

# 2025 | IMPACT REPORT

Dear Friend,

When you're fueled by passion, there's no limit to the doors you'll open and the lives you'll change.

You and your fellow donors have proven this through your firm belief in the value of a Catholic education, and in turn, your steadfast support of the Catholic Education Foundation. Thank you for opening door after door for those seeking financial assistance.

I am excited to share with you this year's Impact Report. Inside you'll see just how many doors you've opened to help families in our community realize their dream of providing their children with an academic experience that's rooted in faith.

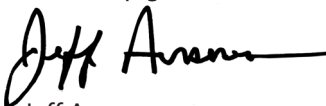
Due in major part to your generosity, last year alone, we awarded \$2,682,550 in scholarships to 2,026 students within the 36 Catholic elementary schools and seven Catholic high schools across the Diocese of Joliet. Without your participation, a Catholic education was out of reach for these students.

Thank you for turning your passion into action to enrich the lives of so many.

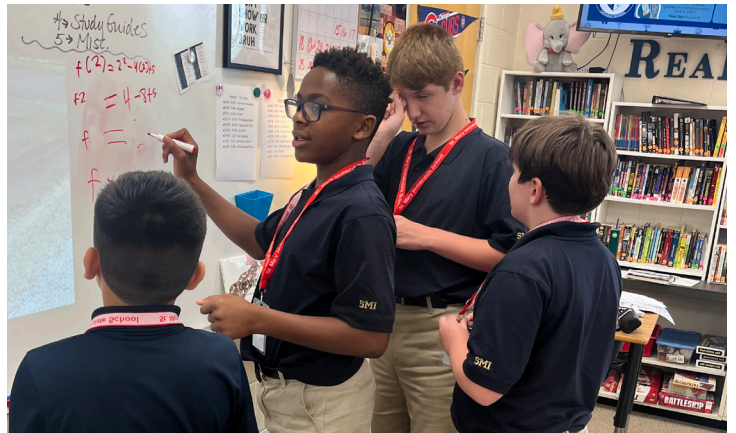
The academic excellence a Catholic education provides combined with the faith-based values it instills, resonates far beyond the classroom. Your dedication is the cornerstone of the funding that's needed to keep our schools vibrant and growing, and your continued support will help ensure this for future generations.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, our school partners, school families, and all the students who benefit from your kindness, please know how much we truly appreciate you and everything you do! We look forward to opening more doors together, so that everyone who desires a Catholic education has access to it and its lifelong benefits.

With deep gratitude,



Jeff Arseneau  
Board Chairman  
Catholic Education Foundation



**\$2.68  
MILLION**  
AWARDED IN  
**SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS**

**OUR STUDENTS NEED YOUR HELP**

**14,125**

STUDENTS  
ENROLLED IN  
DIOCESE OF JOLIET  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**\$13.5 M**

NEEDED TO HELP  
DIOCESE OF JOLIET  
STUDENTS



# Catholic education give students a sense of 'hope'

Maureen and her husband started giving to Catholic education, by donating time while their children attended Catholic grade school and high school and continued to volunteer after the children had moved on to college.

"My husband and I were very active giving of our time and very active in the Catholic school where our kids went, and as they moved on we became aware that there is more than just our local Catholic school," Maureen said.

Eventually donating time turned to donating dollars, which increased during the span of the Invest in Kids Act, giving donors like Maureen a state tax break.

However, after the program was allowed to sunset in 2023, and the tax break was gone, she said their giving increased, simply because of awareness.

"We actively took advantage of the Empower (tax credit program) when it was offered, but our giving reached a new level when our daughter started working for an inner-city Catholic high school," Maureen said. "The depth of need is almost overwhelming, and we knew



"Catholic education brings in the whole idea that we are created in God's image and that cannot be taught in other schools."

- Maureen

we needed to do more. We gave more when we saw the need. It is not relevant to me that I get a tax break anymore."

The driver for Maureen is Catholic education.

"I am a big believer in education and we have an obligation to be educated. It gives us the tools to support ourselves and support and strengthen our

communities. If we are educated, we can make the world around us a better place," she said. "To me, Catholic education brings in the whole idea that we are created in God's image and that cannot be taught in other schools. You can't help but see your community in a different way. God is infused in everything you are taught, and you are caught up in the awesomeness of God's mind."

She saw that more than ever through her daughter's work.

"Not only do these kids receive everything else I know is good about a Catholic education, they receive a sense of

community that instills hope. A Catholic education adds another layer and the ability to provide hope," she said.

Maureen has her own hope for the future students in the Diocese of Joliet, and all over.

"I want every family and every kid that wants a Catholic education to get one," she said. "We need to do whatever it takes to make that happen – whether it is more money, more schools, teachers that are well compensated and can afford to support their families and parents are involved. That would be my hope. We have a lot of work to do."

## CEF scholarships help student-athletes earn titles

Last school season, 16 Diocese of Joliet student-athletes earned state championships from the Illinois High School Association thanks in part to a Catholic Education Foundation scholarship.

The Benet Academy boys basketball team won the Class 4A boys basketball title, joining the Benet girls tennis team (1A), the Montini Catholic football (3A) and girls basketball (3A) teams, Immaculate Conception's team wrestling (2A) and Providence Catholic's



competitive dance (1A) as Joliet Diocese champions.

Adding to the team success, eight individuals won state titles for Diocese of Joliet schools.

The accomplishments in



The Providence Catholic dance team earned a state title in 2024-25.

sports complements the academic achievements the Diocese of Joliet schools have in the classroom, making it

crucial that all students have the opportunity to enjoy success.





# Narcissi says the goal of the CEF is simple

There are many ways to give to the Catholic Education Foundation (CEF) of the Diocese of Joliet, the main two being with time or with donations.

John Narcissi is someone who does both.

A member of the CEF Board of Directors for nearly two years, John started his relationship with the CEF in the very beginning and was a donor before that.

He was president of the Diocesan Board of Education in 2010 when Bishop James Peter Sartain was tabbed by Pope Benedict XVI to be Archbishop of Seattle.

At that time, the Diocese of Joliet principals donated money for a scholarship in his name.

"I was included in the process of picking who should get that scholarship," John said. "I continued to offer support from a school perspective and as a donor."

Through this scholarship awarding process, John met the then-Director of the CEF and the groundwork was laid for him to sit on the CEF Board.

"She always told me 'one day,'" he said. "So, with my relationship with schools and the start of the CEF, (becoming a board member) seemed like a natural progression. Of all the ministries



*John Narcissi has been on the CEF Board of Directors for 18 months.*

the diocese offers, to me, the schools are the most important because that is our future. Bringing our children to Christ is exactly what I believe we are called to do as faithful followers of God."

"I couldn't imagine a vibrant school system if we did not have the Catholic Education Foundation."

- John Narcissi

John attributes part of his success from going to a Catholic school.

"I had a choice between public school or Catholic school and my dad encouraged me to go to Marian Catholic because he thought I needed more structure," John said. "Then he encouraged me to pay for it. So, I worked all summer as a caddy



at a golf course to go to high school. It is more than just education. It is morals and ethics and manners and respect. You get the Catholic culture and Catholic teaching that I think are critical in future leaders.

"You are taught humility at a young age – it is not all about you, there is something bigger. Those lessons will carry on when you are an adult and a leader of people."

With tuition to a Catholic school no longer affordable on the income of a summer golf caddy, John said he knows the importance of the CEF.

"I couldn't imagine a vibrant school system if we did not have the Catholic Education Foundation," he said. "Without that, we would just be educating the privileged kids and that is not in line with our faith."

John feels the goals of the CEF are met with a three-step process.

"One (step) is cultivating the

donors and bringing awareness and bringing money in," he said. "Then we must be good stewards of the donations. The third step is to allocate the money to the families in need."

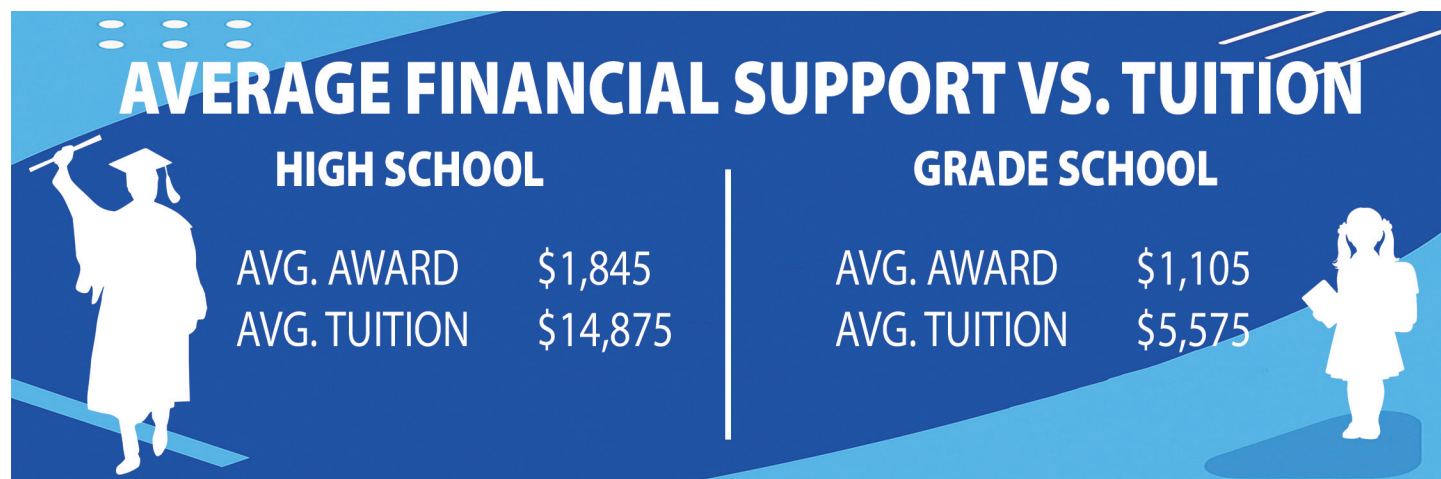
"We need the checks, but we need the people to give their time or at least be advocates and ambassadors of the CEF and let people know who we are. I believe that the way we cultivate this is through relationships and having that presence throughout the diocese."

Those people include the fellow board members.

"It is inspiring to work with the other board members and see these professionals in various fields and roles and to be with them and work alongside faith-based people committed to a common cause," he said. "I find that inspiring and humbling."

While a complex process with a lot of moving parts, John said the overall goal of the CEF is simple.

"We need to have enough money so that every parent that wants their child to go to one of our schools is able to go," he said. "I don't think there is better use of my time than to help bring our children closer to Christ through our Catholic education."



# CEF scholarship program helps students excel in the classroom and beyond

When St. Dominic school in Bolingbrook closed at the end of the 2021-22 school year, then-third grade student Carter and his family were in search of a new school.

The family settled in at St. Mary Gostyn in Downers Grove and Carter could not be happier.

As a fifth grader, he participated in basketball and cross country, which he said will be traded in for track and field, and excelled in the classroom.

Above all, Carter has made a whole new group of friends outside of his Aurora neighborhood, which he can keep up with through gaming or having an old-fashioned sleep over.

Finding a Catholic school for Carter was paramount for the family, not only because both of his parents attended Catholic schools for their entire education, but because with his dad's schedule as a police officer, Christina was looking for a place to teach that she could bring Carter to and from school each day.

"There is something about a



Catholic school and the family that it is," Christina said. "The principal and assistant principal and the pastor know everyone by name."

While the family wanted a Catholic education, they needed some financial help – and they found that in a scholarship from the Catholic Education Foundation of the Diocese of Joliet.

"We are incredibly grateful for this blessing, and it is difficult to express just how helpful it has been for us," Christina said. "We are thrilled to have Carter at St. Mary of Gostyn, where he is thriving after St. Dominic closed a few years ago."

"St. Mary of Gostyn is an amazing school and we are so thankful that we ended up there. The scholarship helps immensely. It is wonderful that [the CEF] has this program and the donors that want to support Catholic education, because we find it so valuable for Carter and our family."

Carter's dad Mark said that value starts with the foundation a Catholic school builds.

"The kids have a good moral base," he said.

Carter is enjoying his time at St. Mary Gostyn – in the classroom and in athletics.

"I like basketball the best," he said. "It is fun to play for the school because all of my friends are playing with me, so that is cool."

Being in a small school offers no-cut athletics, which Christina likes.

"No matter what skill level you are, you have an opportunity," she said.

In the classroom, Carter, like most sixth-grade boys, loves PE class, but he also enjoys using the 3D printer in his Social



*Students like Carter are getting a chance at Catholic Education in the Diocese of Joliet thanks in part to the Catholic Education Foundation and its generous donors.*

Studies class. His favorite subject, however, is Religion.

"It is a serious topic," Carter said. "Our teacher can make it fun, not sad. I can also flip ahead in my book and read about things before we get to the topic."



## Your Continued Support Matters *Your contributions are transforming lives*

Every dollar you give helps close the gap between what families can afford and the true cost of a Catholic education.

Your generosity means more scholarships, more opportunities, and more futures built on faith.

Make a difference today.  
Give the gift of Catholic education.

*Visit [CEFJoliet.org](http://CEFJoliet.org)*



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