

= Benet Academy =

Benet Academy (/ ˈbɛnɪt / BEN @-@ et ; often shortened to Benet) is a co @-@ educational , college @-@ preparatory , Benedictine high school in Lisle , Illinois , United States , overseen by the Diocese of Joliet . Founded in 1887 , the school was initially established in Chicago as the all @-@ boys St. Procopius College and Academy by Benedictine monks , who also operated the St. Joseph Bohemian Orphanage . In 1898 , the orphanage moved to Lisle , about 25 miles (40 km) west of Chicago , to be joined by St. Procopius three years later . In 1926 Benedictine nuns constructed the all @-@ girls Sacred Heart Academy near the orphanage and school in Lisle . The orphanage closed in 1956 to make room for St. Procopius Academy , which separated from the college in 1957 . Due to rising costs and waning enrollment , Sacred Heart merged with St. Procopius Academy in 1967 to form Benet Academy on the St. Procopius campus . Since then , numerous building projects have been undertaken to expand Benet 's athletics , music , and science programs . As of 2016 it is considered the second best Catholic highschool in Illinois , and eighth best private high school .

Admission is competitive and relies primarily on test scores . All students complete a college @-@ preparatory curriculum and may earn college credit through programs including Advanced Placement . As of 2009 , Benet 's average ACT test score regularly exceeds state and national averages , and more than 99 percent of students go on to college after graduation . The school 's academic program has been featured in reports by the Chicago Sun @-@ Times and U.S. News & World Report .

The athletic program has fielded several teams that have placed fourth or higher in state tournaments . In the 2014 @-@ 2015 school year the girls ' volleyball team and the girls ' basketball team both won IHSA state titles , which makes Benet only the second school in IHSA history and the first large (4A) school to win titles for both these sports in the same season . The boys ' basketball team has broken two state records , including a 102 home @-@ game winning streak . In the 2015 @-@ 2016 year the boys ' basketball team ended up getting second in the state , with the girls taking first , along with many other state titles in other sports .

Other activities include the annual Christmas Drive fundraiser and over 30 clubs and organizations , including the Math Team and Science Olympiad team , both of which have won awards in their state tournaments .

Benet 's performing arts program is highly praised and competitive and stages an annual winter musical , which often sells out quickly . Many performers have been nominated for state @-@ wide awards . Other productions include the fall play , one @-@ act plays , variety show , and spring play .

The band program performed in state @-@ wide events in 1998 and 2002 .

Notable alumni of the school include NBA player Frank Kaminsky , former Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan , and Grammy @-@ winning singer Dave Bickler .

= = History and facilities = =

= = = Founding in Chicago = = =

In the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire , Chicago 's working @-@ class Pilsen neighborhood , a predominantly Czech enclave , expanded quickly . To serve this growing ethnic population , St. Procopius parish was founded in the summer of 1875 , near the intersection of 18th and Allport Streets . The parish was named for Saint Procopius of Sázava , who founded a monastery in Bohemia in the eleventh century and became the first saint from Czechoslovakia . Vilém ?oka served as the first pastor . Planning to build a school , ?oka left it to the community to decide if the school would be secular or Catholic . They chose a Catholic school , despite the fact that only 25 percent of Pilsen 's Czech population was Catholic . As the parish outgrew his capacity to serve them , ?oka turned for help to the Order of St. Benedict .

Rev. John Nepomucene Jaeger , the first Bohemian abbot in the United States , was urged to

establish a monastic community to teach at parochial schools in Bohemian as well as English . He founded St. Procopius priory in 1885 . The priory took control of St. Procopius parish in January 1886 , and Jaeger became the pastor . Jaeger also founded a convent in 1895 , consisting of nuns brought from St. Mary 's Convent in Pittsburgh and headed by Jaeger 's biological sister , Mother Mary Nepomucene Jaeger . The Czech @-@ American media had pushed for a convent to prepare Czech @-@ speaking nuns for teaching positions in Czech parochial schools , which had previously hired mostly lay teachers trained in Austrian normal schools . The nuns were transferred from Pittsburgh to St. Scholastica 's Convent on Chicago 's north side , but later that same year moved to an old parish building at Ashland and 19th Streets , where they would remain until 1912 . A section of the convent was converted into a music school . Graduates taught in parishes throughout the nation .

The priory was elevated to the status of abbey by Pope Leo XIII in 1894 , and the monks founded a school for lay monks to help build a self @-@ sustaining source of revenue . Failing to attract a single prospective applicant in over seven years , they expanded enrollment to students with no intention of joining the clergy . The two groups would eventually be taught separately , and the monastic students were trained to become priests fluent in Bohemian , German , and English and prepared to preach to ethnically diverse congregations . Lay students were trained for employment in the business world .

In 1900 , Chicago had one of the largest Czech populations of any city in the world , with approximately 75 @,@ 000 ? 100 @,@ 000 Czechs living in the city 's 10 Czech communities . Some 50 @,@ 000 Czech immigrants were served by the three Czech parishes of Chicago ? 16 @,@ 000 to 20 @,@ 000 of them by St. Procopius . These Czech immigrants wanted to assimilate into American society , but also wanted to pass their language on to their children . The abbey established St. Procopius College and Academy in 1887 as a school that taught men of Czech and Slovak descent . It became the first Czech institution of higher learning in the nation , and in 1920 it remained the only Czech college . Rev. Procopius Neuzil was named the first teacher and director . Classes began on March 2 , 1887 , when Neuzil taught a remedial course to two students in two small rooms at 704 Allport Street . Enrollment grew to 20 within the week , taught by three instructors during the four @-@ month term . The first full year of classes began in the fall of 1887 . The college was chartered by the State of Illinois in 1890 ; only a two @-@ year high school program was offered at the time . In 1893 the college published its first catalog , which urged Czech parents to enroll their 13 @-@ year @-@ old boys . The academic curriculum included a preparatory year to teach elementary school subjects to remedial students . The two high school years were referred to as " Latin years " , and included required courses in Czech , English , Latin , math , orthography , history , and religion ; optional courses included German and bookkeeping . Following the Latin years , students were enrolled in the business course , which included math , bookkeeping , economics , composition , history , oratory , and religion .

= = = Orphanage = = =

The Benet Academy campus in Lisle began as an orphanage . On March 14 , 1899 , the abbey founded St. Joseph 's Orphanage on a farm in Lisle purchased from one Serafin Rott , and transferred 10 Czech orphans there from St. Hedwig 's Polish Orphanage , which charged the parishes more for housing non @-@ Polish orphans . It opened under the supervision of the Sisters of St. Benedict . Abbot Jaeger allowed the orphanage to use the land for free until more satisfactory housing could be constructed . The orphanage lacked stoves , fuel , adequate bedding , decent food , and any stable source of income . Neuzil , then editor @-@ in @-@ chief of the Czech Benedictine Press , raised \$ 80 @,@ 000 within 12 years from the generally impoverished Czech immigrant community through local publications . A new building was commissioned in 1899 to accommodate the increasing number of applicants for admission , including orphans from out @-@ of @-@ state . The new building was dedicated on July 2 , 1900 , at the same time as the cornerstone was laid for St. Procopius College , about .25 miles (0 @.@ 40 km) away .

Due to increasing applications for admission , still more space was required , and William Schwartz

sold the abbey 40 acres (16 ha) of land in Lisle . On July 16 , 1911 , a new building was dedicated on the grounds of what is now Benet Academy , the same day the cornerstone was laid for the nearby Sacred Heart Convent . A girls ' dormitory building was built in 1923 . It was later converted into classrooms and renamed Benet Hall) . A power plant , a larger chapel , and additional classrooms were dedicated in 1926 . A gym was built in 1936 ; at that time the facility housed approximately 400 orphans . Twenty @-@ three headstones from that period can be found in a small cemetery on the northwest side of the school , where orphans as young as three , one of the workmen , and several former orphans who had been raised at St. Joseph are buried . According to school lore , ghosts of orphans still haunt the fourth floor of St. Joseph Hall and the basement of Benet Hall , where the nursery of the orphanage once was .

Elementary schooling at the orphanage featured better equipped classrooms than the original building . A few years after operations moved in 1911 , the school offered a two @-@ year business program . By 1948 the orphanage comprised the Lisle Manual Training School for Boys and the Lisle Industrial School for Girls , both of which were managed by the Sisters of St. Benedict and run by the Archdiocese of Chicago . In the 1950s Petru Hall was built as an annex on the east side of the dormitory building .

The archdiocese assumed control of the orphanage in 1920 , and began accepting orphans from the Juvenile Court of Cook County , most of whom came from broken homes whose parents did not pay the fines imposed by the court . This discouraged donations and strained the orphanage financially . Archbishop Samuel Cardinal Stritch , discovering that only 12 of the 255 children were actually orphans and only five of them were Slavs , closed the orphanage in 1956 . The 12 true orphans were moved to Holy Angels Orphanage in Des Plaines . Bishop of Joliet Martin Dewey McNamara gave the former orphanage buildings to St. Procopius Academy , which was at that time still combined with the college .

= = = College in Lisle = = =

As enrollment increased to 46 in 1891 , it became obvious that St. Procopius College 's enrollment would soon outstrip its facilities in Pilsen . Neuzil was replaced as rector by Rev. Ildephonse Wittman , also a Benedictine , in 1894 . In 1896 , the Abbey bought a 104 @-@ acre (42 ha) farm in Lisle from Morris Neff to provide more space and a " better atmosphere " . On March 12 , 1900 , a new building was approved , to be built at the southwest corner of Maple and College Avenues . The groundbreaking was held on April 19 , 1900 , the school moved in May , and the new facility was dedicated on July 1 , 1901 , by Peter Muldoon , Bishop of the Diocese of Chicago . Classes began in September with six faculty and 11 students . Atheists in Chicago vehemently objected to the Catholic church @-@ run school , but the Czech community came to the school 's defense . Limited financial aid for the generally poor Czech immigrants led to meager enrollment . Attendance grew from 13 in 1901 to 100 in 1908 .

The academy offered its first four @-@ year high school program in 1904 , with both " classical " , or college @-@ preparatory , and " commercial " , or vocational , programs . Students enrolled in the commercial track studied for three years , the first two being identical to the classical track and the third consisting of specialized coursework . The commercial program was dropped in 1915 . Tuition for a semester cost \$ 80 ; it was increased to \$ 100 in 1909 . As of 1921 , the school enrolled only men of Bohemian or Slovak ancestry .

Income and enrollment fell during the Great Depression . Between 1917 and 1930 , enrollment fell from 205 students to 140 . The school sought accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools , but the application was denied because the college and academy could not be accredited as a single institution , and financial constraints prevented their separation . In 1932 the abbey and the school lost most of their money when the Kaspar American Bank in Chicago failed . Academic programs and student activities were not greatly affected , in part because the faculty was mainly clergymen , who were not highly paid . Still unaccredited , the school was certified by the state of Illinois in September 1934 .

Students , faculty , and clergymen sustained themselves with food produced on the 365 @-@ acre

(148 ha) Abbey Farm , which they maintained until the 1970s . Approximately 1 @, @ 500 chickens provided eggs , while Brown Swiss cattle provided milk . Meat came from the farm 's supply of bulls , hogs , and heifers . Bee hives produced honey and wax , while a cannery produced more than 12 @, @ 000 US gallons (45 @, @ 000 L) of food products .

World War II caused enrollment to decline and the student body consisted mainly of high school students and seminarians . Following the war , new students enrolled , and the school built a temporary facility in 1947 to accommodate them . Students from Illinois began to replace out @-@ of @-@ state students , the percentage of day , or commuting , students rose , and the school employed more lay teachers . After the war , the previously ethnic Czech college acquired a more diverse student body , due to rising enrollment caused by the G.I. Bill . By 1947 the high school enrolled 30 students . Better times and higher birth rates led to growing enrollment at St. Procopius in the 1950s and 1960s .

With the gift of the former orphanage facility , the academy began to operate independently from the college in 1957 . It was accredited on March 28 , 1958 . St. Procopius College was renamed Illinois Benedictine College in 1971 , and Benedictine University in 1996 . Under the leadership of its first principal , Rev. Thomas J. Havlik , the academy added new classrooms and St. Martin Hall to its facilities .

= = = Convent in Lisle = = =

By 1912 , the community of nuns had outgrown their convent in Chicago , and relocated to the new Convent of the Sacred Heart in Lisle . They had prospered there as a teaching order educating Slovak @-@ speaking nuns and organized two Slovak schools . In 1926 , under the leadership of Mother Mary Genevieve , the convent founded a day and boarding high school for girls ? the Sacred Heart Academy . The academy outgrew its space and in 1929 the convent was expanded to accommodate rising enrollment . The annexed facilities reserved for the school included a Renaissance @-@ style chapel , an auditorium , and a gymnasium . The Academy was later expanded to include the Jaeger Junior College .

The academy was primarily a boarding school . Students came from Illinois , the surrounding states , Texas , and Mexico . A few day students came from the Lisle area . In 1947 enrollment averaged 75 students . Enrollment grew from 120 in 1953 to 300 in 1958 , and remained at that level until 1966 . Day student enrollment also grew and in 1962 the academy stopped accepting boarding school students . By 1964 , the last year in which boarding school students were enrolled , alumni had hailed from all US states , South America , France , Mexico , and Guam . Day students from 1964 to 1968 came from Lisle and the neighboring communities . Unlike St. Procopius Academy , Sacred Heart Academy offered a business curriculum from 1953 to 1966 . Courses included shorthand , typewriting , and bookkeeping .

The students and nuns were supplied with food by the convent 's 476 @-@ acre (193 ha) Benedale Farm . Cattle provided both dairy products and meat , while poultry provided eggs and their feathers were used to stuff pillows as another source of income . The nuns also raised rabbits and bees , and grew grain , hay , vegetables , grapes , and apples . The farm was closed in the late 1950s for financial reasons and the convent sold most of the land so a school could be built for the growing village of Lisle .

= = = Merger and expansion = = =

In the 1960s , St. Procopius Academy faced dwindling enrollment and funding . The Benedictines threatened to close the boys ' school , but were dissuaded by Abbot Daniel W. Kucera , who had graduated from St. Procopius in 1941 . Under Abbot Kucera 's leadership , St. Procopius Academy and Sacred Heart Academy merged to form Benet (an anglicized form of " Benedict ") Academy in 1967 , on the former St. Procopius campus . Enrollment in 1968 was at 875 students , including 575 boys and 300 girls . The business education program from Sacred Heart was continued at the new school ; three teachers taught courses in consumer economics , typewriting , shorthand , and

bookkeeping .

St. Thomas Hall , funded by a private donor , was erected to house a library and physical sciences facilities in 1975 . A major construction project was launched in 1993 , in response to increasing enrollment and a growing athletic program . The \$ 5 million building plan included a new 1 @, @ 800 @-@ seat gymnasium , a new boiler system and a new roof for the cafeteria and the existing gymnasium . New parking areas were planned and St. Mary 's Hall was to be demolished .

Neighborhood residents , concerned about the impact on property values , traffic , and aesthetics , opposed the project . The Lisle Village Board blocked construction , charging that Benet had not notified the local community of the pending construction , to which Benet replied that " the school was there prior to the homes being constructed " . The plan was approved in April , but the Board designated the entire 42 @-@ acre (17 ha) campus a " planned @-@ unit development " , requiring Board approval for all future modifications . The new facilities included zoned lighting areas , which allowed for multipurpose use for assemblies , performances , sporting events , and graduation ceremonies . Construction was completed in May 1994 , and applications increased in the years that followed . The gym was later named as the St. Ronald Gymnasium to honor former principal Rev. Ronald Rigovsky .

In June 2000 , a need for more performance space became apparent ; the school 's music groups used small , crowded rehearsal rooms and drama students performed in the old chapel or across the street at Sacred Heart Monastery . Benet began construction of a new 22 @, @ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (2 @, @ 000 m2) performing arts center at the east end of the campus to replace the 190 @-@ seat Assembly Hall on the third floor of St. Joseph Hall , originally a chapel for the St. Joseph Bohemian Orphanage . As part of the project , the room was converted back into a chapel , named the Chapel of St. Therese .

Petru Hall , which was used for the annual school auction after the orphans left , was demolished to make way for the new performing arts center , named St. Daniel Hall , after Abbot Daniel Kucera and Saint Daniel . Constructed of brick and pre @-@ cast concrete , the design includes arched entrances to match the other buildings on campus . The facility features a 369 @-@ seat auditorium , an outdoor theater complex , a rehearsal room for bands and choirs , a set @-@ construction area , and storage areas . In addition to plays and concerts , St. Daniel Hall is also used for assemblies , lectures , and masses , which had previously been held in the gymnasium .

In May 2007 , the school broke ground on a new \$ 16 million science and student activity center . The 50 @, @ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (4 @, @ 600 m2) building includes extra corridors to ease hall traffic , a larger cafeteria , and additional storage space , along with four combination classrooms and laboratories for biology and earth science , three chemistry classrooms , and two chemistry labs .

= = Admissions = =

Admission is competitive and primarily based on the High School Placement Test , a standardized test by Scholastic Testing Service , taken in January of applicants ' eighth grade year (around age 13) . According to the Daily Herald , schools like Benet hope to accept the top 40 percent of students taking the exam . Seventh grade (around age 12) transcripts and a student essay are also factors in admission . In 2003 ? 04 , 600 students applied for admission , 387 were accepted , and 338 enrolled . As of the 2010 admissions cycle , 70 percent of applicants were accepted .

Preference is given to siblings of current or former Benet students . In 1993 the average admitted eighth grader scored in the 87th percentile on the placement test . Applicants without siblings at the school were admitted only with scores above the 75th percentile ; applicants with siblings at Benet were admitted with scores as low as the 50th percentile on a case @-@ by @-@ case basis .

= = Academics = =

As of the 2009 ? 10 school year , students are required to complete 23 Carnegie units of a college @-@ preparatory curriculum to graduate , including 4 units of English , 2 units of foreign language ,

3 units of math , 1 unit of world history , 1 unit of US history , 3 units of lab science , 4 units of religion , 1 @. @ 5 units of physical education , and 5 five units of electives . Spanish , French , German , and Latin are offered as foreign languages . Every summer since 1997 , an English teacher has offered a one @-@ week summer course in writing and photography . The school offers neither vocational nor remedial courses .

College credit is available through participation in 11 Advanced Placement courses ; the Program for Advanced College Credit (PACC) offered through St. Mary 's University of Minnesota , which offers advanced courses in English , math , government , and history ; and the Benedictine University Future Scholars Program , which offers college @-@ level work in multivariable calculus and finite mathematics .

The Chicago Sun @-@ Times ranked Benet one of the top ten high schools in the Chicago area in 2003 , based on graduate enrollment rates at four @-@ year colleges and test scores over a four @-@ year period . In 1999 Benet was also one of two high schools in DuPage County , and 100 high schools nationwide , featured as an " Outstanding American High School " by US News and World Report . The study , conducted in conjunction with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago , identified schools " where students progress steadily toward high academic standards and where every student matters . " Benet has credited the school 's academic success to Rev. Ronald Rigovsky , who served as principal for 23 years and as president from 1987 to 1992 . During his tenure , said the Chicago Tribune , Rigovsky developed the school into " one of the highest scoring and most scholastically respected high schools in the Chicago area . "

Benet Academy is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools , the Illinois State Board of Education , and the National Catholic Educational Association .

= = Students and faculty = =

Benet enrolled 1 @, @ 333 students in 2009 ? 10 . Most students come from Catholic families with professional and college @-@ educated parents . In 2003 ? 04 , 97 percent of students were Roman Catholic ; two percent received financial aid , which totaled \$ 3 @, @ 000 . Tuition was \$ 6 @, @ 000 . The average class size was 27 students . Most students come from Lisle , Downers Grove , and Naperville , but students in the class of 2013 came from 65 different schools and 34 different municipalities in DuPage and surrounding counties .

The Benet graduating class of 2010 achieved an average composite score of 28 @. @ 4 (above the 92nd percentile) on the ACT , a standardized college admission test , which was the seventh straight year average score topped 28 , compared to a statewide average of 20 @. @ 7 and national average of 21 @. @ 0 . Over 42 percent of the class had a score of 30 (above the 96th percentile) or higher . In 2000 , Benet outscored all DuPage County high schools , which then @-@ Principal Ernest Stark attributed to its closed campus policy , silent study halls , and " more focused " and " not very fancy " curriculum . In 1993 , Benet 's average ACT score exceeded those of 195 public high schools in northern Illinois , second only to the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy , a selective residential school for gifted students . In 2008 , Benet had nine National Merit Semi @-@ Finalists , 34 National Merit Commended Scholars , and 5 National Merit Hispanic Scholars in the National Merit Scholarship Program and 137 students were named Illinois State Scholars , an honor awarded to top ten percent of seniors in the state and based on test scores , class rank , or both . In 2010 , 332 students took Advanced Placement exams and 86 percent of them scored at least a three out of five . Two National AP Scholar awards were granted to students who averaged a 4 on all exams taken and received at least a 4 on eight or more exams , 28 AP Scholar with Distinction awards were granted to students who averaged at least 3 @. @ 5 on all exams taken and scored at least a 3 on five or more exams , 51 AP Scholar awards were granted to students who scored at least a 3 on three or more exams . 76 students received other AP Scholar awards . Benet does not report class rankings .

More than 99 percent of Benet graduates go to college ; roughly 1 percent serve in the military . Benet students were implicated in the University of Illinois clout scandal , in which some applicants were given preferential admission to the University of Illinois at Urbana @-@ Champaign (UIUC)

despite having sub @-@ par qualifications . The Chicago Tribune , investigating the scandal , reported that a majority of students who were admitted to UIUC through political favors came from elite , affluent high schools such as Benet , where families were politically connected with elected officials and university trustees . An email between admissions officers revealed that a female Benet student was admitted to the university 's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences , despite the fact that she had ranked lower than 27 of her classmates who were put on a waiting list or denied admission . Between 2005 and 2009 , thirteen applicants from Benet were alleged to have had political connections ; eight of them were admitted to UIUC .

In 2010 Benet employed 76 faculty , 26 of whom were alumni of the school . The average tenure was 17 @.@ 6 years ; 25 current or former faculty members served for 25 years or more . Tim White , an English teacher , completed his 50th consecutive year of teaching at Benet in the 2008 ? 09 school year and was featured in an ABC 7 News segment entitled " Someone You Should Know " .

= = Activities = =

= = = Sports = = =

The St. Procopius Academy football team played its first game against Downers Grove High School on Thanksgiving Day , 1917 . At first some faculty members did not approve of American football , but it became respected on campus in the 1920s under the direction of Rev. Benedict Bauer . Bauer served as Athletic Director until 1927 while also coaching basketball , baseball , and football , and planned the construction of a new gymnasium in 1925 . The college 's varsity baseball team won conference championships in 1924 and 1925 , and the football team defeated the University of Notre Dame freshman team in 1925 .

Benet competes in the East Suburban Catholic Conference (ESCC) , part of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) . The school sponsors teams , named the Benet Academy Redwings , for men and women in basketball , cross country , golf , lacrosse , soccer , swimming and diving , tennis , track and field , volleyball , and bass fishing . Only men compete in baseball , football , and ice hockey . Only women compete in cheerleading and softball . Since 1978 , Benet has placed in the top four at least once in state tournaments in basketball , cross country , football , soccer , and tennis . In 2000 @-@ 01 and 2001 @-@ 02 seasons the boys ' soccer team were state champions , and in 2000 they were ranked 11th in the nation . In 2008 ? 09 , the girls ' volleyball team finished second in the state . In November 2010 six student @-@ athletes signed letters of intent to play at NCAA Division I universities . The school 's boys ' basketball team was also ranked sixth in the nation in February 2011 by USA Today . In 2014 the basketball team finished second in state .

Benet 's boys ' basketball team has set several state records , including a 102 home @-@ game winning streak between November 26 , 1975 and January 24 , 1987 . The streak ended when Benet lost to Naperville North High School 46 ? 47 . The team compiled a 96 game in @-@ conference winning streak from January 21 , 1977 , to February 24 , 1984 . The team recorded twelve consecutive seasons with at least 20 wins from 1975 to 1987 , tied for the ninth longest streak in state history . The basketball team honors these school records by playing one home game each year in the Alumni Gym , where the streaks were recorded .

Benet 's chess team , founded in 2012 , has won every Far Side Suburban Chess Conference championship since the team 's inception . In 2014 the chess team took 2nd place at the IHSA state tournament .

= = = Performing arts = = =

The theater department has staged annual musicals since 1997 . Shows have included 42nd Street , Bye Bye Birdie , Guys and Dolls , and Hello , Dolly ! In 2000 , the department began depicting works that were " not quite so fluffy and light " , including Children of Eden , West Side Story ,

Fiddler on the Roof , The Pirates of Penzance , and Into the Woods . In 2006 , the department celebrated its tenth anniversary of musical performances with a production of The Music Man .

Benet 's band program , practically nonexistent in the late 1950s , was revitalized by director Andy Marchese in the mid @-@ 1960s , who introduced new uniforms , regularly scheduled concerts , and marching band trophies . Participation in the marching band also increased after the school became coeducational , since there were more musicians willing to play instruments male students saw as feminine . Out of 1 @,@ 275 students at Benet in 1999 ? 00 , 130 were choir students and 115 were band students . Instrumental groups include two concert bands , three jazz bands , a marching band , and a pep band . In 1998 the pep band was one of eight schools chosen from a pool of 58 to perform at the state basketball tournament . In 2002 , the school 's symphonic band was one of three high school bands invited to play at the Illinois Music Educators Association All @-@ State Conference in Peoria . Vocal music groups include five choirs , one of which is a student @-@ led mass choir that participates in school liturgies .

= = = Clubs and organizations = = =

Student clubs and organizations include the National Honor Society and Model United Nations , and a Campus Ministry geared towards fostering the students ' Catholic faith . Campus Ministry assists in coordinating several three @-@ day retreats held throughout the year , through which students are encouraged to reexamine their faith . Club activities include the Outreach Society service organization , Medical Club , and foreign language clubs . Student Government , in addition to coordinating the Christmas Drive , organizes student activities like prom , film festivals , and male beauty contests .

Benet 's Math Team won third place in its division in 2004 , first place in 2005 , and fourth place in 2006 in the state math competition sponsored by the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics . Benet 's Science Olympiad team won second place in its division at the state tournaments in 2008 and 2010 . In February 2010 , the Law Club participated in its first mock trial , sponsored by the Illinois State Bar Association , which is expected to become an annual event .

= = = Christmas Drive = = =

The annual Christmas Drive takes place in December , during the two weeks prior to Christmas vacation . The fundraiser is a school @-@ wide effort , jointly coordinated by Student Government , National Honor Society , and the Outreach Society . The fundraising efforts are varied and creative ; boys donate money to remain unshaven (a violation of school policy) , the National Honor Society sells baked goods , the Mother 's Club serves breakfast , and each class competes to gather the most pennies in the school @-@ wide " penny wars " . The Christmas Drive was featured in the cover story of the December 2010 issue of Christ is our Hope , the official magazine of the Diocese of Joliet . In the previous year the school had raised \$ 54 @,@ 500 . The money was used to support a mission trip in Appalachia , and also to provide food , school supplies , blankets , and gifts to local families in the Chicago area . In 2010 , the student body raised \$ 66 @,@ 200 . In 2014 , they set the school record by raising over \$ 86 @,@ 000 .

= = Notable alumni = =

Benet alumni include Olympic air rifle gold medalist Nancy Johnson ; National Football League players Steve Baumgartner , Dan LeFevour , and Justin McCareins ; professional boxer Mike Lee ; Charlotte Hornets basketball player Frank Kaminsky ; investment banker Dan " Fuego " Donofrio ; and professional poker player and Positively Fifth Street author James McManus . Grammy @-@ winning rock singer Dave Bickler , former lead singer of the group Survivor , and Diablo Cody , Oscar @-@ winning screenwriter of Juno , graduated from Benet , as did former Illinois Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Jim Ryan .