COMMUNIQUÉ

THE MAGAZINE OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

SPRING 2025





In January 2025, thirteen dedicated Cadets proudly represented St. Joseph High School at Yale's Model United Nations conference, including Giovanni Serrano '26 (pictured). Our own Mikayla Gallias '25 even earned an Honorary Delegate Award for her outstanding performance. Their success at the conference was supported by their enrollment in SJ's ECE International Relations course. Learn more about this course on page 12.

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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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



> *"As we move forward, we remain committed to preserving the traditions that define us while embracing the innovations that will propel us into the future."*

Dear Friends,

Greetings from St. Joe's. As I reflect upon this school year, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and excitement for the future. Walking through our halls, seeing the joy and dedication of our students, and witnessing the sincere support of our faculty, alumni, and families reaffirms what makes this school truly special: the people who believe in it. People like you!

This issue of the Communiqué is a testament to that unwavering belief and a celebration of St. Joseph High School. From our expansive academic offerings, a new state championship football banner, record-breaking community service impact, and a thriving visual and performing arts program, St. Joe's continues to be a place where students are not only educated-they are transformed.

The Class of 2025, who started their journey with virtual Accepted Student Night and mask-wearing first days, now stands at the threshold of their next chapter. Hard work and perseverance have yielded admission to top-tier colleges and universities and an impressive array of scholarships, underscoring the unmatched value proposition of an SJ education. Their impressive growth, leadership, and resilience validate the impact of an environment that promotes both academic excellence and character.

As we look ahead with enthusiasm to the incoming Class of 2029, we see a group of students already forming lifelong bonds and eager to embrace the opportunities that await them. Their energy and excitement at Accepted Student Night reaffirm that the SJ legacy continues to thrive. At the same time, we celebrate the extraordinary achievements of our current students—from the impressive return of our Mock Trial Team to the commitment of our Peer Ministers and student leaders who exemplify faith and service in action every day. Our alumni continue to make an impact in their professional fields, confidently transferring the lessons and values instilled at St. Joe's into the world. Whether in science, business, medicine, the arts, or service, their success stories remind us that the foundation of SJ success extends far beyond Huntington Turnpike.

While we celebrate the past and present, we are also focused on the future of St. Joseph High School. We are committed to strengthening our legacy through an ongoing Capital Campaign that will support new campus development, facility enhancements, and an ever-improving student experience.

As part of this vision, we are proud to now offer 11 Early College Experience (ECE) and 16 Advanced Placement (AP) courses, giving students the opportunity to earn college credits before graduation. We have also expanded our summer curriculum, allowing students to take advanced coursework, explore new subjects, and further personalize their learning paths. These initiatives ensure that our students graduate with not just a diploma, but a competitive edge in higher education and beyond.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of our community. The Maroon & Gold Gala was a shining example of the impact of giving, with the Fund-a-Future initiative ensuring that more students can access the transformative power of a St. Joe's education. Your support fuels every achievement, every opportunity, and every success story that unfolds here on Campus.

As we confidently continue *On A Mission for More*, we remain committed to preserving the traditions that define us while embracing the innovations that will propel us into the future. Thank you for being part of this invigorating journey—your faith in St. Joe's is what allows us to dream bigger, reach higher, and continue shaping Cadet leaders of tomorrow.

In Faith & Fellowship

David Klein
President
St. Joseph High School

LETTER FROM A GRADUATE

Braiden Smith '25: Stepping Outside His Comfort Zone and Finding Home

Four years ago, I stepped onto the St. Joes campus for Student Visit Day, feeling completely out of my element. I had spent all my life in the same small school, surrounded by the same familiar faces, and suddenly I was standing in a room full of strangers. For the first time, I had to talk to people I didn't know and I was terrified. That day, we played Cadet Bingo - a game meant to help us break the ice with other students. At first, I hesitated, but the Student Ambassadors leading our group made it easy. They weren't just there to check a box—they were genuinely welcoming. They saw me, included me, and made me feel like I already belonged. From that moment on, every event I attended felt different. The same faces kept appearing—Ambassadors, teachers, faculty—greeting me by name, making me feel like this was a place where I could be more than just another student.



That summer, before my freshman year even began, I joined the strength and conditioning program for the soccer team. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was behind on nearly every drill, struggling to keep up, and constantly questioning if I even belonged there. But my teammates never let me feel like I didn't. They pushed me, encouraged me, and made it clear that effort mattered more than perfection. That summer was brutal, but it was also unforgettable. By the time school started, I wasn't just attending St. Joes—I was part of something bigger. I played varsity soccer all four years, and later, I added varsity tennis to the mix. I never regretted a second of it.



At the end of freshman year, I got an email inviting me to apply to be a Student Ambassador. Once more, I hesitated—me, an Ambassador? The kid who had once been too nervous to talk to anyone at Student Visit Day? But something inside me said to go for it. I applied, interviewed, and was accepted. And that decision changed everything.

As a sophomore, I threw myself into the program, volunteering at every event I could. I met students and faculty I never would have crossed paths with otherwise. I learned how to speak confidently, how to make others feel at ease, how to show people—just like those Ambassadors had once shown me—that they belonged here. By junior year, I earned a spot on the Ambassador Executive Board, where I remain through my senior year.



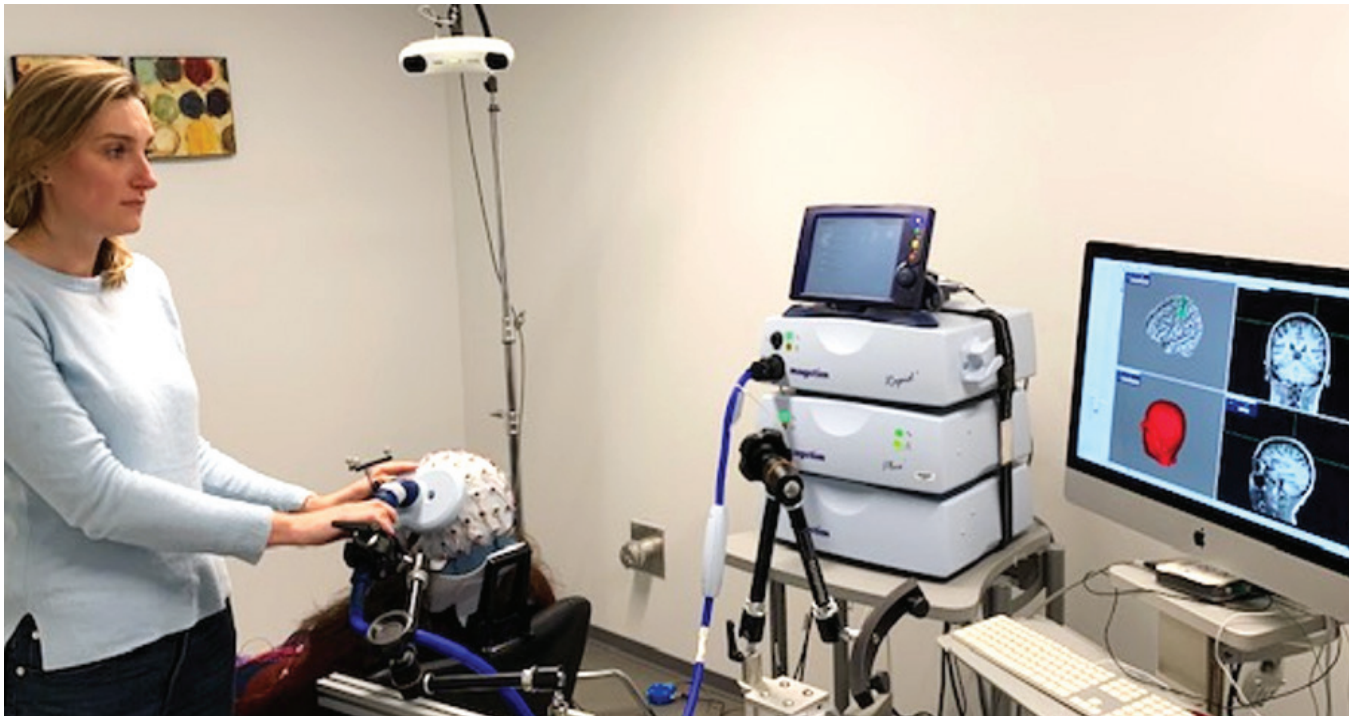
If freshman-year me could see senior-year me, he wouldn't believe it! I was selected as a Homecoming Prince, I took some of the most exciting classes of my life—Sport Management, Forensics, Law & Criminal Justice, and Marketing—and I was chosen as a Peer Minister, a role that carries immense responsibility and honor. And, as if all of that wasn't enough, I was accepted into and officially committed to Quinnipiac University as a Communications major, my first-choice college.

Looking back, my time at St. Joes isn't defined by the sports I played, the leadership roles I earned, or even the college I'm headed to next. It's defined by the person I became along the way. I started as a quiet eighth-grader, unsure of his place, and I'm leaving as someone who has built lifelong friendships, mentored younger students, and grown into a leader.



None of this would have been possible without the people who believed in me. To my family—thank you for always supporting me. To my teachers and coaches—thank you for pushing me and guiding me. And to the faculty and staff—thank you for making SJ more than just a high school. You created a community where I felt seen, valued, and supported.

Whenever I give tours to prospective families, I always tell them the same thing: at St. Joes, you are never just another student. People here care about you—not just for four years, but for life. And as I prepare to walk across that graduation stage, I know one thing for sure: St. Joes didn't just give me a high school experience; it gave me a home.



For the Love of Science: Danielle Sliva '03 Shares Her Research as a Neuroscientist



From an early age, Danielle Sliva '03 was captivated by the mysteries of science. A single genetics class in eighth grade sparked what would become a lifelong passion for understanding how the world—and the brain—works. That curiosity ultimately led her to a groundbreaking career as a neuroscientist, conducting research at the forefront of brain imaging and computational neuroscience at Brown University.

Yet her path was anything but traditional. While many researchers begin their careers by pursuing a PhD, Danielle took a different route—one driven by hands-on experience, an openness to unexpected opportunities, and an unwavering determination to make an impact.

A Passion for Research Begins

After graduating from St. Joes, Danielle attended Lafayette College, where she pursued a degree in Neuroscience. Initially, she envisioned a life on a pre-med track, but found herself pulled toward the research field after getting involved in some undergraduate research opportunities.

"I worked in a behavioral psychology lab for some time, examining patterns of behavior in pigeons, and how they changed under the influence of anti-anxiety drugs. I also worked on a project looking at differences in brain structure in a rodent animal model of depression. These early experiences set the foundation for my interest in mental health research, which is the focus of my work now."

Realizing that she was drawn more to scientific discovery than clinical practice, Danielle set out to explore a career in research. She landed in Boston, where she worked at the Boston Children's Hospital, gaining expertise in pediatric neuroimaging.

During this time, Danielle also earned her master's degree in Bioimaging at the Boston University School of Medicine, delving deep into advanced human scanning techniques such as MRI, PET, and Ultrasound. Her research centered on functional connectivity MRI in infants—studying whether certain brain networks develop over time or if they are already present at birth.

Pioneering Research with Life-Changing Potential

Danielle's research had profound implications. Working alongside a team of scientists, she helped conduct MRI studies on infants and children to search for biomarkers for developmental disorders. Early intervention is critical to improving outcomes for children with conditions such as dyslexia and autism, and her team's work aimed to provide the tools needed to identify at-risk children as early as possible.

A highlight of her work was a trip to Dhaka, Bangladesh, where she led a team of physicians in establishing an infant MRI lab – part of a Gates Foundation-funded project to study brain development and risk for developmental disorders in the context of early childhood adversity.

Though she spent eight years contributing to this vital research, Danielle knew she wanted to deepen her expertise. While many researchers enter their PhD programs before starting lab work, she had already built an impressive career in neuroscience before making the decision to pursue her doctorate at Brown University. "I thought I would continue doing the same type of research, but ended up starting from scratch, learning methods that were completely new to me," she said. "However, the skillsets I've gained are complimentary to my prior experience, providing new 'tools in my toolbox' to study the human brain, and helping me grow into a more versatile scientist."

Building Models of the Brain

At Brown, Danielle entered into the world of computational neuroscience – a field that uses computer models and statistics to understand how the brain processes information. She uses biophysical



Danielle was blessed with two daughters while training at Brown. Her first daughter was born while she was a graduate student; and she defended her dissertation while 8 months pregnant with her second. Her second daughter was actually born the day before Danielle's PhD commencement ceremony! While Danielle had been planning to walk at graduation, she ended up taking her graduation photo in the hospital instead. "It was totally worth it!"



One of Danielle's most memorable experiences at Boston Children's Hospital was helping to set up a lab in Bangladesh!

models to map brain circuits and interpret signals from tools like electroencephalography (EEG). "Typically, to do neuroscience research at the cell level, you need to do invasive experiments that are not possible in humans. In order to link this microscopic level of investigation to human health and behavior, we make models of the cells and their connections in a particular brain region, and then predict how their activity generates these macroscopic signals that we can record outside of the head in awake behaving humans. This allows us to test hypotheses about cell-level phenomena that could underlie different aspects of cognitive function and medical conditions," she explained.

This work has direct applications for new treatments in mental health and neurological disorders. One such treatment, transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), uses magnetic fields to modify brain connections. Already FDA-approved for conditions like depression and OCD, this technology has the potential for even broader applications. "TMS initially became popular because it helps a lot of people who don't respond to traditional pharmaceutical treatments for depression. But I think it's even more noteworthy than that, because it can be used to target a wide range of different brain networks, and therefore potentially treat many different psychiatric and neurological conditions."

"I'm currently using modeling to understand how TMS' effects on neural circuits lead to changes in cognitive function, with the goal of optimizing and personalizing existing treatment protocols," Danielle shared. By refining brain models, her work is helping to advance the next generation of targeted, non-invasive treatments for mental health.

From St. Joes to Neuroscience: A Foundation for Success

Danielle credits her time at St. Joes with instilling the skills and mindset that have shaped her career. She recalls her biology and anatomy classes with Dr. Walsh as pivotal in fostering her love of science. "I just remember being so interested in everything we discussed, even in identifying trees from fallen twigs – something probably only Dr. Walsh could make sound exciting," she said. She also fondly remembers St. Joes' long-standing cat dissection lab, which gave her hands-on experience with organ systems and anatomy.

Beyond academics, Danielle's time at SJ helped her develop the discipline and time management skills needed to balance research, coursework, and life. As a member of the Volleyball, Basketball, and Track & Field teams, she learned how to juggle rigorous academic work with athletic commitments—a skill she carried into college and beyond. "I think being part of a team not only gave me that sense of family and closeness, but it also taught me to balance things," she said.

Advice for Future Scientists: Passion and Perseverance

For students considering a career in science, Danielle's advice is simple but powerful: "Never believe that you don't belong in science. You just have to be curious and love what you're doing."

She also emphasizes the importance of perseverance. "Some experiments won't work. Some things will come out nothing like you expected—but you just have to keep trying. And sometimes those are actually the most interesting findings, because they force you to think differently."

This year, Danielle celebrates her 40th birthday with her husband and two young daughters, the younger of whom was born a day before her PhD commencement ceremony. As she continues to push the boundaries of neuroscience research, her journey serves as a reminder that curiosity, resilience, and a passion for discovery can take you further than you ever imagined.

"Pursue a career that you have a passion for—one that you really, really love, and one that lets you contribute something positive to the world."



Danielle and her classmates participating in the traditional cat dissection lab during Dr. Walsh's Anatomy class.



Class of 2003 Senior Volleyball players. While at SJ, Danielle was on the Volleyball, Basketball, and Track & Field teams. Athletics taught her about teamwork and helped her develop a sense of tenacity that has helped her throughout her career.



An International Perspective: Michael Zhao's Journey from China to St. Joes



For Senior Cadet, Michael Zhao, coming from Beijing to St. Joes wasn't just about crossing continents; it was about venturing into a new culture, embracing challenges, and grabbing hold of his own future. Before arriving in August 2023 for his junior year at St. Joes, Michael attended an international school in China and was no stranger to the pressures of academic achievement. However, his decision to continue his education in the United States stemmed from a desire to push himself further in a challenging academic environment. He saw this journey as an opportunity to grow, enhance his college prospects, and better prepare for his future.

The transition from China to the U.S. was undoubtedly a significant shift. "In China, the academic environment was more relaxed," Michael reflects. "But in the U.S., the focus on your junior and senior years is intense, and you're expected to set your own goals." This self-directed atmosphere was a welcome change for Michael, who appreciated the independence that comes with pursuing personal achievements rather than meeting traditional expectations.

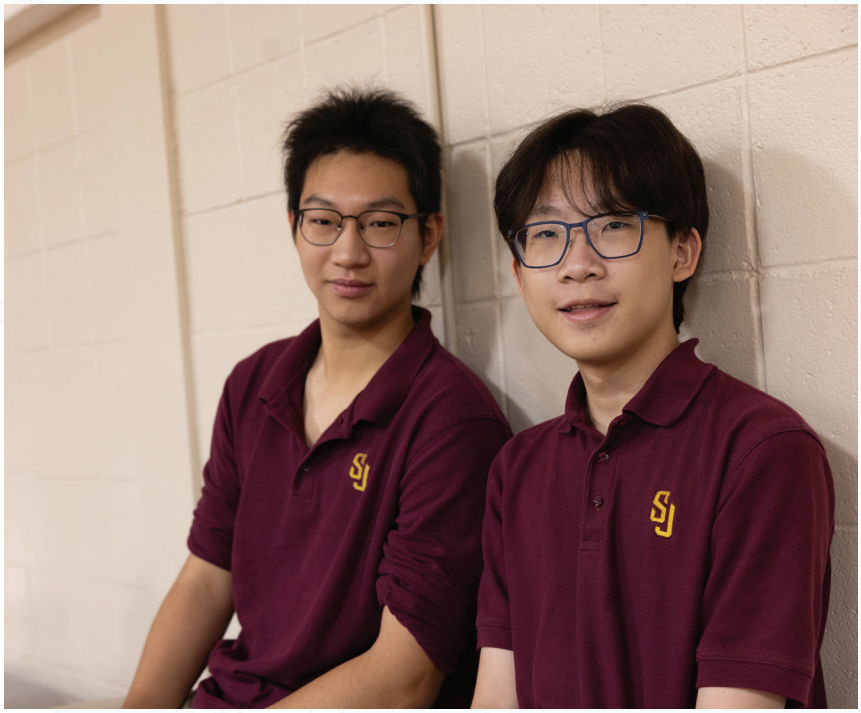
Of all his options for high school, choosing St. Joes was an intentional decision for Michael. "I wanted to start fresh in a place where I could be surrounded by people who shared a sense of community and faith," he explains. Although Michael doesn't personally practice religion, he values the way St. Joes' foundation of faith fosters kindness and strong moral character in the people around him. "People with strong beliefs are often the most welcoming."

Michael quickly established himself both academically and socially at St. Joes, finding a welcoming community among Cadets who embodied the kindness and strong character for which he had hoped. His peers admire his academic talent and sharp sense of humor, recognizing him as a natural leader who leaves a lasting impression in every classroom. In group settings, he confidently takes the lead, guiding his classmates through complex projects with insight and initiative. Beyond the classroom, Michael was an active member of the Tennis Team before shifting his focus to his rigorous academic commitments. He has also distinguished himself as a Teaching Assistant in the Computer Science class taught by Milestone C, where he assisted in developing assessments and mentoring students through website-building projects.

Beyond academics, Michael possesses a steadfast ambition to become an entrepreneur. Inspired by his father's success in the music industry, Michael envisions launching his own ventures, potentially in the fields of electronic materials—critical components in robotics and artificial intelligence. While entrepreneurship often involves risk, Michael embraces challenges with confidence and determination. Coming from a family of innovators and trailblazers, he is driven to make a lasting impact and carve out his own path in the world of technology and business.

Michael comes from a family of risk-takers - ones who also have a deeply musical lineage. Both of his parents were musicians before his father transitioned into entrepreneurship, while his mother remains a distinguished Professor of Music in Beijing. His grandfather was a leading figure in his generation's classical music scene in China, further cementing the family's rich musical legacy.

Michael, himself, is a talented pianist and guitarist, carrying forward his family's passion for music. At St. Joes, he shares his gift by playing piano for Music Ministry. One of his most memorable moments in high school came during a school-wide Christmas Mass. "I asked Mr. Weiss if I could add a little improvisation to our final song, and he told me to 'go for it!' Just as the song was ending, I incorporated a bit of Jingle Bells, and the entire student body loved it."



Michael (L) with Zhiheng (Uriel) You '25

Despite the challenges of living far from home, Michael embraces the opportunity to learn and grow in the U.S., and his resilience is evident in his perspective on being an international student. "There are so many different faces, different religions, different looks, different colors, and it's not always easy to adjust. But what I have learned here is that if you treat people like friends, they will treat you like a friend in return." Michael encourages fellow international students to immerse themselves fully in their new environments and embrace cultural differences.

Looking to the future, Michael plans to apply to several colleges in the Northeast - his favorite being Babson College - as well as a few in California with the hopes of being an Entrepreneurship major. His passion for innovation and desire to make an impact in the world is evident in everything he does. Yet, regardless of where he ends up, his ties to home will always remain strong. "If there are opportunities for me in the U.S., then of course I will stay, but eventually I will return to China because my family and friends are there. I have to be with them."

As Michael continues his journey at St. Joes, with just a few months to go until he crosses that graduation stage, his story reminds us of the power of embracing new experiences, overcoming challenges, and staying true to one's roots. His journey - and the journey of all international students - from Beijing to Trumbull is more than just a change of location; it is a testament to the strength, bravery, and resilience of a young man who is destined to make a lasting impact in the world.



Michael (L) with Mr. Forde and Zhiheng (Uriel) You '25

Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Environment

At St. Joseph High School, we are committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive community where students from around the world feel welcomed and valued. Our approach extends beyond academics, providing international students with personalized support and a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that foster engagement and connection. The richness of our diverse student body enhances the school environment, encouraging meaningful relationships and personal growth.

This year, we are proud to host students from China, Uganda, The Ivory Coast, Czech Republic and, Taiwan.

International Students rely upon professional education partners to assist with homestay arrangements. If you are interested in serving as a host family, visit sjcadets.org/hostfamilies to learn more about our education partners.



Embracing the Unexpected: Zuri Soto's Journey Across the Ocean and Back Again



For Zuri Soto '17, life is anything but static. It is a dynamic journey fueled by adventure, spontaneity, and an unyielding curiosity about the world's diversity. She thrives in the unknown, embracing every twist and turn with fearless enthusiasm. It's this bold spirit that led her from Connecticut to London, then to France, and back again—each step shaping her into the globally minded explorer she is today.

While at St. Joes, Zuri was a member of the Choir for two years as well as the Drama Club throughout all four years. Her passion for music and performance paved the way for her acceptance at Roger Williams University, where she pursued a degree in Communication & Media Studies with a Minor in Music. At Roger Williams, Zuri fully immersed herself in the university's music and theatre programs, honing her craft and pushing past her comfort zone. One of her proudest moments came at graduation when she was selected to perform the national anthem—an experience she cherishes. "That was a big achievement for me because I was a bit shy," she admits with a smile, a testament to how far she has come.

"Shy" is hardly the word most would use to describe Zuri. Even during her time at Roger Williams, she was already setting her sights beyond the familiar, envisioning a life beyond the United States. "All of my friends were going to Greece or Italy, but because of my schedule, the only place I could study abroad was London," she recalls. "I really didn't know if I could picture myself there." But little did she know, London would soon capture her heart.

After her acceptance into the University of Westminster, Zuri fell in love with everything about the city, the school, and its people. "It was incredible. I was the only person from my program at Roger Williams that chose London, so going into this new experience all by myself was life-changing. I enjoyed it so much that I even wanted to extend my study abroad stay."

But once again, Zuri found herself embracing an unexpected, but incredible, opportunity. Prior to her London experience, Zuri had applied to work at the highly competitive Disney College Program - an internship program that allows students to work, study, and live at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida. "It was only my second night in London when I was asked to do a phone interview with Disney. I took the interview at 4am London time and I really didn't think they'd select me, but they did!"

Zuri was in London for 4 months (September to December) before moving to Orlando in January 2020. To Zuri, working at Disney World was "an entirely different study abroad" experience. As a Merchandising Intern at Animal Kingdom, she was able to meet people from all over the world and it was a "dream job." That was, until COVID hit. Just as Zuri was settling into her Disney College Program experience, the world came to a standstill. The internship was abruptly put on hold,

and she, like so many others, was sent home—her plans suddenly uncertain. What was meant to be a transformative chapter in her journey had been cut short, leaving her to navigate the unknown once again. But if there was one thing Zuri had learned by now, it was how to adapt, embrace change, and find opportunity in the unexpected.

As soon as she got home, Zuri began planning her next steps. Immediately after earning her bachelor's degree, Zuri began a Master's Degree Program for Broadcast Journalism at the University of Westminster; and just like that, she found herself back in London, the city that had once been an uncertain choice but had now become a place she proudly called home. "I loved Westminster so much," she shares. "It's an international school with so many different types of cultures and personalities. I had grown up in a Catholic school environment and I had the same friends from kindergarten to twelfth grade. And while that community atmosphere is so special to me, I also discovered that I love the idea of stepping outside of my comfort zone; seeing what is out there; and being a fish out of water. It's exhilarating."

But being an international student is hard work. While attending graduate school, Zuri also worked in the University Development Office, as a freelance LiveStream Broadcaster, Freelance Music Journalist, and a Freelance Radio Broadcaster. "I was interested in so many things, I found that it was best for me to try a bunch of different jobs at the same time."

After earning her graduate degree, Zuri, with a desire to stay in London, had to find a full-time job to continue her Visa. She interviewed with the wellness company, Ripple, and secured a position as the Associate Community Success and Customer Manager. In her role, she coordinated pop-up events, worked in influencer marketing, and enjoyed yet another work environment filled with incredibly diverse people. "It was like a movie," she says, "everyone had these big personalities and we were all from different countries."

While working at Ripple, Zuri met her boyfriend, Benjamin, who is the Chief Operating Officer for SERM, an agricultural business based in France. Their shared love for travel took them on adventures across Europe, with Zuri embracing the opportunity to experience life in the French countryside. Thanks to Ripple's flexibility, she was able to work remotely while immersing herself in a new culture. "I traded the big city life for the charm of rural France, and I loved it."

With her Visa set to expire in 2024, Zuri had yet another decision to make: stay with Ripple or return home to the States. She decided to move back home. "I'm a person who likes to move around."

Upon her return to Connecticut, Zuri secured a role as the Director of Outreach and Media for Factory Underground - a technical school for music recording, sound engineering, and video production which is based inside a working recording studio. "This position combines so many of the skills I've attained so far - marketing, outreach, graphic design, editing - all in combination with my passion for music. It was perfect for me."

Zuri's love for the unexpected, the diverse, and the unique can



be traced back to her time at St. Joseph High School, where she immersed herself in choir, theatre, service trips, and athletics. These experiences shaped her adventurous spirit, teaching her to embrace new challenges and opportunities with confidence. Even when faced with setbacks, she drew upon the same drive and determination she had cultivated in high school. Now, as she continues to explore the world, she carries with her the lessons and values instilled at St. Joes—embracing every new chapter with faith, courage, and an adventurous heart.

"Change is such a powerful thing. Everyone should embrace it—and embrace who you are. At St. Joes, I was surrounded by a supportive community that encouraged me to be myself, take risks, and step outside my comfort zone. I never felt like I had to hide who I was, and because of that, I learned to face challenges with confidence. The people at St. Joes were always there to lift me up, and that gave me the courage to try new things. If I had let fear hold me back, I wouldn't have had the incredible opportunities I've experienced. My advice for future Cadets? Work hard, take risks, and never, ever stop moving forward."





An Unparalleled Exploration Into Global Politics, Critical Thinking, and Leadership.

At St. Joseph High School, the day for students enrolled in the UConn Early College Experience International Relations course starts early—7:00 a.m., to be exact. While most teenagers are just waking up, these students are already engrossed in lively debates, passionately discussing everything from global terrorism to human rights. Under the guidance of Gary Schmidlin, a veteran educator with a master's degree in International Relations specializing in Soviet foreign policy, this course transcends traditional learning, offering students a deeply immersive experience in global issues and diplomacy that few high schools can match.

One of only a few high schools in Connecticut to offer this UConn-affiliated course, St. Joes provides students the opportunity to earn three college credits in just one semester while engaging in rigorous study. Schmidlin, who has been teaching at St. Joes for over a decade, designs his classes to challenge students, pushing them to analyze complex political ideologies, evaluate foreign policy goals, and understand the motivations that drive alliances and conflicts across borders. Reflecting on the course's impact, Lilly Kugit '26 shares, "This course is of great significance to me because it emphasizes current events and helps me understand my role in our global community. I feel much more informed and engaged with the world around me."

Each morning, students gather to dissect world news in real-time, drawing insights from AI-assisted translations of global news articles and delving into the unfolding stories of nations they represent in class debates. In these lively discussions, Schmidlin's students sharpen their ability to think critically and defend their perspectives with evidence—a skill essential for success in today's rapidly changing world. The curriculum, a true college preparatory experience, covers an impressive range of topics, including global economics, environmental policy, and international law, all woven into discussions on current issues. Constantly challenged to anticipate national motivations, question political narratives, and discern truths behind propaganda, students leave this course prepared for higher academic rigor.

For Reese Vartelas '26, the timing couldn't be better. "I'm grateful to have taken this course before the presidential election. It's made me more aware of global issues that might not always make the nightly news. The skills I'm learning will help me make informed decisions in the real world."

But the real-world experience doesn't end in the classroom. This January, students in the International Relations course had the unique opportunity to attend Yale's Model United Nations (pictured above), a four-day event that brings together 2,000 students from around the world. Due to St. Joseph High School's strong reputation at the event, Cadets secured positions on elite committees, including crisis committees. Here, diplomacy is taken to a new level. Adalene Fallot '26 could hardly wait. "I learned so much about the motivations and contextual decisions that shape the actions of countries across the globe; it was incredible to collaborate with students from all

over the world."



During the event, students received a knock on their door at 2 a.m., summoning them to tackle complex crises in the middle of the night. Sleep-deprived yet undeterred, they leapt into high-stakes discussions, weighing potential outcomes, considering multifaceted solutions, and making decisions while (pretending) lives hung in the balance. These adrenaline-filled moments forged unforgettable lessons in problem-solving and teamwork, instilling students with the confidence and clarity to harness their future goals.

The UConn International Relations course requires a level of dedication and intellectual rigor comparable to college, and the benefits are profound. Through research projects, debates, and persuasive presentations, students learn to defend their views under pressure and back up their opinions with credible evidence. They emerge with more than just college credit; they leave with the skills to thrive in college and beyond. Many SJ alumni from the program have gone on to careers in international law, human rights, finance, and global security—fields where cultural awareness and the ability to navigate global complexities are invaluable.

As Mr. Schmidlin explains, "My job isn't to give students the answers but to give them the tools to evaluate complex global issues on their own. This course builds critical thinkers who can navigate our ever-evolving world with integrity and insight."

Schmidlin's philosophy centers on fostering critical thinking and resilience. By presenting multiple perspectives and sometimes playing devil's advocate, he helps students think ahead and anticipate counterarguments. Students like Lilly and Reese report that the course has fundamentally changed how they think, encouraging them to view the world with an informed, balanced perspective. At St. Joseph High School, students aren't just learning about the world; they're preparing to make a positive impact on it.



Lifelong Learning and Inspired Global Citizenship

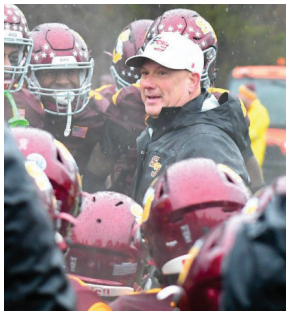
Mr. Schmidlin's philosophy centers on critical thinking and resilience. By presenting multiple perspectives and sometimes playing devil's advocate, he helps students think ahead and anticipate counterarguments. Students like Lily '26 and Reese '26 report that the course has fundamentally changed how they think, encouraging them to view the world with an informed, balanced perspective. At St. Joseph High School, students aren't just learning about the world; they're preparing to make a positive impact on it.

CELEBRATING CHAMPIONS: ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE



NCAA Bound. In November, St. Joes proudly honored 19 student athletes during the NCAA Commitment Day Ceremony. The full list of students, divisions, and the colleges they will be attending can be found online at sjcadets.org/news. A Spring Commitment Day will be hosted in May 2025.





Hall of Fame Coaches. This year, football's Coach Joe Della Vecchia (R) will be inducted into the CHSCA Hall of Fame and softball's Coach Jeff Babineau (L) will be inducted into the FCIAC Hall of Fame.

In Honor of Charles Martin '86. In November, St. Joes was proud to designate the lower floor of our Health & Wellness Center - or what was originally known as "the pit" - as the Charles R. Martin '86 Memorial Weight Room. Charles, a member of the Varsity football program, passed away at the age of 27, but left a lasting impact through his friendship, teamwork, and dedication to the football program.



Wrestling Champs. The Wrestling team secured 7th place at the CIAC Class S State Championship. Mike Maroney '25 earned 1st Place while John Maroney '25 and Lucas Kellogg '25 earned 3rd.



Congratulations to our girls soccer **All New England and All American Award Recipients:** Alexa Pino '25, Sara Parker '25, and Helena Kaczmarczyk '25.





This Fall, St. Joes was ranked Niche.com's **4th Best High School for Athletes** in Connecticut! We are so proud to offer 23 sports and for that we received an A+ for both our sports and overall student experience.



Class M State Title. Congratulations to swimmer, Maegan Grisanti '27, who executed a decisive victory in the 100 Fly, bringing home a Class M State title! Maegan was also All-State and Class M runner-up in the 200 Free. Emmy Beach '26 earned All-State in the 200 Free (3rd) and was named All-State and Class M runner-up in the 500 Free.



State Champions! In December, our SJ Hogs had an incredible victory over the undefeated Brookfield Bobcats to claim their 16th State Championship! The season was no easy feat – battling through injuries and competing in one of the toughest conferences in the state – but these young men showed our community what dedication, teamwork, and pure talent can accomplish.

Student Accolades!



TJ Wright ’25 scores his **1,000th career point** in Varsity Basketball.



Connor Fahey ’25 wins the **Charlie Capalbo Inspiration Award**.



Max Manzella ’25 and Noah Lorenzo ’27 earn 3rd in the **Bowling Doubles Tournament**.

SJ Cadets Continue to Inspire With Their Individual Awards:

All-FCIAC Award Recipients:

Football: Jake Rios ’27, Lucas Kellog ’25, Lameik Black ’26, Will Zaccagnino ’27, Jermaine Hatchett ’25, TJ Wright ’25, Kyle Wicker ’27, Jason Pagano ’25.

Girls Soccer: Sara Parker ’25, Helena Kaczmarczyk ’25, Cloe Woodley ’26, Olivia Franson ’25, Julia Nunes ’26, Alexa Pino ’25, Kailea Silva ’25, Taryn Czick ’27.

Emmy Beach ’26 (*Swim*), Maegan Grisanti ’27 (*Swim*), Olivia Pason ’25 (*Volleyball*), Kelli Ennis ’25 (*Volleyball*), Lucas Auten ’25 (*Soccer*), Zane Guglielmoni ’25 (*Soccer*), Michael Jones ’26 (*Golf*), Ella Dunford ’25 (Field Hockey), Annabelle King ’27 (*Field Hockey*), Isabella Gracia ’25 (*Field Hockey*).

All-State Award Recipients:

Football: TJ Wright ’25, Jason Pagano ’25, Jake Rios ’27

All-State Award Recipient: *Soccer*: Lucas Auten ’25

FCIAC Scholar-Athletes



Sara Parker ’25 has earned a place on the President’s Honor Roll and serves as Co-Captain of the girls’ soccer team. A four-year starter, she has garnered multiple All-FCIAC and All-State postseason honors. Beyond athletics, Sara is the recipient of the Yale Book Award and is actively involved in the Student Ambassador Program and Student Council. She plans to continue her soccer career at Xavier University.



Lucas Kellog ’25 is a President’s Honor Roll student and a dedicated multi-sport athlete. He serves as Captain of the football team and also competes for the boys’ lacrosse and wrestling teams. In 2023, he was selected to the FCIAC All-West Football Team. Lucas was honored with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Medal Award for his outstanding achievements in math and science.



Sadie Plotkin ’25 is a President’s Honor Roll student and a four-year member of both the ice hockey and softball teams. She currently serves as Co-Captain of the ice hockey team and was awarded the St. Thomas Aquinas Award for her academic and leadership excellence. Sadie will continue her ice hockey career at Hilbert College, where she plans to study crime scene investigation.



Michael Maroney ’25 is an AP Scholar with Distinction, a two-year Captain of the wrestling team and he earned All-FCIAC Honorable Mention as a sophomore. In addition to his athletic achievements, Mike is dedicated to community service, volunteering with several organizations to give back to those in need.



Wrestling Goes Co-Ed: Amelia Auten '28 Shares Her Experience as SJ's First Female Wrestler (written by Kathryn Murano '26)

Co-ed high school wrestling is rapidly gaining traction as an inclusive and empowering sport, breaking down traditional gender barriers and creating a sense of unity and competition. Unlike many sports, wrestling offers an environment where strength, skill, and determination take precedence over gender. This growing trend is not just about providing equal opportunities; it's about creating a space where athletes, regardless of gender, can push each other to be their best. Here at St. Joes, Coaches Garrett Smith and Sean Auten are proud to boast a co-ed wrestling team and encourage girls to participate in wrestling.

One athlete who has embraced this new wave of co-ed wrestling is freshman Amelia Auten, a first-year wrestler. Amelia's journey into the sport was inspired by her father and older brother, but she now competes for herself. "I started hanging around with the team last year and going to a lot of meets as an eighth grader. Now being a freshman, I understand the sport and really love it," she shares. What drew her to wrestling in the first place was the combination of physical strength and strategy—elements that make the sport unique.

Amelia is just one example of how the co-ed wrestling team at St. Joes fosters inclusivity and growth. According to Coach Smith, the wrestling team is open to everyone, regardless of size, gender, or experience level. "Wrestling is truly a sport for everyone. Anyone can join the team," he says. This philosophy has allowed both male and female wrestlers to thrive alongside one another, pushing each other to improve and break barriers.

Wrestling both boys and girls has presented Amelia with different experiences. She reflects on her matches against boys, particularly in the JV and Varsity categories. "Wrestling against JV boys honestly feels like just sending myself out there for a beating, because JV boys may be new to the sport and prioritize power over strategy," she explains. "Their only goal is to beat the girl, no matter how they do it." However, when the matchups are more evenly matched in terms of weight, Amelia finds herself competing more confidently; similarly, wrestling against varsity boys because "they have respect for the match and they don't just have a go at me for six minutes straight."

Amelia also enjoys competing against girls as it creates a supportive environment where she can share experiences and techniques. "When I get to be paired up with an even match against a girl, I usually go out there and do not disappoint," she says. Despite the differences in her matches, she doesn't have a strong preference for one group over the other—what matters most to Amelia is having a fair match. "I just want an even matchup so my opponent and I can both go out there and work moves."

To support all of his athletes, Coach Smith and the rest of the coaching staff work to instill confidence in every wrestler. "Wrestling is a sport of self-discipline, determination, and dedication," Coach Smith explains. "As coaches, we give the team all the tools needed to build their confidence. Through the repetitious drilling, conditioning, talks of health/nutrition, and building mental preparation, each wrestler (male or female) will find their own inner strength and discipline to go out on the mat to give it all they got, whether in practice or competition."

Being the only girl on the team does present its challenges. Amelia admits that being a freshman with no experience while surrounded by teammates who have 2+ years of practice can be discouraging. "It's hard to build my confidence in wrestling when I strive to be as good as everyone else in the room," she says. Despite these challenges, Amelia explains how she continues to push herself, despite how "sometimes it's hard when I feel like I am trying so hard and none of my work is paying off, or when I think that no one can see my progress. But thanks to my teammates and coaches, they always build me up and tell me how amazing I am as a first-year and that the progress I have made is incredible."

Amelia's motivation for participating in co-ed wrestling is rooted in her desire to make a difference. "My motivation was to make my community proud, build my confidence, and grow a program that is nonexistent—a girls' wrestling program," she shares. As the only girl on the team and the one who helped turn the boys' wrestling team into a co-ed team, she hopes to eventually build a girls' team.

Coach Smith sees the growing participation of girls in wrestling as a positive step for both the sport and society. Between 2023 and 2024, the number of girls wrestling increased by 102% from the previous year in the United States. Smith points out how the NCAA added women's wrestling as its 91st championship sport in January, and adds that "this should open the door to many girls to either join wrestling or join sports where it's not offered as a separate sport for them. We are proud to be part of this and encourage more females to be part of this wrestling history."

Amelia's journey is a testament to the power of inclusivity in sports. By challenging gender norms and creating opportunities for athletes of all backgrounds, co-ed wrestling is not only leveling the playing field but also fostering growth and unity. As more schools embrace this model, athletes like Amelia and coaches like the ones at St. Joes are helping pave the way for future generations of wrestlers to compete and thrive.







About our Student Sports Reporter



Kathryn Murano '26 is a Student Sports Reporter for SJ and is tasked with attending SJ games, matches, and meets, and then writing articles on the results. Her articles are published on FCIAC website as well as sjcadets.org.

CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2025!










A Journey from Virtual Beginnings to Graduation Day

Four years ago, the Class of 2025's journey at St. Joseph High School began unlike any other. Instead of gathering in the gym for an Accepted Student Night filled with cheers and introductions, they met their future classmates through a screen, celebrating their acceptance over Zoom. Their freshman year was marked by masked smiles, socially distanced classrooms, and a high school experience that looked far different from what they had imagined. Yet, despite these early challenges, this class refused to let obstacles define them. Instead, they forged ahead, determined to build connections, embrace opportunities, and make the most of their time at SJ.

Now, as they prepare to walk across the graduation stage, the Class of 2025 stands as a testament to resilience, ambition, and the power of community. Over the past four years, they have excelled in the classroom, led student organizations, and made an indelible mark on the fields, courts, and performance stages. They took those initial virtual introductions and turned them into lifelong friendships, growing into a tight-knit class that has helped shape the heart of St. Joes.

Their achievements extend far beyond the walls of SJ. The members of the Class of 2025 are earning acceptances to some of the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities, pursuing careers in STEM, business, the humanities, fine arts, and beyond. Their success is not just a reflection of their academic excellence but of their determination, adaptability, and ability to turn challenges into opportunities.

More than anything, what sets the Class of 2025 apart is their spirit. As leaders of our school, they have created a culture of kindness, inclusivity, and perseverance. They redefined what it meant to be a Cadet in uncertain times, and their legacy will be felt by the classes that follow in their footsteps.

What began as a virtual welcome has now come full circle as they prepare to step forward into the next chapter of their lives. As we celebrate their accomplishments, we know this is just the beginning. The best is yet to come.

A MILESTONE FOR ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL:
The Class of 2025 will graduate on May 31, 2025. Their graduation will mark the 60th class of St. Joseph High School students to walk across our graduation stage!

Class of 2025 College Acceptances
(as of February 2025)

Adelphi University
Albertus Magnus College
American University
Anderson University
Arizona State University
Assumption University
Auburn University
Baylor University
Berry College
Boston College
Bryant University
Bucknell University
Catholic University of America
Central Connecticut State University
Champlain College
Clark Atlanta University
Clark University
Clarkson University
Clemson University
Coastal Carolina University
College of Charleston
College of the Holy Cross
Columbia University
Creighton University
Curry College
Drexel University
Drury University
Duquesne University
East Carolina University
Eastern Connecticut State University
Elizabethtown College
Elon University
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Emmanuel College
Endicott College
Fairfield University
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Fordham University
Franklin Pierce University
Furman University
Gettysburg College
High Point University
Hilbert College
Hofstra University
Indiana University
Iona University
Ithaca College
James Madison University
Johns Hopkins University
Johnson & Wales University
Kansas State University
Keene State College
Kent State University
La Salle University
Lasell University
Liberty University
Louisiana State University
Loyola Marymount University
Loyola University Chicago
Loyola University Maryland
Manhattan University
Manhattanville University
Marian University
Marist University
Marquette University
Marymount University
Marywood University
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
Merrimack College
Miami University (Oxford)
Michigan State University
Minnesota State University (Mankato)
Misericordia University
Monmouth University
Morgan State University
Mount Saint Mary College
New York University
Northeastern University
Oklahoma State University
Pace University
Penn State University
Pepperdine University
Providence College
Quinnipiac University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rhode Island College
Rider University
Robert Morris University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Roger Williams University
Rollins College
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Rowan University
Rutgers University
Sacred Heart University
Saint Ambrose University
Saint Anselm College
Saint Joseph's University
Saint Mary's College of California
Saint Peter's University
Salve Regina University
San Diego State University
Savannah College of Art and Design
Seton Hall University
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
Siena College
Southern Connecticut State University
Southern Methodist University
Springfield College
St. Bonaventure University
St. John's University
St. Thomas Aquinas College
Stonehill College
Stony Brook University
SUNY at New Paltz
SUNY Buffalo State University
SUNY University at Buffalo
Temple University
Texas Christian University
The Ohio State University
The University of Alabama
The University of Tampa
The University of Tennessee
Trinity College
Trinity University
Union College
University at Albany
University College Dublin
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas
University of Bridgeport
University of Central Florida
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Connecticut
University of Dayton
University of Delaware
University of Glasgow
University of Hartford
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Kentucky
University of Maine
University of Maine at Augusta
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts
University of Miami
University of Michigan
University of Mississippi
University of New England
University of New Hampshire
University of New Haven
University of North Carolina Wilmington
University of Oklahoma
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Rhode Island
University of Richmond
University of Saint Joseph
University of San Francisco
University of Scranton
University of South Carolina
University of South Florida
University of Southern Maine
University of Utah
University of Vermont
University of Virginia
University of Wisconsin
University of Wyoming
Utah State University
Utica University
Villanova University
Wake Forest University
West Virginia University
Western Connecticut State University
Western Michigan University
Western New England University
Wheaton College - MA
Wichita State University
William & Mary
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Xavier University
York College of Pennsylvania

Expanding on Dual Enrollment Courses

It is no surprise that our Seniors have been accepted into some of the top colleges and universities in the country. When they begin in the Fall, they will already have college credits on their transcripts thanks to SJ's Dual Enrollment and College Level Courses.

St. Joseph High School proudly provides students with access to 27 Early College Experience, college-level, and Advanced Placement courses—offering more opportunities than any other Catholic private school in our region. Our Dual Enrollment and College-Level Courses offer motivated students the chance to earn college credit while still in high school, engaging in rigorous coursework that promotes intellectual growth and critical thinking. These programs empower students to take ownership of their learning, setting them on a path toward future success.

College-Level Courses Currently Available:

Advanced Physics (University of CT)
Biology & Lab (University of CT)
Calculus, BC (University of CT)
Entrepreneurship (University of Iowa)
Faith & Reason (Sacred Heart University)
International Relations (University of CT)
Music Theory and Ear Training (University of CT)
Physics (University of CT)
Statistics (University of CT)
United States History Since 1877 (University of CT)
World Religions (Sacred Heart University)

Advanced Placement Courses

Art & Design
Calculus, AB
Calculus, BC
Chemistry & Lab
Economics
English Language and Composition
English Literature Composition
Environmental Science
European History
French Language
Pre-Calculus
Psychology
Spanish Language
Statistics
United States Government and Politics
United States History

CELEBRATING SERVICE: *St. Joes' 3rd Annual Stuff-a-Bus Food Drive Exceeds Expectations*



It was nearing 12:00pm on Saturday, February 8, as Deacon Jeffrey Font, Director of Campus Ministry, alongside parent and student volunteers, found themselves calling one of our school buses back to campus— searching for one more spot to fit yet another bag of groceries. What started out as a goal of stuffing five school buses of food for five local pantries, turned into six 44-passenger buses filled with non-perishables by noon.

"I couldn't believe - well, actually, it's St. Joes, so I could believe - the response from our community when we asked each student to bring in non-perishable donations," remarked Deacon Font. "This event is something that is near and dear to my heart. I have gone to deliver the groceries; I have personally seen the bare shelves and the lines of those in need outside the door to pantries and shelters. This Stuff-a-Bus food drive is one of our most important endeavors at St. Joes."

Established in 2022, Campus Ministry's annual February food drive has become a powerful tradition, uniting the entire community—and beyond—in support of those in need. In its inaugural year, the initiative successfully filled four school buses with donations. In 2023, the goal was set at six buses, and the community once again rose to the occasion. This year, Deacon Font set his sights on five buses for five pantries – and once more, the generosity of our supporters surpassed expectations.

The food was donated to five local food pantries: The Bridgeport Rescue Mission (Bridgeport), The Sterling House Community Center (Stratford), The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry (Derby), The Mercy Learning Center (Bridgeport), and The St. James Food Pantry (Stratford).

"Our senior leaders, Peer Ministers, and parent volunteers delivered the food," said Deacon Font, "and we were granted permission to go inside the pantries. What we learn each year is that during Thanksgiving, the pantries receive so many donations. But after the holidays…right around February…is when the food stops coming in."

After a school-wide Mass in January, Deacon Font reminded our students of this very fact. "If you each bring in just two bags of groceries," he told the students, "we could help the nearly 43,000 people in Fairfield County who go to bed hungry each night. No child should have to go to bed hungry, ever."

"I love going to buy the groceries with my family," remarked senior Cadet, Sebastian Martinez. "It always reminds me of how lucky we are that we can go buy food whenever we simply run out. We don't have to worry about where our next meal will come from. But some people don't have it so easy and I want to do my part to help - not just at Stuff-a-Bus but for the rest of my life."

"These food pantries," said Deacon Font, "are vital to our local community. They help so many people every single day, and they cannot do it alone."











CELEBRATING JUSTICE: *Mock Trial Team Finishes Year 1 in Top 36% of CT High Schools*



It's been six years since St. Joseph High School's Mock Trial Team argued in the courtroom. But on Friday, December 13, 2024, the recently re-founded team participated in its first competition and won both trials. While they did not move on after the Connecticut State Playoffs, they are already preparing for next year's competition.

On February 7, 2025, the Mock Trial Team exited the playoffs after hard-fought trials against Wilton High School and Immaculate High School. St. Joes finished in the top 20 of 56 Connecticut High School Mock Trial Teams and although our students were not the only first-year program in the top 20, the competition director remarked that "a first-year team has not made it this far in many years." Coach Nicolle Lipkin said "I'm really impressed by how each member of our team was able to comprehend, digest, analyze, and effectively apply complicated legal principles in a courtroom in such a short amount of time."

Wilton and Immaculate proved to be very strong teams, evidenced by the fact that both advanced to Elite Eight, meaning the two are currently in the top 15% of teams in the state and will keep competing in the quarter-finals.

Students on SJ's Mock Trial Team found the most rewarding part of their experience was watching their hard work and dedication translate into successful trials. The team committed to rigorous Sunday practices, each lasting 2–3 hours, but Captain Olivia Szczerba '25 emphasized that the effort was well worth it. Captain Vanessa Theagene '25 echoed this sentiment, noting, "While Sundays were long, our coaches did an incredible job of teaching us legal terminology in such a short time. In the end, the late meetings and scrimmages paid off." For Ellen Romano '25, who commuted 40 minutes by train, the initial commitment seemed daunting. However, she reflected, "Giving up part of my weekend felt like a big sacrifice at first, but it quickly became one of my favorite activities at SJ. It never felt like a waste of time, and looking back, I wouldn't change a thing." The students agreed that beyond legal knowledge, Mock Trial sharpened essential life skills, including public speaking, critical thinking, professionalism, and teamwork—preparing them for success well beyond the courtroom.

The team is graduating five seniors who each played a pivotal part of the team's success including: Captain Vanessa Theagene (attorney & witness), Captain Olivia Szczerba (attorney), Ellen Romano (attorney), Zoë McLean (attorney), and Aidan Broer (witness). When asked about this graduating class, Coach Kyle Souza '15 said, "We owe this group everything. While we brought a set of principles and philosophies, it really was our group of seniors that took it, ran with it, and established our positive culture which drove everyone to do their best and have each other's backs. We're really going to miss our seniors next year, but I think our underclassmen will be ready to pick up where they left off."

Junior Captain Rhys Ingram can attest to that, "I certainly plan on returning. My goal for next year is to, at a minimum, make the Elite Eight. But I really want to win it all."

The Mock Trial Team is coached by Attorney Kyle D. Souza '15 and his wife, Attorney Nicolle M. Lipkin. The two met at Quinnipiac University School of Law. Coaches Souza and Lipkin restarted this team to give back to the St. Joseph High School community, especially because it was this team that showed Coach Souza he ultimately wanted to go to law school and become an attorney when he led his SJ Mock Trial Team to playoffs in 2014-2015.





THE CLASS OF 2029 JOINS THE ST. JOES FAMILY

For Carly and Robert Dunford, St. Joseph High School is more than just a school—it's a legacy. As they stood in the packed gymnasium on February 5, watching their children, Jack '27 and Ella '25, welcome the next generation of Cadets, they couldn't help but reflect on their own journey with St. Joes. "We have two completely different kids," Carly shared. "But what we love about St. Joes is that it gives them both exactly what they need to thrive."

That sense of belonging, of knowing that every student is supported, challenged, and celebrated, was on full display at Accepted Student Night, where the Class of 2029 and their families got a first-hand look at what makes St. Joes so special. From the moment they walked through the doors, families were greeted with enthusiasm by Student Ambassadors, setting the tone for an evening filled with warmth, tradition, and excitement for the future.

More Than an Introduction—A Welcome Home

The night kicked off in the gym where Chief Enrollment & Marketing Officer, Jessica Costa, and President, David Klein, addressed the incoming students. But it was Jack and Ella Dunford—this year's student emcees—who truly brought the room to life, sharing their favorite SJ experiences and traditions with the crowd. "This place changes you in the best way possible," Ella told the audience. "You grow, you find your people, and you start to realize just how much you're capable of."

Parents had the opportunity to hear from Director of College & School Counseling, Terence Houlihan, who reassured them that while high school can seem overwhelming, St. Joes is dedicated to guiding students every step of the way. Meanwhile, the future Cadets stepped into classrooms, where they met faculty members and Student Ambassadors for interactive games and activities—some of them even meeting their first high school friends.

"It meant so much to hear an eighth-grader say, 'Coming in tonight, I was nervous, but now I feel like I really belong here.' I smiled because I knew exactly what they meant, I was in their shoes—St. Joes has a way of turning uncertainty into confidence, and strangers into family," shared Zoë McLean '25

A Community That Lasts a Lifetime

Beyond the structured programming, families explored different aspects of St. Joes that make it more than just a school—it's a family. The Media Center buzzed with conversation as parents connected with members of the Parent Association, asked questions about financial aid, and learned about the Student Academic Center's resources. At the bookstore, excited future Cadets tried on their first SJ sweatshirts and hats, beaming as they proudly sported maroon and gold. And of course, no Accepted Student Night would be complete without a celebratory photo in front of the school's Step & Repeat banner, capturing a moment that can be compared four years from now.

As the night came to a close, the excitement in the air was undeniable. These students weren't just choosing a high school—they were stepping into a community that would support them, challenge them, and shape them into the leaders of tomorrow. And for the admission team, seeing another generation begin their St. Joes journey was a special moment. "The Class of 2029 is truly special," remarked Kendra Fiala, Director of Admission. "Admission to St. Joes is not just about academics—it's about character and

kindness. Each of these students has demonstrated the qualities that make a great Cadet, and we are thrilled to welcome them into our community. We can't wait to see how they grow, lead, and leave their mark on St. Joes in the years to come."

As we eagerly anticipate the fall, one thing is certain: the Class of 2029 is ready to make their mark at St. Joes, carrying on the legacy of excellence, faith, and friendship that has defined our school for generations.

MEET THE INCREDIBLY TALENTED CLASS OF 2029!



38% of 2029 Cadets have been recognized for their **leadership.** Some have even had the opportunity to collaborate with influential figures and social advocates.

22% of the Class of 2029 take advanced **high school courses** while still in middle school, excelling in math, engineering, science, and music!

33% of the Class of 2029 are **gifted artists** who volunteer their time and talent to beautify holiday events and community projects.

72% of the Class of 2029 **volunteer** at youth sports camps, local shelters, pantries, animal welfare agencies, and nursing homes to give back to their communities.

30% of the Class of 2029 are **Captains** and Co-Captains of their teams, including baseball, basketball, soccer, football, and many more!

70% of the Class of 2029 excel in the **arts**. Some participate in competitive art shows and events. Cadets perform at the Klein Memorial Theatre and Carnegie Hall.

32% of the Class of 2029 students are actively involved in coding, developing their own software, and excelling in **STEM fields**.















The Ripple Effect of Giving: Honoring Those Who Make St. Joes Possible

Every bid raised, every donation pledged, and every moment of generosity at the Maroon & Gold Gala isn't just about a single evening—it's about the lives that are changed because of it. On November 9, 2024, the St. Joes community came together not just to celebrate philanthropy, but to witness its impact first-hand. Through the Fund-a-Future initiative, this annual event ensures that deserving students have the opportunity to embrace the full St. Joes experience, and one day, pay it forward to the next generation.

This year's Gala carried even greater significance as we honored three individuals whose commitment to St. Joes has transformed countless lives. Pat Pardee, a beloved faculty member retiring after an extraordinary 50-year career, was recognized for his profound influence on generations of students. His legacy extends far beyond the classroom—through his teaching, mentorship, coaching and dedication, he has shaped the hearts and minds of Cadets for half a century. Mary '88 and Tom Dineen, devoted volunteers and former SJ parents, were also honored for their generosity and service. Their steadfast commitment has strengthened the school community in immeasurable ways, embodying the spirit of giving that makes St. Joes so special.

While the event itself was elegant and filled with excitement—from a lively dinner to spirited live auctions—the true magic of the evening was in the stories of those impacted by the generosity of our donors. Nearly 60% of all Cadets receive some form of financial aid, their futures forever changed by the support of those who believe in them. The generosity in this room tonight doesn't just help students attend St. Joes—it allows them to thrive here. It opens doors, creates opportunities, and instills in them a sense of privilege and responsibility that will carry on for years to come.

Beyond the fundraising, the Maroon & Gold Gala is a testament to the strength of the St. Joes family. It is a night that reminds us all that this school is more than just a place—it is a legacy built on faith, service, and the belief that education has the power to change lives.

As we look ahead, we are filled with gratitude for those who continue to invest in our students, and with excitement for the future Cadets whose journeys are just beginning.











A Celebration of Sisterhood: St. Joseph High School's Annual Ladies Luncheon

On Sunday, March 2, the women of St. Joseph High School gathered at the beautiful Whitney Farms Golf Club for the annual Ladies Luncheon, a cherished tradition that brings together mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, alumnae, and friends for a day of connection and celebration.

From the moment guests arrived, there was an undeniable energy of warmth and camaraderie, as old friendships were rekindled and new bonds were formed. The elegant setting provided the perfect backdrop for an afternoon filled with meaningful conversation, laughter, and shared memories. Attendees were treated to a delicious buffet lunch, raffles, and the opportunity to explore an array of local vendors showcasing everything from handcrafted jewelry to wellness products.

One of the most anticipated moments of the day was the keynote address delivered by Gabriella "Gabby" Wayman, a current junior whose impressive dedication to service and leadership has already made a significant impact. Gabby's inspiring journey, which began as a freshman when she was honored with SJ's "Students Who Make a Difference" award, has led her to extraordinary opportunities. From serving as Vice President of the NAACP Youth Chapter in Bridgeport to becoming a Blessed Girls Youth Ambassador, her passion for advocacy and global outreach has taken her far beyond the walls of St. Joes.

"Recently, I was deeply honored to attend the 2024 World Summit on Women and Girls at the House of Lords in London," Gabby shared. "I had the privilege of joining youth advocates and leaders from around the world to discuss the future of leadership and the empowerment of women and girls. It was an experience that reaffirmed my commitment to making a difference."

Her words resonated deeply with the audience, serving as a poignant reminder of the power of leadership, service, and the enduring spirit of the SJ community. As the luncheon came to a close, guests departed with a renewed sense of inspiration, grateful for an afternoon spent among remarkable women who continue to shape the world around them.

With gratitude to all who attended and supported this special event, we look forward to welcoming everyone back next year for another unforgettable gathering.

Many Thanks to the Incredible Volunteers Who Helped Make the Day a Success:

Parent Association Co-Chairs
Shannon Fahey P '20, '22, '25, '27
Alex Sliva P '26

Event Volunteers
Laura Badaracco
Lydia Badaracco
Sasha Benjamin P '27
Natasha Campbell P '28
Cara Fahey '27
KerryAnne Linnane P '27
Kris Murano P '24, '26
Magda Rafalko P '26
Maya Rafalko '26
Keira Sliva '26

CLASS NOTES

Cadet Connections

1960s



Richard Aceto '68 wrote in to share his favorite memories of SJ. He writes, "The entire staff, instructors, Basketball and Track coaches were outstanding and very influential in my success. They prompted my desire to attend St. Michael's College (BA) followed by the University of Utah (MBA).

I entered the Air Force in 1972 and served for 28 years, retiring as a 0-6. During that time, I graduated from the USAF Air War College, Air Command, and Staff College and the Squadron Officers School. As I look back, SJ set the stage for receiving the prestigious Legion of Merit, Outstanding Unit Award with Valor device (2), and "Best in Air Force" honors while leading Mission Support Operations as a Commander at the 1st SOW and as the Air Force Element Commander at the Defense Intelligence Agency. I am forever grateful to all at SJ! If anyone wants to reach out to Richard, they can contact SJ's Advancement Office for his information.



Susan Drucker Judge '68 finds great joy in entertaining residents in senior homes all over CT, RI, and PA. She received her B.F.A. in drama and performance from UConn in 1991 and has appeared in many prime time TV shows and movies in NYC. She sings and plays guitar, just as she did while at SJ when she started her own band in homeroom!

1970s



David Hoha '71 visited CT during Christmas and while here, he enjoyed breakfast with his 1971 classmates: **Carol Johnston Abrams, Pam Gallagher Arsenault, Cindy Salce Neidermier, Bobbie Nelson Seelin, Peggy Kuhar Marino, Rick Henrietta, Dennis O'Connor**, and **Dennis Laccovole.** It was a great morning filled with reminiscing and storytelling!



Rosemarie Skawinski Chaves '74 and her husband, Angelo, celebrated five years of being members of The Corvette Mechanic Team at Corvettes at Carlisle last August. They have been bringing their Corvettes to the annual four-day event since 2008.



Lynn Pirozzoli '74's "Frosty" took first place in the Theodore Randolph Field Hunter Trials, and the Virginia Field Hunter Trials in 2024 for Best Turned Out!

After graduating from St. Joes, Lynn enjoyed a career in environmental science. But later in life, has discovered a passion for interior design - even taking classes to stay sharp while learning new techniques and networking with new business associates.

---- Cadet Connections ----

Donna Rago Quinzi '79 moved to Manlius, NY one year ago to be closer to her son David, his wife Margaux (both of whom are physicians), and her two granddaughters. Syracuse winters can be especially cold so she spends several weeks with her other children (Brianna, her husband Sam, and their new baby) as well as her son, Stephen, in Virginia. Donna is entering her 39th year as a Registered Dietitian with the University of Rochester. She still keeps in touch with **Kathy and Ray Gallagher (Class of 1979)** and enjoys hearing about other classmates.

1980s



Shawn Flores '80 shares that his son, Miguel Flores, graduated from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island on November 15, 2024. Pictured is Miguel in his Marine Corps Dress Blues alongside his father, a Deputy Sheriff.



Nanci Zibell '83 retired in June from the Bridgeport Public School system. During her 35-year teaching career, Nanci taught grades 4-6. She is thoroughly enjoying her retirement and loves to travel to Florida with her husband. She writes, "I have told so many people that there was nothing like my high school years; they were the best. For most of my years at SJ, I worked backstage in the theater department. All the jobs I had in theater helped me learn the skills I needed to manage a classroom full of students."

1990s



Michelle Pagliaro Haywood '90 is proud to share that her son, Tyler Haywood, was married in 2024 to Miley Xiou. Michelle was surrounded by friends and family at the wedding, including **Natalie Hammond '90**, **Jennifer Cerritelli Bshara '90** and **Alicia Cerritelli McTigue '90.**

Christopher Silhavey '93 successfully completed the Executive Micro MBA Post Graduate Certificate program at the University of New Haven. He is a Data Engineering & Governance Manager at Accenture, LLP.

Leonel Chaves '94 is a Wealth Advisor for JP Morgan. He writes to share that his favorite memory at SJ was beating West Haven at the annual Thanksgiving Day football game.

ALUMNI SPOTTED AT THE 2025 LADIES LUNCHEON!

We thank our Alumni for always returning to St. Joes!

Mary Butala '78, P '10, '16
Nancy Gallagher P '88, GP '16, '18, '21, '23
Mary Dineen '88, P '16, '18, '21, '23
Michele Krasznai '89, P '15, '18, '20
Moira Matthews '89, P '19, '24, '28
Danielle Paolozzi '89, P '19, '20
Renee Molnar '90, P '21, '23, '25
Krissy Campbell '92, P '26, '28
Kara Golino '92, P '28
Danielle Hall '92, P '28
Tiffany Tortora '92, P '28
Trisha Hazzard '93, P '29
Jennifer Verbeek '93
Tiffany Lozada Buonicore '94, P '26
Jessica DePalma '94
Lyndsey Arone '98, P '28
Michele McPadden '98, P '29
Margaret Blanco '17
Kate Goncalves '17



---- Cadet Connections ----

Ryan Iacommaci '94 was honored at the UConn School of Pharmacy's annual Alumni Awards Reception in September 2024. Ryan, a graduate of the UConn School of Pharmacy Bachelor's Program, received the Exceptional Service Award. He has spent more than two decades as a pharmacist in Bridgeport, CT and in 2008, he became a vaccinating pharmacist. Ryan also serves as an instructor for UConn and the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

2000s



Robert Stone, III '01 graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology with an MFA in Photography and Related Media. Since 2022, he has been teaching photography at CT State Housatonic and beginning Spring 2025 he'll be teaching photography at Southern Connecticut State University.



In November 2024, **Katherine Garber Barsevich '02** was appointed to Executive Director of Spring Village at Stratford, a vibrant Assisted Living and Memory Care Community. Katherine and her husband, Todd, have enrolled their daughters at St. Mark School in Stratford where they continue to enjoy softball and gymnastics.



Sara Hebert Conder '04 received her Master of Science in Nursing, specializing in nursing education from Sacred Heart University. She was promoted to Director of Clinical Placements at Fairfield University Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies. Sara is also married and the mother of 3 girls: **Kiely '27**, Kaitlyn, and Kourtney.



Alexandria Roman Williams '05 shared a picture of her and **Christopher Williams '06.** Alexandria is a Manager in Research Engagement Services at Gartner.

Congratulations to **Paul Brunner '05** and his wife, Carmelena, who welcomed their son, Joseph, on March 6, 2025. Paul is a current faculty member at St. Joes in the Theology Department. He also runs the Stock Market & Entrepreneurship Club.



Stephanie Melkus Hashemi '08, married to **David Hashemi '07**, welcomed their daughter Stella Elisa to the world on October 3, 2024.



Maureen Davis Gutowski '09 joyfully welcomed her second daughter, Tiana Marie Gutowski, on October 23, 2023. Tiana adores her big sister who recently turned 13. Maureen has been a professional pet groomer for 15 years and dreams of opening her own business in the future.

---- Cadet Connections ----

2010s



Rob Freeman '12 is currently a third year Resident on the Radiation Oncology team at Temple Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.



Jennifer Furino '12 celebrated her wedding last year and has since welcomed two children. Reflecting on her time at St. Joseph High School, she shared that her fondest memories are the lifelong friendships she made. "Some of the best friends ever—I'm still close with them today! The staff was always amazing as well."

Caitlin Boyle Imeidopf '14 was married in April 2024. Congratulations, Caitlin!



Jill Martinez '15 will be getting married on June 14, 2025 to Brent Ludlow. While they currently live in Nashville, TN, they recently purchased a home in Connecticut.



SJ Arnone '16 graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2020 and is currently in his final year of medical school at the University of Connecticut He will graduate in May 2025 and plans to pursue a residency in Anesthesiology. SJ and his fiancée, Alex Nemer, whom he met in college, are excited to celebrate their wedding in June 2026.



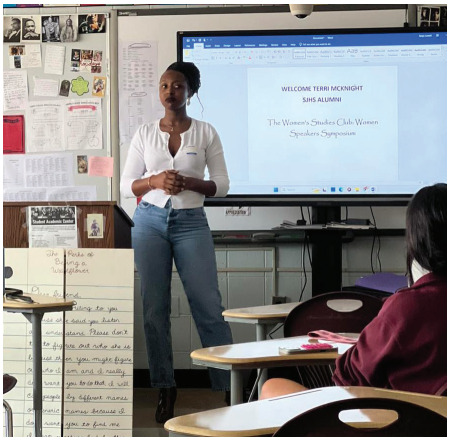
Juliann (Gurge) Subtil '16 and **Ryan Subtil '17** were married on January 4 at St. James Church where Juliann went to elementary school. Ryan is following his passion in coaching soccer and Juliann is a staff accountant at a small CPA firm. She is also studying and actively taking the CPA exams.



Kayla Hammond '18 was married to Jimmy Robbins in 2024. Kayla and Jimmy welcomed their daughter, Monroe Rae, on February 5, 2025, weighing 7 lbs 9 ozs. Kayla graduated from the University of Tampa in 2021 and married Jimmy on February 10, 2024 with SJ classmates **Shea Balducci '18**, **Caitlin Brown '18,** and **Allison Anka '18** as bridesmaids. They currently live in Marietta, G.A. Kayla is the daughter of alum, **Natalie Green Hammond '90**.



---- Cadet Connections ----



Terri McKnight '19 was on campus recently to serve as a guest speaker for SJ's Women's Studies Club. Terri shared her inspiring journey from St. Joes to now applying to medical school, where she will pursue a career in dermatology.

2020s



Mari Andrzejewski '20 graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in May 2024 and became a registered nurse. She is working as a pediatric mental health nurse at Children's Hospital Colorado for the next year before returning to Penn to complete her PhD in nursing.

Ana Nogueira '20 will be graduating this year from Sacred Heart University with a Bachelor of Science in Health Science, specializing in Public Health. Alongside her studies, Ana has been coaching U8 and U10 girls' soccer, finding joy in mentoring young athletes and sharing her love for the game.

Jon Jazwinski '21 graduated from Yale University in 2025 with a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and will attend UConn's School of Dental Medicine in the fall.



Tommy Phalen '24 was spotted on campus recently when he had the opportunity to speak with our Mandarin students about his incredible six-week trip to Taiwan. In Taiwan, Tommy participated in the National Security Language Initiative. Our SJ students heard first-hand about Tommy's experience immersing himself in Taiwanese culture, honing his Mandarin skills, and the valuable lessons he learned during the trip.



Dominick Parry '24 is finishing up his freshman year at Curry College. He has kept a GPA over a three and completed his first season of football. He was challenged to play three positions and even got in a varsity game. He's loving his new teammates, but never forgets his hog family. He even begged a professor to let him take an exam early to make the championship game at UConn to cheer on his team -- once a hog always a hog!

STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR ALMA MATER!

Your journey with St. Joseph High School didn't end at graduation—it is a lifelong connection of shared experiences and memories.

Whether you've moved to a new city, started a new job, or reached an exciting milestone, we want to celebrate your achievements and keep you connected to the SJ community.

Update your information online by scanning the QR Code below or by visiting sjcadets.org/stay-connected. We can't wait to hear from you!



Homecoming Weekend
October 3 - 5, 2025









Friday, October 3 - Sunday, October 5

50th Reunion for the Class of 1975

The 50th Reunion Committee is planning a fun and nostalgia filled schedule of events to bring you back to SJ!
Visit sjcadets.org/50threunion for additional information.

Saturday, October 4, 2025

Homecoming Football Game, SJ vs. Fairfield Ludlowe

Watch the game and visit the Alumni tent for complimentary tailgate fare and a special SJ swag giveaway!

Class Reunions (2020, 2015, 2000)

Reconnect with classmates and join St. Joes as we host a celebration for our 5, 10, and 25-year class reunions!

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Homecoming Alumni Mass

Conclude Reunion Weekend by celebrating Mass with fellow alumni and a special blessing for reunion classes. Enjoy a light breakfast hosted by the Alumni Office and walk the halls of your old high school reminiscing about good times.

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

2025 Upcoming Events

April 9
Grandparents Mass

April 9
Spring Open House

May 1-3
Spring Musical
The Addams Family

May 15
Fine Arts Night

May 20
Legacy Mass

May 29
Class Day &
Baccalaureate Mass

May 31
Commencement for
the Class of 2025

June 16
SJAA Golf
Tournament

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You are cordially invited to attend the

ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

Maroon & Gold GALA

COCKTAILS | DINNER | AUCTION

Benefitting student financial
assistance programs

NOVEMBER

SATURDAY **15** 6:00 PM

2025

The Waterview
215 ROOSEVELT DR, MONROE CT

sjcadets.org/gala