*A few days before the wedding and after picking up their marriage license, the pair “came home to Joe”. They took a photo in front of the school to commemorate the start of their love story and to signify that they were ready to kick off the next chapter as husband and wife!*



# ***Racing Toward the Finish Line:***

## ***The Boys & Girls Track & Field Programs Grow Exponentially & Earn a Record Breaking Season***



*Boys & Girls Track Teams Celebrate After the 2024 FCIAC Outdoor Track & Field Championships*

**T**he 2023-2024 Outdoor Track & Field season was nothing short of spectacular, with both the boys' and girls' teams etching their names in the record books and showcasing an extraordinary level of talent and teamwork.

Last year proved to be a turning point for the program which saw an unprecedented growth in athlete participation. The Teams saw a surge in participation jumping to 110 student athletes across the boys and girls outdoor program. The girls' indoor team alone saw 32 athletes competing—a remarkable increase from previous years. This enthusiasm transitioned into the outdoor season, where 52 athletes joined, reflecting the indoor program's success and growing interest. To put this into perspective, just five years ago, there were approximately 65 students on both teams combined.

The program's achievements are not only due to athletic prowess but also the strong team culture cultivated by the coaching staff and captains. Head coaches Stephen Neugebauer and Sasha Benjamin have worked tirelessly to create an environment where every athlete feels supported and valued. "When I first started, the teams were distinctly separate—boys over here, girls over there, each taking separate buses," Benjamin noted. Recognizing the need for unity, they implemented team bonding activities and embraced the philosophy of "all for one, and one for all." Now at SJ, the boys and girls teams practice together, travel together, and root for each other at every meet. This approach transformed the dynamic into one that resembles more of a family than a team. Coaches emphasized personal development and encouraged students to push beyond their limits, ensuring that every athlete knew they would be supported as long as they gave their best effort.

The shift in culture directly translated to the track, where students consistently set new personal bests and school records. At the 2024 FCIAC Indoor Championship, six students achieved new personal bests at one of the year's most important meets. Highlights included Jason Lambert's first-place finishes in the 300m and 600m races, and Christopher Recupero's medal in the high jump. Meanwhile, Makena Hawkins and Danika Neugebauer finished 5th and 6th in their respective events.



The success continued into the 2024 CIAC Outdoor Track and Field State Championship, where our Cadets continued to shine. The girls' team finished 7th overall, with the 4x400m relay team clinching the State Title while also setting a new school record. Maeve Matthews placed third in the 400m race, and Olivia Franson took third in the javelin throw. The boys' team also made its mark, with Jacob Miller, Jack Martin, Walter Withrow, and Jason Lambert setting a new school record in the 4x400m relay and finishing 3rd.

While breaking records and winning state and conference titles were definite highlights, the most rewarding aspect of the season was witnessing the personal growth of the student-athletes who were unafraid to embrace new challenges and step out of their comfort zones. Many students who were once hesitant to try new events or even join the team found themselves setting personal bests and celebrating their achievements with pride, regardless of placement.

*“Student-athletes would come off the track so proud of their performances; and even though they might not have finished in the top spot,” said Benjamin, “to see the excitement in their faces makes it worth it.”*

Reflecting on the past season, it's clear that the real success lies beyond records and medals but within the newfound confidence of the athletes and family-like culture. This year's end-of-year picnic was attended by both programs and a number of students received awards and accolades. The program's commitment to continuous improvement and the desire to improve will drive the team to new heights, ensuring that the next season is even more rewarding.



*Above: After the FCIAC Indoor Championships  
Below: Cadets Enjoy an End-of-Year Picnic*



*Parents & Seniors Celebrate During Senior Night for the 2024 Track & Field Season*

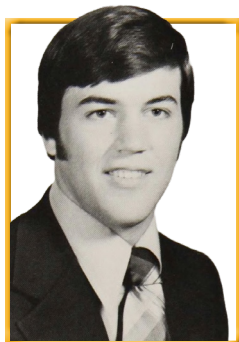


# 8TH ANNUAL HALL OF FAME

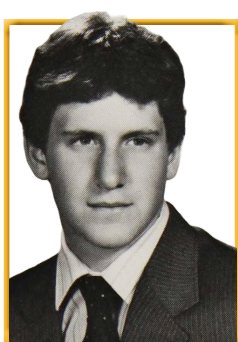


On October 4, 2024, St. Joseph High School inducted nine individuals and one team into the Athletic Hall of Fame. The Ceremony recognizes those who have been instrumental in the overall development and success of athletics at the school. Read more at [sjcadets.org/halloffame](http://sjcadets.org/halloffame).

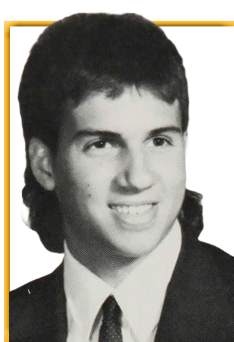
## 2024 INDUCTEES



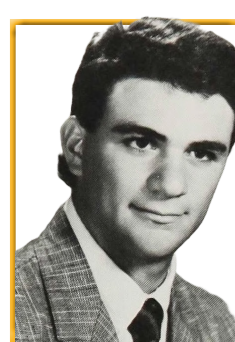
**Daryl Donnelly '80**



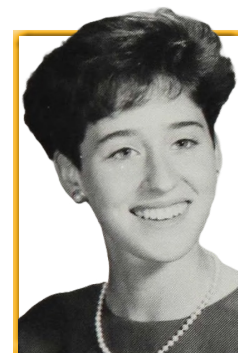
**Albert Tolomeo '86**



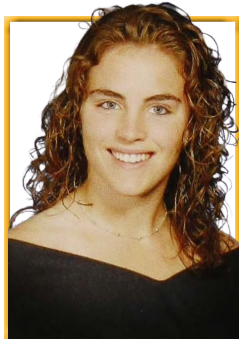
**Douglas Morabito '89**



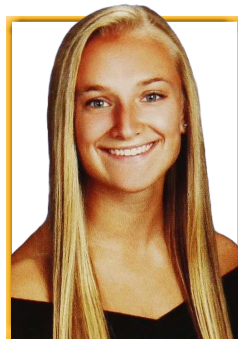
**Jeffrey Pisacreta '90**



**Eileen Hickey '91**



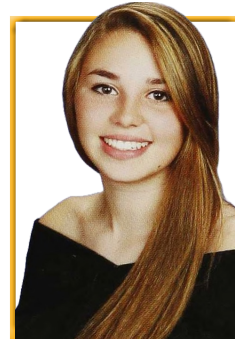
**Maureen Spellman '08**



**Samantha Grasso '14**



**Shane Miller '14**



**Sabrina (Toole) Quigley '14**

*Congratulations to all Inductees! Scan the QR Code below to read each inductee's full bio.*



**2013 Girls Varsity Soccer Team**





# 50 YEARS YOUNG

The Class of 1974 celebrated their 50th Reunion from June 27-30, 2024, marking an unforgettable weekend of connection and celebration. The reunion kicked off with a "Meet & Greet" followed by a choice of two Friday afternoon activities: a wine-tasting tour or a golf outing. Saturday evening brought the class together at the Courtyard Marriott Ballroom, where old friends reminisced and rekindled lifelong bonds. The weekend concluded with a special Mass in the Alumni Chapel on the St. Joseph High School campus, bringing the celebration full circle in a spirit of gratitude and reflection.

Jeff Adzima '74, who organized and coordinated the event, described the experience as "one of the most memorable of his life. From the early stages of planning to the reunion's culmination, the sense of camaraderie and nostalgia was profound." With the support of the Advancement Office and the enthusiastic contributions of classmates, the event surpassed all expectations. The reunion not only celebrated the past, but underscored the enduring strength of the connections formed at St. Joes, reminding all involved of the shared journey and growth that continues to unite the Class of 1974.

*"Seeing so many familiar faces, catching up on the years gone by, and sharing memories...it felt like coming home."*  
~ Jeff Adzima '74





## 1960s

**Theresa (Bombardier) Maietto '67** has spent the past 50 years building a life in California, where she has been happily married for 46 years. With two children and nine grandchildren, Theresa's family remains at the heart of her life. Now retired, she continues to give back to her community by volunteering on the Board of her local senior center, demonstrating her lifelong commitment to service.



## 1970s

**Joe Pifko '70** was recently re-elected to the Trumbull Town Council, marking his third term in office. A dedicated public servant, Joe continues to contribute to the community alongside his wife, **Pat Gillespie '70**. Together, they have three daughters, all proud St. Joes graduates: **Kate '96**, **Annie '97**, and **Tricia '98**.



**David Hoha '71** finds great joy in creating connections among his classmates by organizing mini class reunions, ranging from intimate gatherings to larger events. Recently, a group from the Class of 1971 enjoyed breakfast together at Old Towne Restaurant in Trumbull, keeping the spirit of camaraderie alive.

**Brian Casey '72** recently retired after an impressive 40-year career in the Aerospace and Defense industry. During his tenure at both GE and Pratt & Whitney, Brian played a pivotal role in supporting international campaigns, traveling the globe, and contributing to advancements in the field. His dedication and expertise left a lasting impact on the industry, and he now enjoys a well-deserved retirement following decades of professional leadership.

**Edward Ettorre '76**

has spent the past 48 years building a successful career as a trained auditor, currently serving as Vice President for Bank of America in Charlotte, NC. Throughout his career, he has lived in various parts of the U.S. This year he and his wife celebrated 27 years of marriage. Edward shares that his greatest pride is his daughter, Elizabeth, who remains the sparkle in his eyes. In addition to his corporate work, Edward discovered his passion for painting and enjoys expressing his artistic talents in his spare time. He welcomes reconnecting with alumni at [ed-dicinn@gmail.com](mailto:ed-dicinn@gmail.com).



**Colleen (Coyle) Keltos '76** pursued her love of science, earning a BS in Biology with a minor in Chemistry from Fairfield University. She spent an incredible 43 years teaching Science, Math, and Technology at Fairfield Prep, where she also held several administrative roles under the Dean of Operations, before retiring in June 2023. Colleen furthered her education with a MA in Instructional Computer Science and an MBA in Management of Technology from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She and her husband, Jim Keltos, are proud parents of three daughters, including her youngest, **Mickayla (Keltos) Bivona '11**, who followed in her mother's footsteps by attending St. Joes.

## 1980s



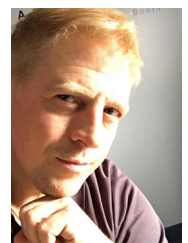
**Jim Banville '81** shared a fantastic photo from a 40-year reunion celebration of classmates from the Classes of 1981 and 1982. The group gathered in December 2022 at the New Hampshire home of **Ron Swatt '82** to reconnect and celebrate decades of friendship. Pictured L-R: **Jim Bundock '82**; **Garrett Doering '81**; **John Russo '82**; **Jim Banville '81**; **Mark Flores '82**; **Ron Swatt '82**. The reunion was a wonderful reminder of the enduring bonds formed at St. Joes.



**Diane Montelli Morrissey '84** is set to release her debut cookbook with Simon & Schuster in March 2025. This highly anticipated release is now available for pre-order and showcases Diane's passion for cooking. We look forward to celebrating this exciting milestone with her!

**Michael Fernino '86**

is proudly celebrating his 40th anniversary as a professional wedding and events DJ/MC. What began during his sophomore year has evolved into a thriving business—Music In Motion Entertainment—which now offers a variety of services including photography, lighting, and photo booth rentals for private events. Over the past 40 years, Michael has personally performed at over 3,000 functions, and his passion for the industry shows no signs of slowing down. One of his earliest events was the Walk-A-Thon at St. Joes, marking the beginning of an impressive career.



**Christine (Limauro) Rowland '88**

recently earned her Doctor of Medical Science degree from the University of Lynchburg. She continues to make a significant impact in the field of addiction medicine as a practicing Physician Assistant and serves as an associate professor at the University of Bridgeport's Physician Assistant Institute, shaping the next generation of healthcare professionals.



**Betsy (Ganim) Cowette '89** was recently appointed Chief Financial Officer of ShelterLogic Group, headquartered in Watertown, CT. Her leadership and financial expertise have earned her this prestigious role, marking an important milestone in her career.



This fall **Andrew Firda '89** will take the stage in Virginia Repertory Theatre's production of Stephen King's *Misery*. A proud member of Actors' Equity Association since 2002, Andrew's love for the stage began during his senior year at St. Joes, where he first performed in a production of *Spoon River Anthology*.



**Liza (Ginoni) Gamino '92** proudly won the title of Mrs. Connecticut in the Mrs. America Pageant, a remarkable achievement that has led to numerous opportunities, including being a guest speaker at events across the state and connecting with figures such as Senator Blumenthal and the Mayor of Shelton. Liza is also deeply involved in her community, serving as Vice President of the Derby/Shelton Rotary.

After relinquishing her Mrs. Connecticut America title in June, Liza now holds the Mrs. Connecticut title in another pageant system until April 2025. She reflects on turning 50 as a truly amazing time filled with unexpected accomplishments and opportunities!

## 1990s

**Sue Kmec '90**, a cancer survivor, recently led the opening of THRIVE, a nonprofit cooperative wellness center in Trumbull dedicated to supporting individuals impacted by cancer—regardless of type, stage, or age—as well as their families and caregivers. The center offers a fully equipped gym with skilled trainers, over 30 monthly events and activities, support groups, yoga, art therapy, educational series, mindfulness workshops, and peaceful nooks for relaxation. THRIVE is a beacon of hope and healing in the community. Learn more at [THRIVEwellnessCT.org](http://THRIVEwellnessCT.org).



\* **Natalie Green Hammond '90's** daughter, **Kayla Hammond '18** was married to Jimmy Robbins in 2024.

In addition, **Michelle Pagliaro Haywood '90's** son, Tyler Haywood, was also married in 2024 to Miley Xiou! Both Natalie and Michelle were surrounded by friends and family including **Jennifer Cerritelli Bshara '90** and **Alicia Cerritelli McTigue '90**.

**Tracy (Willsher) Stevenson '92** is currently working for Jones Lang LaSalle, a renowned global leader in the commercial real estate industry. Known for its expertise in both local and international markets, the firm has been a great fit for Tracy's professional talents. In February 2022, she married Michael Willsher, and the couple is eagerly awaiting the arrival of their third grandchild in January 2025, adding another exciting chapter to their growing family.

**Brian Farnen '93**

has recently accepted a full-time professorship at Fairfield University, where he will be teaching courses in business, environmental, and employment law. This new role allows Brian to share his extensive expertise with the next generation of leaders.



**Angela Capinera '95** runs her own business, *Your Mind in Bloom, LLC*, and also dedicates her time as a volunteer EMT-Basic with Stratford EMS, serving her community with passion and care.

**Venessa (Anderson) Eisenman '95** was recently named the 2025 Teacher of the Year at Weston Public Schools, where she teaches high school English. She credits her love for teaching language arts to the inspiration and dedication of her former St. Joes teachers: Mrs. Marusa, Mrs. Green, and Mr. Izzo.

**Michelle (Beaulieu) Lazurek '96**

has published her eighteenth book, *Hall of Faith*, which will be released by Lifeway/B and H Kids on October 29, 2024. This children's book is a retelling of the Hebrews 11 passage, teaching young readers about the Bible and the importance of trusting God.



\* The classnote on Natalie Green Hammond '90 and Michelle Pagliaro Haywood '90 has been corrected for the digital version of this *Communiqué*.



### 2000s

**Kristen (Bruno) Bedell '00** joyfully welcomed her son, Kohen Matthew Bedell, into the world on May 13, 2024. Congratulations to Kristen and her family!



**Steve Bayusik '02** serves as the Director of Operations for Geronimo Hospitality Co., overseeing six restaurants across 3 states, including Geronimo Tequila Bar and Southwest Grill, Camacho Garage, CT Shell & Bones Oyster Bar and Grill, Bar Yoshi, and oBar. For more information, visit [geronimohospitalityco.com](http://geronimohospitalityco.com).

**Ashley (Hackett) Lupo '04** recently began a new role as the K-8 Math Coach at Six to Six Magnet School in Bridgeport, CT, where she is excited to make an impact on student's mathematical growth and development.

**Sarah (Ahmad) Coldiron '05** is thrilled to announce the arrival of Connor Ross Coldiron, born on October 16, 2023. His big sister, Camila (4), is already smitten with her new baby brother.



**Thomas Sportini '07** welcomed his fourth child, James Joseph, on July 2, 2023. Congratulations to Thomas and his growing family!

**Minna Schubert Neal '08** and her husband, Matt, joyfully welcomed their first child, Daisy Grace Neal, on July 9, 2024. The couple is excited to embark on this new chapter of parenthood together.

**Molly Sackett '08** has built a 12-year career in film and television, working as a producer and location manager. A founding member with the Teamster Union Local 817, Molly has contributed to TV shows such as *Orange is the New Black*, *Blue Bloods*, and *Wu-Tang: An American Saga*. Her film work includes major productions like *Bridge of Spies*, *Ocean's 8*, and *Hypnotic*.

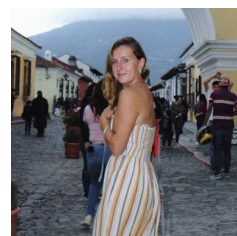


**Christen Keogh Fuhrmann '09** recently earned her master's degree in American Journalism from New York University, marking a significant academic achievement and expanding her professional expertise.



**Johanna (Reech) Retalis '09** married Nick Retalis two years ago, and the couple is excitedly expecting their first child in January 2025. After earning two degrees and working in various school systems, Johanna has returned to St. Joseph High School as a member of the faculty. She is now teaching freshman Biology, Medical Microbiology, and Forensic Science, proudly joining the ranks of alumni who are shaping the next generation of Cadets.

**Kate McMahon '12** has explored and lived in 70 countries since graduating from American University. In Gabon, Africa, she collaborated with Duke University on studies of the African forest elephant. She then backpacked along the West Coast of Africa before teaching English in Vietnam and Cambodia. Kate is a freelance journalist, publishing an article in *Business Insider* encouraging tourists to visit Sri Lanka. Kate resides in Dahab, Egypt.



**Lauren Della Vecchia '13** married Mark Hirschbeck on August 17, 2024. The couple first met in Room 105 at St. Joes back in 2010, making their wedding a true SJ love story! The celebration was filled with many SJ alumni, adding to the special connection of the day. Congratulations!



**Denzel Moscova '13** graduated from Norwich University in 2017 with a Bachelor's degree in Business Management, focusing on Entrepreneurship, and a minor in Marketing. While at Norwich, Denzel also played football. In 2023, he earned his certification in Market Conduct Management and has since held various roles in sales and recruiting. Currently, Denzel works as a Market Conduct Examiner in the Regulatory Insurance industry. He and his wife, Alayna, are proud parents of Canaan and Ciella and are homeowners in Shelton, CT.



**Kelsey Schulze Testi '13** married Jesse Schulze on June 22, 2024, in New Rochelle, NY. The celebration was filled with SJ pride as family and friends, representing alumni from the Class of 1978 to the present, joined the couple on their special day. Congratulations to Kelsey and Jesse!

### 2010s

**John Corrado '11** married Meghan Quinn on May 25, 2025, at the beautiful Park Chateau in East Brunswick, NJ. The celebration was a true St. Joes reunion, with alumni from the 1980s to the 2010s in attendance, adding to the joy of the occasion. Congratulations to John and Meghan!





**Mary (Lockwood) Zimnoch '13** recently tied the knot this April, marrying her high school sweetheart, **Justin Zimnoch '13**—whom she sat next to in Señora Rivera's Spanish class over a decade ago! The couple celebrated their special day surrounded by many former classmates and fellow SJ alumni, making it a truly memorable event. Congratulations to Mary and Justin.

**Caitlin Boyle-Imeidopf '14** was married on April 5, 2024. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Caitlin and her spouse!



**Edmund Marcarelli '15** relocated back to Connecticut in 2021 after living in Florida and is now actively involved in helping run his family's business, Triple S Inc., and duc-interiors in Norwalk.

**Chris Prutting '16** has been accepted into the University of Bridgeport, where he will continue his nursing education to earn an RN degree.

**Abby Weber '16** graduated from the University of Tampa in 2020 with a degree in marketing. In 2022, she launched The Queen Way Clothing Company, a brand focused on empowerment. Abby recently passed her realtor exam and is now working with the KVA Group, a luxury division within Keller Williams.



**Michael Rosati '17** has begun teaching special education at Bunnell High School in Stratford. He will work with students with autism spectrum disorder. Michael is also completing his master's degree in Special Education, with a concentration in Autism and other Developmental Disorders.

**Sean Attanasio '18** is entering his third year as an Athletic Trainer at The Taft School in Watertown, continuing to support student-athletes.



**Bridget Fatse '18** got engaged in April to fellow FCIAC athlete Scott Cunningham, a 2018 Wilton High School graduate. After following each other's athletic accomplishments through local newspapers, the couple reconnected post-college and now live in New York.

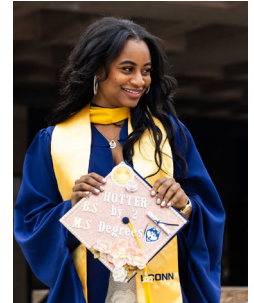


**LtR: Hannah Hutchison '18, Patricia Bastek '18, Kayla Giacobbe '18, and Grace Erodici '18** have been best friends since meeting at St. Joes! Trish celebrated her bridal shower this past weekend and is getting married in October. The group is incredibly thankful for the lasting friendships formed at SJ.

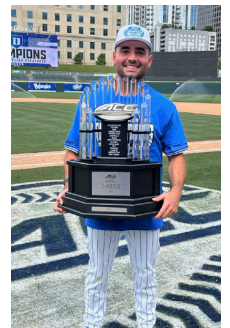
In 2021 **Halle Grabowski '18** and **Kayla Giacobbe '18** launched *Simply Garnished, LLC*, a fully insured and licensed mobile bartending service that caters to all of New England. Their business combines their bartending expertise with a passion for marketing and event planning.



**Maia Moscova '18** earned her Bachelor's in Allied Health and Gerontology in 2022 and her Master's in Surgical Neurophysiology in 2023 from the University of Connecticut, where she was also a captain on the Women's Rowing Team. Maia is now a certified Surgical Neurophysiologist, working in the healthcare industry.



**Jimmy Evans '19** graduated from Tufts University, where he majored in Economics and minored in Finance and Entrepreneurship. He was a four-year starter on the baseball team, earning All-Region and All-Conference awards, and leading Tufts to a conference championship in 2023. After graduating, he transferred to Duke University, where he earned a Masters in Management Studies in 2024. He is currently working toward his Duke MBA at The Fuqua School of Business.



**Haotang Li '19** is pursuing a Master's degree in Materials Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Lauren Marcarelli '19** graduated from the University of Alabama in 2023 with a BS in Interior Design. She currently works as the Design Coordinator for RMS Companies in Connecticut.

**Darren Warren '19** graduated from Trinity College with a degree in Biology. While at Trinity, he founded the Trinity College Emergency Medical Services program and was a four-year football and track team member, serving as captain for both. Darren co-published research on childhood diabetes with Yale endocrinologist Dr. Nally and is currently interviewing for medical school.



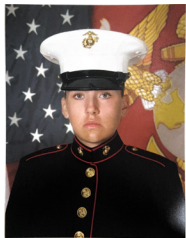


2020s

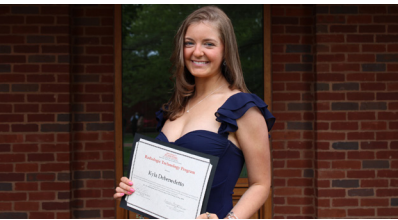
**Christopher Kylie '20** graduated from Xavier University in May 2024 with a degree in Marketing. He is now participating in a Management Training Program with State Farm Insurance and will begin his MBA at Xavier while living in Newport, Kentucky.



**Alyssa Meyers '20** graduated from Marine Corps Bootcamp at Parris Island, SC, on June 21, 2024. She is beginning her career as an IMRL Asset Manager and is stationed in Okinawa, Japan.



**Jack Attanasio '21** is entering his senior year at Norwich University Military Academy. He was ranked #1 out of 600 cadets in his U.S. Army 5th Regiment Advanced Camp training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and received the Distinguished Leadership Award.



In June 2024, **Kyla DeBenedetto '21** passed her registry board exam to become a licensed radiologic technologist. She is continuing her studies at the University of Hartford, pursuing a Bachelor's degree and certification in MRI technology.



**Hailey McKeon '23** was elected Vice President of Membership Programming for the Lambda Pi Chapter of Alpha Chi Omega at the University of Mississippi.



**Logan Spoelstra '24** embarked on a two-month mission trip to El Salvador. As a missionary intern, Logan worked in construction, evangelism, and taught in schools and orphanages, sharing the message of Jesus and salvation.

## PLANT THE SEEDS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS.

College Prep Education | Service | Fine Arts | Clubs | Technology | Athletics

SJ is a community of faith, family, and friendship. Freshmen students feel it as soon they walk through the front doors: a welcome that is freely given. A pride that bonds the community. A belief that strengthens the spirit. A connection that lasts a lifetime. By the time they become seniors and walk across that graduation stage, our students know that when they joined the St. Joes family, they became known, and admired for precisely who they were and who they will work to become.

A photograph of Isabella Jakab '24, a young woman, smiling.

"The teachers and students I have met upon my 4-year journey have changed my life in a profound way, shaping the person I am today. The Cadet family will forever hold a special place in my heart for providing guidance, support, and valuing students' potential to foster personal growth." ~ Isabella Jakab '24

A photograph of Troy Maxwell '24, a young man, smiling.

"The faculty and staff at SJ have helped me become the person I am today. The teachers always wanted the best for me and supported me in and out the classroom. The counselors helped me whenever I needed and the Student Ambassador program helped to build leadership skills." ~ Troy Maxwell '24

A photograph of Jason Lambert '24, a young man, smiling.

"At SJ, I've been able to take a very challenging course load, grow in my Catholic faith, be involved in the community, develop new friendships, have leadership opportunities through athletic teams; and to celebrate school traditions making great memories that will last a lifetime." ~ Jason Lambert '24

Scan the QR Code or use the envelope located in the center of this Communique to support the future of our SJ Cadets!

A QR code located in the bottom right corner of the section.



# IN MEMORIAM

The following alumni passed away  
between July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.  
We ask that you keep their families in  
your thoughts and prayers.

*"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray  
for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."  
(2 Maccabees 12:46)*

Daniel Gates '66

Angelo Stavola '66

Angela (Saboeiro) Silvestre '69

Thomas Cribbins '69

Matthew Student '69

Rene Robillard '70

CathyAnn Plumer Colson '71

Elaine Garbarino '71

Charles Kovalusky '72

Thomas Richard '74

Barry Condon '75

Barbara Piaty '75

Patricia Martin '80

Christopher Lavorgna '83

Jay Quinlan '91

Jessica Cody Geraghty '04

To schedule a Memorial Mass in our  
Alumni Chapel, contact the Alumni  
Office at [alumni@sjcadets.org](mailto:alumni@sjcadets.org).







**ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL**  
2320 Huntington Turnpike  
Trumbull, Connecticut 06611

## 2024-2025 Upcoming Events

### **November 14-16**

Fall Play  
*It's A Wonderful Life: A  
Live Radio Play*  
[sjcadets.org/drama](http://sjcadets.org/drama)

### **December 11**

Winter Open House  
[sjcadets.org/openhouse](http://sjcadets.org/openhouse)

### **December 12**

Fine Arts Night

### **February 8**

"Still Hungry" Stuff-a-  
Bus Food Drive

### **March 2**

Ladies Luncheon

### **March 19**

Feast Day of Saint  
Joseph

### **March 26**

Career Day

### **May 1-3**

Spring Musical

### **May 31**

Class of 2025  
Commencement

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