DePaul CRISTO REY

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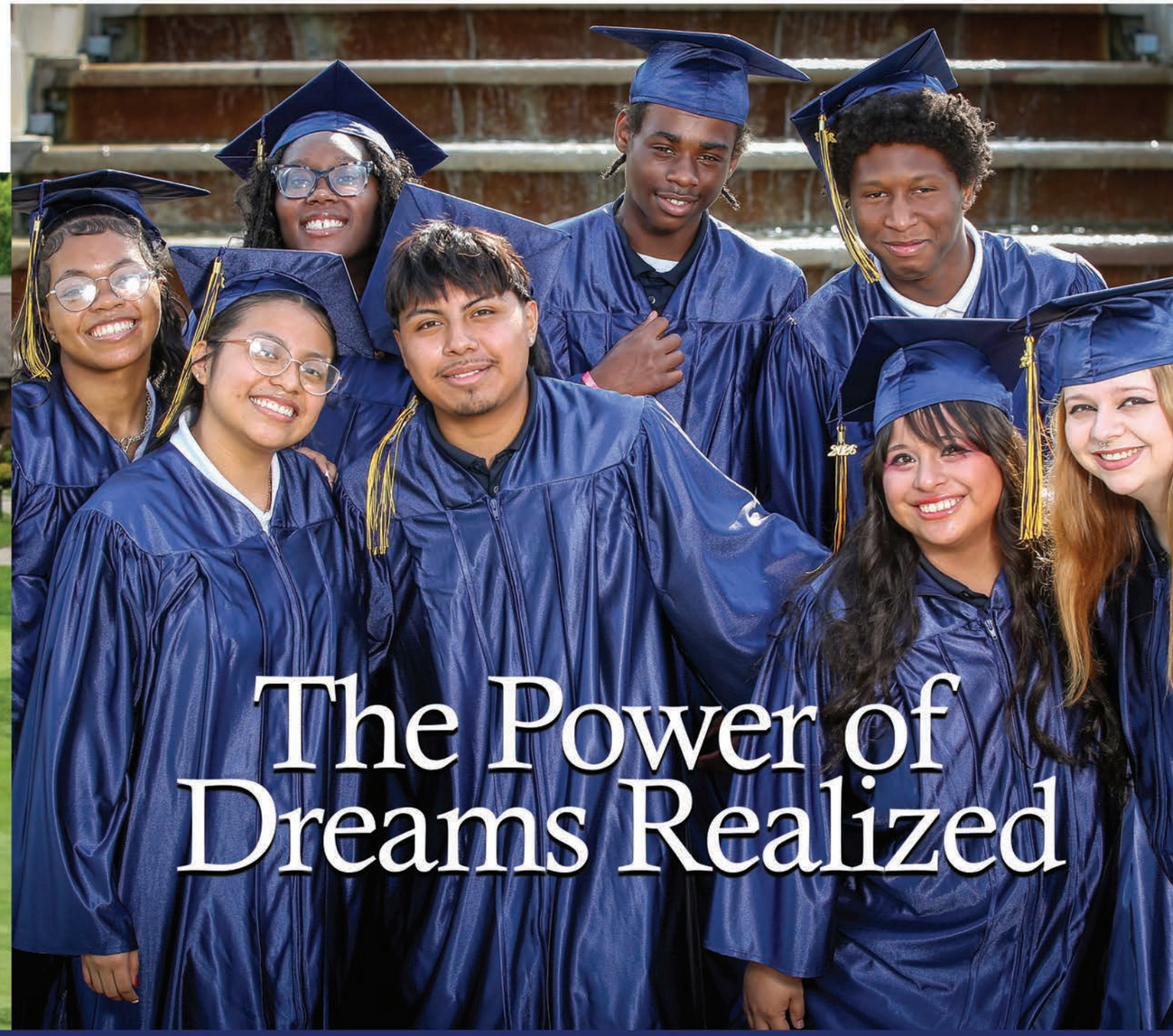
Inside: Milestones, Momentum and $1 Million

DePaul CRISTO REY HIGH SCHOOL

MATTERS



A Word from Our Valedictorian

Dear DPCR Community:

This year, when the season changes from summer to fall in the months to come, this change will feel different. Different because my classmates and I will no longer be attending DePaul Cristo Rey. As I think back on our senior year, I can't help but reflect on the accomplishments of my classmates and all of the wonderful things we were able to do through the support we received at DPCR. Out of our class of 63 graduates, 21 students received at least one full-tuition scholarship. Many of us are first-generation students, which is why I want to thank all of you for giving us the opportunity to go to college and break generational barriers.

As a Gates Scholarship recipient, I know the impact that this will have on my life. Thanks to this scholarship, I will now be able to attend the **University of Notre Dame** without any financial pressure and the freedom to go above and beyond. When I received this scholarship, I couldn't help but reflect on how DPCR has helped me get to this point. From the accommodating teachers to the college advisors who have made it their mission to prepare us for college, I was given the support I needed every step of the way. Thanks to the wonderful community at DPCR, my classmates and I were able to receive more than scholarships; we've received support and hope that has permanently altered our lives in indescribable ways. I hope to continue breaking cycles in my family and become the first-ever licensed attorney. I plan to major in political science at Notre Dame, a major that will help me learn how to make a difference in my community.

I want to thank you all again for assisting the Class of 2026. I can't wait to see all of the accomplishments my classmates and I will have in the years to come. Regardless of where we are, your help will forever be a part of our journey to success.

With gratitude,

Yirialis Diaz Mercedes '26
Valedictorian

Sister Barbara Davis, SC

September 10, 1942 — April 22, 2026

Remembering A Life Devoted to God, Students and Service

The DePaul Cristo Rey community lost a dedicated Board member, school advocate and tireless volunteer with the death of **Sister Barbara Davis, SC,** in April. S. Barbara joined DPCR's Board of Directors in 2017 and was recognized with DPCR's Founders Leadership Award in 2022 for her service, charity and passion for the school's mission. S. Barbara had a long and distinguished career in education serving 50 years as a teacher, Catholic elementary school principal, school consultant, and coordinator of alumni relations for Catholic college graduates. She was loved and appreciated by students, families and colleagues, and honored as a Distinguished Principal by the **National Catholic Educational Association Department of Elementary Schools** and was a recipient of the Governor's Award for Excellence. This quote, one of her favorites from **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,** sums up her career, life and 65 years as a Sister of Charity. "You will often be at a stand for what is best in a situation so new, but only do your best as you have always done and leave the rest to our dear God."

DPCR has recognized her lifelong dedication to Catholic education and love of DPCR with the new **S. Barbara Davis Memorial Fund** which will support the academic program. To make a gift, please visit depaulcristorey.org/support or contact **Sparkle Worley** at sparkle.worley@dpcr.net.

Certifications Launch New Era in Corporate Work Study

As the demands of today's workforce continue to evolve, DePaul Cristo Rey is reimagining how students prepare for the future. This summer marks a significant new chapter for the school's Corporate Work Study Program (CWSP) which is a signature component of the Cristo Rey model and has been an integral part of a DPCR education since the school's founding in 2011.

In those 15 years, the world of work has and continues to rapidly change, so DPCR leaders have spent more than two years researching and exploring ways to invest in students so they are better prepared for college and careers. That work, led by Vice President of Corporate Work Study **Shermirah Smith,** has led to certification programs being piloted with students this summer. "We have talked to industry professionals to understand what they need in entry-level employees and what certifications are relevant in their fields," says Shermirah.

This month, 30 students in three cohorts are participating in certification programs. These are CNA (certified nursing assistant) certification for students interested in health care; OSHA 10 safety certification for students interested in construction, engineering and manufacturing; and a CompTIA computer information certification for students interested in cybersecurity.

"After these summer programs are over, my team and I will review the successes, areas to be improved, and data for future planning," says Shermirah. "Our next steps will be to place our certified students into relevant CWS positions this coming school year as well as explore adding more certification options into the curriculum in the year ahead."

Heaven Evans Named Alumna of the Year

During our second annual Braggin' Rights Alumni vs. Students basketball game, **Heaven Evans '18** was honored during half-time as Alumna of the Year. Her time on the basketball courts at DPCR and **Thomas More University,** where she earned her bachelor's degree, demonstrated she's an all-star athlete who competes with heart and lifts those around her. Today, she serves as director of the **Winton Hills Community Center** and she has been involved for many years with Cincinnati's Saturday Hoops program. The alumni on the court, including Heaven, won the game for the second year in a row!

Heaven Evans '18** (right) is pictured with Graduate Success Director **Brittany Ranz.

Credo Perago Floreo Award

Preston Frater '26 was surprised at graduation with DPCR's highest senior honor, the **Credo Perago Floreo Award.** It recognizes the senior who most exemplifies the school motto, Believe. Achieve. Become. One of Preston's nominators said, "He's an exceptional young man who cares for his school community and is always willing to lend a helping hand." He's pictured with Interim President **Patricia Robertson.**

Distinguished Young Professional Award

Vice President of Corporate Work Study **Shermirah Smith** (right) presented the **Distinguished Young Professional Award** to **Griselda Lorenzo-Cabrera '26** for achieving an outstanding professional transformation through the Corporate Work Study Program. Griselda worked through CWS for three years at **Custom Design Benefits** where she distinguished herself for her professionalism, positive attitude and strong work ethic.

Record Level of Scholarship Success

In a record-breaking year for the senior class, 21 seniors earned full-tuition college scholarships.These seniors pictured have full scholarships to **the University of Cincinnati, the Ohio State University** and **Xavier University** as well as Cristo Rey National University Partner schools: **Berea College, Mount St. Joseph University,** and the **University of Dayton.** Several of these seniors earned more than one full-tuition award, and Valedictorian **Yirialis Diaz Mercedes '26** (far left in second row) earned the prestigious national **Gates Scholarship.**

A Full-Circle Moment: 2015 Grad Addresses New Grads

Continuing DPCR's tradition to invite back a graduate, **Theresa Bruns '15** addressed the 2026 graduates and guests as the commencement speaker. She is a graduate of **Berea College,** holds a master's degree from the **University of Kentucky,** and has worked in social work for the past seven years. Among the inspiring words in her address were, "You are ready for what comes next. This school has prepared you, and now it is your turn to take that foundation and build something great."

De'Errah Whitehead '26

Omari Harris '26

Principal Jim Schurrer and Delilah Baker '26.

Rey of Light
DePaul Cristo Rey High School

A Million Dollar Night Makes DPCR History!

In an unforgettable night, DePaul Cristo Rey High School achieved a fundraising first – the Rey of Light Scholarship Benefit raised over $1 million. Generous sponsors and guests pushed the April 25 event past its $1 million goal through sponsorships, donations, silent and live auction bidding, and raffle sales. Rey of Light 2026 was chaired by DePaul Cristo Rey Board Member **Ed Stenger** and his wife, **Betty.** 400 guests attended the dinner and auction. **Joseph Barrett Whittle,** a graduate from the Class of 2017, gave an inspiring speech that brought a standing ovation and led into the Fund-A-Need paddle raise which alone raised over $430,000 for student tuition assistance.

A. *DPCR Alumni Volunteers (left to right):* ***Adiaratou Bangaly '21, Heather Cook Trennepohl '17,*** *Graduate Success Director* ***Brittany Ranz, Joseph Barrett Whittle '17, Heidi Cook '19,*** *and* ***Aurora Ortinez '20.***

B. *Interim President* ***Pat Robertson*** *with Rey of Light Chairs* ***Ed*** *and* ***Betty Stenger.***

C. ***Barbara*** *and* ***Dave Mueller,*** *Principal* ***Jim Schurrer,*** *and* ***Dick Piening.***

D. ***Joe*** *and* ***Trish Baker*** *with Board of Directors Members* ***Jack Kortekamp*** *and* ***Sister Joan Cook, SC.***

E. ***Joseph Barrett Whittle '17*** *inspired the crowd with his story.*

With Gratitude to Our Rey of Light Sponsors:

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Pat and Steve Robertson

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Betty and Ed Stenger

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Make an Impact in Just an Hour A Month!

DPCR's mentoring program is expanding and we need more mentors! This program requires as little as an hour a month at DPCR to meet with a freshman or sophomore for lunch, conversation and fun activities. We're seeking mentors to draw on their experiences as college graduates and professionals to support our students. For more information about the program, use the QR code below or contact **Lisa Muething** at 513.861.0600 or lisa.muething@dpcr.net.

1. *Mentor* ***Jordyn Calhoun-Freeman*** *and* ***Ija'Rae '29***
2. ***Christopher '29,*** *Mentor* ***Jim Daffin,*** ***Donovann '29,*** *and Mentor* ***Jim Bloomfield***

Neyer Legacy of Love, Faith and Giving Lives On Through DPCR Alumni

Don and Phyllis Neyer

The Neyer family has been very involved with DPCR since its beginning. Donna has been a DPCR volunteer since its inception and her brother, **Dan Neyer,** served on DPCR's Board of Directors, the Finance and Facilities committees, and continues to provide guidance on campus renovations. The family feels strongly about DPCR's mission and the Grad Success Program. They feel this program will help to ensure the lifelong success of DPCR graduates by supporting them to achieve their goal of a college education.

"Our family has been blessed and we are called to share our blessings with others," says Donna on behalf of the Neyer family. "We get so much fulfillment witnessing the transformation in DPCR students' lives because others believe in and support them."

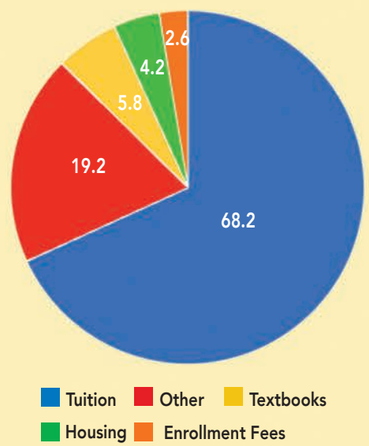
If you'd like to learn more about supporting the Graduate Success Fund, contact Vice President of Advancement **Sparkle Worley** sparkle.worley@dpcr.net or 513.861.0600.

Don and Phyllis Neyer lived a legacy of love, faith and service in Cincinnati. They raised their eight children in a devoted Catholic family and taught them the importance of giving back to help those in need. Since their deaths, their philanthropy continues with their children as they carry on their giving to local organizations. Thanks to a significant gift to the Graduate Success Fund, their legacy now lives on through DePaul Cristo Rey alumni.

"Our parents were always giving back," says daughter **Donna Broderick.** "Dad always told us that the definition of love is 'to will and work toward the good of another.'" Phyllis passed away in 2016 and after Don's death in 2023, he left his children a donor-advised fund from which to oversee charitable giving. This year, that fund provided a $150,000 gift to DPCR's Graduate Success Fund.

The Graduate Success Fund provides professional and financial resources to support alumni to college completion. Through this fund, alumni can apply for microgrants to fill college financial shortfalls including tuition gaps.The Neyer gift will help to endow the fund and support the microgrants. Even a small microgrant can be the difference between staying in college or dropping out.

Where Microgrant Funds Go 2015-Present



Alumni News

Congratulations to Our College Graduates!

We couldn't be prouder of our alumni who have achieved college degrees this year.

CLASS OF 2017

Krishna Perry '17
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College

CLASS OF 2018

Jessica Tomas Lainez '18
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College

CLASS OF 2019

Alliah Bell '19
Miami University

Vada Harris '19
Wright State University

Jarren Morrow '19
Central State University

Brandolyn Wilson '19
Miami University

CLASS OF 2020

Aaliyah Brooks '20*
University of Georgia

Jaron Brooks '20
Illinois State University

Edwin Rubio Mora '20*
Heidelberg University

CLASS OF 2021

Jayla Andrews '21
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College

Alassane Barry '21*
University of Cincinnati

Alayshia Freeman '21
University of Cincinnati

Richard Greene III '21
St. Thomas University

Avi Hocker '21
University of Cincinnati

Allison Kelsey '21
Spalding University

Mouhamed Minani '21
University of Cincinnati

Charissa Monday '21
ATA College

Alinson Mejia Punay '21
Northern Kentucky University

Brian Steele '21
Tennessee State University

CLASS OF 2022

Cecilia Chavez '22
Miami University

Orlandria DeRamus '22
Mount St. Joseph University

Eva Garay '22
Xavier University

Kamaria Gragston '22
Marquette University

Bayi Koita '22
The Christ College of Nursing

Vision Lawrence '22
Mount St. Joseph University

Daniela Morales '22
Miami University

Charlie Santizo Perez '22
University of Cincinnati

Chyanne Rice '22
Northern Kentucky University

Zacari Rochelle '22
Tennessee State University

Ameccuh Taylor '22
Miami University

Destiny Tolbert '22
Central State University

Josh Voegler '22
University of Louisville

Ja'Nyla White '22
Tennesee State University

Jayla Williams '22
University of Notre Dame

*Master's Degree

Allison Kelsey '21

Jarren Morrow '19

Bayi Koita '22

Daniela Morales '22

Charlie Santizo Perez '22

Ja'Nyla White '22

The Best of Bruin Life

New Sports, New Records at DPCR

DPCR's athletic program grew with three new sports added this school year. The golf team debuted in the fall, an indoor track team was added in the winter, and the first girls flag football team took the field this spring. **Richelle '27** became DPCR's first student to advance to state competition in indoor track, and the flag football team finished second in its division. These additions complement DPCR's other athletic teams including the track & field team which set six new school records this spring.

Comeback Kid

Congratulations to **KeiLand '28**, the 2026 **Comeback Kid.** This annual award recognizes a student who has made a significant turnaround improving into someone who is a force for constructive good in the DPCR community. He was honored at the All-School Awards Ceremony in May.

Bruin Award

At the end of the school year, **Haven Baldwin-Jenkins '26** was recognized with the 2026 **Bruin Award** as a student who exemplifies the key Bruin characteristics of: Dedicated, Professional, Caring, and Responsible.

A Year of Service and Impact Locally and Globally

Students lived the theme, "Lead with Love, Serve with Purpose," through many acts of service this year including through two spring projects. In March, the organization, **A Child's Hope Int'l,** set up in DPCR's gymnasium and throughout the day all students spent a class period packing meals bound for refugee camps in the Dominican Republic. The students, including **Christopher '28** pictured, packed 34,776 meals in one day! In May, all freshmen spent a day outside learning about the importance of watersheds and water quality then they rolled up their sleeves to gather trash, remove invasive honeysuckle, and plant seeds along Cincinnati's Mill Creek.

Teacher/Staff Spotlight

Teachers and staff were honored, along with students, during our All-School Awards Ceremony on May 15. Among those in the spotlight for their work and service were the following.

ELIZABETH ANN SETON EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Belinda Barton

Math Teacher

Joined DPCR in 2023

What is your favorite thing about working at DPCR?
My favorite thing about working at DPCR is the freedom I have with the curriculum and building positive relationships with my kids (students). I want my kids to learn Algebra, but I also want them to learn from me to be bold and that it's okay to be different. It's okay to stand up when others tell you to sit down. It's okay to have goals when no one else believes because believing in yourself is enough. I am proof because I live my bucket-list job daily; even when so many said I wouldn't.

What one word would you use to describe DPCR?
Inspiring

Do you have a favorite memory from your time here?
There are so many, but I adore watching the students I taught in seventh and eighth grade graduate from DPCR. I love seeing them be successful and achieve so much here.

Which of DPCR's value statements do you think best describes what you see every day?
The value that I see daily is Embracing Belonging. It's the foundation of my classroom, but I am able to do it well in my room because DPCR embraces diversity and enables their staff to be themselves.

What do you wish more people knew about DPCR?
We are a diverse school. We care about our students as both students and as individuals. We really do embody holistic learning to shape the student both in and out of the classroom.

What do you do outside of DPCR?
When I am not working, I love spending time with my family (daughter, 3 step-kids, and husband). I also like to swim, play games and build Legos with my daughter.

SPIRIT OF ST. VINCENT AWARD

Jasmin Luna-Villa '16

Admissions and Financial Aid Coordinator

Joined DPCR in 2023

What is your favorite thing about working at DPCR?
The vibrant, loving, and supportive community that we have here. I love working with our students and their families, and I love working with our faculty and staff. We all come together like one big loving family.

What one word would you use to describe DPCR?
Caring

Do you have a favorite memory from your time here?
Senior Decision Day. It's nice to see our students and their families celebrating a huge milestone in the students' lives. To see that the work that we do every day at DPCR is focused on our students' future and achieving our schoolwide goal, it is a very proud moment for all of us.

Which of DPCR's value statements do you think best describes what you see every day?
Embracing Belonging. We have a very diverse community and it is a joy to see how each individual gets along with one another. We learn about each other, respect each other and embrace it. This is what makes DPCR unique.

What do you wish more people knew about DPCR?
We have a supportive community, we prepare our students for college, and we have our Corporate Work Study Program. Not only are we preparing our students for college, but we are helping them become young professionals too. I, along with my fellow alumni peers, are proof of DPCR's schoolwide goal, "All students will graduate from high school and college."

What do you do outside of DPCR?
I am an artist. I have a small photography business and my goal is to open my own photography studio combined with ceramics. I love to play volleyball and watch soccer with my family. Lately I've realized that I enjoy baking! On Sundays I serve at my church, **St. Boniface,** during the Spanish Mass. I am part of a nonprofit organization called **Apoyo Latino,** that provides resources for the Hispanic community in the Cincinnati area. I work on maintaining their website and run their social media profile.