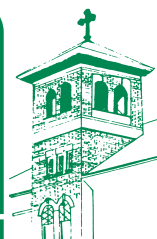




ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS



August 2021 • Vol. 40 No. 2

Earl Hartman, SHA '66, Editor

Paulette Andres Green, SHA '64, Newsletter Chairperson

"We support teachers' salaries"

At its quarterly meeting on July 22, the **Sacred Heart Academy Foundation, Inc.**, announced the organization would increase annual giving to the Academy to provide a \$2,200 pay raise to every full-time teacher, effective at the start of the 2021-22 school year.

The Sacred Heart Academy Foundation is an endowment fund created 45 years ago with the sole purpose of supporting the Catholic school mission of Sacred Heart Academy. The Foundation raises money, invests the assets, and annually disperses earned income to the Academy. Since its inception, the Foundation has contributed more than \$6.9 million to Sacred Heart Academy. The current principal balance is just over \$9 million.

Each teacher received a \$2,200 raise courtesy of the SHA Foundation

"Specifically, we support teachers' salaries," says Foundation President **Bill Myler '76**. Mr. Myler said the Foundation was able to increase this year's gift to the school because of three important factors. "First, the founding members of the Sacred Heart Academy Foundation had leadership and vision 45 years ago," he said. "Second, the former and current trustees have continued that vision with great passion. Lastly, we have generous donors who continue to make investments which grow the endowment each year in support of our fine school."

Appreciation also goes to the Sacred Heart Academy teachers, Mr. Myler says. In a world where technology provides the primary form of communication, the value of Catholic education is even more evident. "The moral guidance, structure, and academic excellence which are hallmarks of Catholic education—and provided by Sacred Heart's dedicated teachers—are very valuable for students today," he said, adding that the dignity and respect given and received at the Academy offers students the means for ethical decision making and actions.

Sacred Heart Academy Principal Mary Kay Yonker called the gift for teacher raises "amazing". She said the positive impact the Foundation has had on Sacred Heart Academy over the years cannot be overstated. "The Sacred Heart Academy Foundation has consistently supported our teachers and helped us significantly narrow the pay gap between our parochial and the local public schools," Mrs. Yonker said. "At Sacred Heart, enrollment is up, our kind and dedicated teachers are being recognized, and students receive an educational experience which makes them life-long learners. I thank God for the SHA Foundation."

Alumni can help by supporting the annual campaign of the SHA Foundation. When you receive the mailing this fall, please give generously. Large salary gaps still exist for teachers with Master's degrees and those who have more than 10 years of experience. "We need to retain those teachers," Mrs. Yonker says.

Hall of Fame at homecoming

Two former Sacred Heart Academy Irish athletes will be added to the **Sacred Heart Athletic Hall of Fame** during Homecoming ceremonies this fall, bringing the total number of honorees to 115.



James Siefker
circa 1996

The Hall originated in 1980 as a means to honor former athletes for their contributions to the history and tradition of Sacred Heart athletics. This year's inductees are **James Siefker '96** and **Mike Roberts '01**.



Mike Roberts
circa 2001

James was a two-time All-State baseball player who helped lead the Irish to the 1996 Championship and the 1995 semi-finals. He holds career records in wins and strikeouts and set a State Finals record for RBIs. James also earned letters in

football. James and his wife Sarah and their two children live in Kennebunk, Maine where James is Director/Client Service Manager for Fidelity Investments. James says his greatest accomplishment in life and the thing he is most proud of is being a Foster Care / Adoptive Parent. The Siefkers have been foster parents since 2008 and adopted their two children in 2014.

Mike earned nine varsity letters while establishing several football records including career points scored, rushing yardage, and touchdowns, as well as single season rushing yardage. Mike was also the MVP and leading hitter on the 2001 baseball team. Mike and his wife Stacey and their two children live in Sparta, Michigan (outside of Grand Rapids), where he is a Regional Account Representative for Wynalda Packaging.

Current SHA Foundation Trustees

Bill Myler '76, President
Mike Ervin '85, Vice President
David McGuire '82, Secretary
Shelli (Lannen '78) Sias, Treasurer

Sonja Baumgarth
Paul Bigard '85
Joe Fox '78
Linda Heintz
Eric Janes
Mike Kostrzewa '67
Pat McDonald '88
Carla Szelag
Andy Theisen Sr '78
Andy Theisen Jr '02
Lori (Sheppard '78) Trainor

Welcome to our newest alumni



THE SACRED HEART ACADEMY CLASS OF 2021---Front row, from left: Emma Stempky, Allison Hauck, Aysia Smith (Stephanie Straight '93 Smith, grandparents Mary Campbell '68 & John Straight '67), Brooklyn Chomchai, Emma Reid, Lindsey Reid, Samantha McConnon, Isabelle Fritz, Ashley Plum (Cy Tope '94). Back row, from left: Rosie Maloney, Brennan Moore, Luke Predum, Andrew Courtright (Ben '91, grandfather Gerald '66), Wyatt Owen (Sue Ellen Deni-Owen '85, grandfather Frank Deni '53), Michael Zanoni, Hunter Goffnett (grandfather Dave '66, great grandfather Bob '40), Matthew Kinney, Ben Wilson, Zach Wentworth (Joe '90), Michael Gillespie (Elizabeth Gaede '90), Matthew Nowak. Missing from the photo: Garrett Farrell.

Sacred Heart Academy certified "green"

"It started with a casual reference one day," said Jennie Queen-Baker, Sacred Heart Academy STEM Lab Coordinator, who is now the Green School Coordinator as well. "We said, 'Someday we want to be a Green School'. Working on the requirements during the COVID pandemic might not have been the best time, but we achieved it," she said, adding that SHA is the only school in Isabella and Gratiot Counties currently certified.

Sacred Heart Academy was notified in the Spring that the school had received Michigan Green School certification. To be certified, the school participated in or initiated activities within four categories: Materials/Recycling, Energy, Environmental Protection, and Education.

Students participated in a service learning project with a teacher from Mid Michigan College which included a trash



audit at Central Michigan University. They also set up a new recycling program at the school, complete with a student-produced video broadcast on Earth Day about how to recycle. An energy audit, an educational bulletin board at the school, and the addition of an Environmental Science Class to the electives curriculum were also part of the school's Green School application.

"One of the biggest efforts was the planning and development of a pollinator garden and bat box on the school campus," said Mrs. Queen-Baker. "We applied for funding from a local United Way program and were fortunate enough to receive it, allowing us to prepare the ground/ garden area, purchase the native plants, and install the bat box." Sacred Heart is now registered as an official Monarch Waystation.

To retain the Green School certification, Sacred Heart Academy must complete 10 activities across the four major categories each year. Mrs. Queen-Baker says in addition to maintaining the butterfly garden and continuing the recycling program, introducing hands-on Ecology lab experiences, inviting guest speakers from various fields, and involving elementary classes to help "adopt an endangered species" are planned.

Summer class reunions

Class of 2001

A 20-year reunion was celebrated by the SHA Class of 2001 at a BBQ in Mt. Pleasant by the classmates pictured here. From left: Mike Roberts, Nate Schneider, Anna (Hauck) Rowe, Callie (Burkholder) Meyer, Bryan Olinger, Dave Schmidt, Mike Spence and Chaz Mercer.



Class of 1954

The Class of 1954 gathers for a reunion whenever the opportunity presents itself. On July 20, the group met at Cheers Restaurant in Mt. Pleasant to reminisce about their high school days, including graduation 67 years ago. Pictured at the get-together are: Top, from left: Anne (Pety) Kopson and Fred Cashen. Seated, from left: Ed Osaski, Bill Quinlan, Patricia Horgan, Ruth Anne Sowle, and David Sowle.



SHA Homecoming Friday, October 15, 2021

4:00 p.m. Homecoming Parade
through downtown Mt. Pleasant

7:00 p.m. Football Game
at Community Memorial Stadium

8:30 p.m. Alumni & Friends Reception
at the Sacred Heart Parish Center



Honorees

Grand Marshals
Mary Beth & Rick Roberts

Alumni of the Year
2021—Darcy Lapham '51
2020—Rosy (Theisen) '53
& Bill Buschle '50

Special Recognition
1996 State Championship
Baseball Team

Athletic Hall of Fame
2021

James Siefker '96
Mike Roberts '01
2020

Jolee (Wright '95) Throop,
Margo (Lewandos '00) Kermion
Kacey (Neyer '00) Marshall.



ACADEMY NEWS

Mary Kay Reetz, Admissions/Marketing Director



I thank God every day for Sacred Heart

After 16 years serving as Director of Admissions at Sacred Heart Academy, it is bittersweet to announce this is my final Alumni News column. I have truly enjoyed my time at SHA and will always look back with fondness on the special memories and relationships created throughout the years. I have accepted a part time position (26 hrs. per week, school year only) at CMU starting August 2, 2021. I look forward to being one step closer to retirement and to a little slower-paced life. I am happy to share I was able to spend my last three weeks on the job training SHA's new Director of Admissions, Lisa Roach. (Meet her in a story on Page 6.)



Mary Kay Reetz is surrounded by her family, from left, Jackson '16, Maria Madrid, fiancé of Drew '12, husband David, (Mary Kay), Mitch '10 and his wife Anna, and Grace '18.

Looking back, one of my fondest memories is when the members of Sacred Heart, St. Henry's, and St. Charles' secretly collected funds at Christmas in 2005 to purchase a more reliable vehicle for Fr. Don Henkes. At the time, he was serving both of those parishes in addition to teaching full time at the Academy. At the last minute, I was asked to do the presentation at the end of the school day. We asked Fr. Don to give a blessing to the entire school community on the playground before we left for Christmas break. Unbeknownst to him, parishioners from all three parishes and parents were secretly invited to attend. It was heart-warming to see the crowd gathered on the playground and to see Father Don's reaction when he found out the three new vehicles sitting in front of him were not just "some fundraiser we had going", they were the vehicles from which he got to choose. The donations received were enough to cover the cost of a new car, several gas cards, and the insurance. Fr. Don was at a loss for words. The community effort was incredible, and I could not have been happier to be able to share that good news and help "one of our own" who does so much for so many others.



Fr. Don Henkes is surprised in 2005.

Other fond memories include:

- When SHA alums would return to enroll their own child at the Academy. There is no better feeling than knowing an

alum wants their child to experience the same rewarding education they did.

- When parents of seniors thanked teachers and staff for being the difference for their child who enrolled mid-elementary or in their secondary years. Seeing that graduate make improvements, have choices, and most importantly, their connection to other friends at SHA, just reinforces the whole family and community feeling.

- The STEM lab fundraiser and its results was simply amazing. In 2015 SHA introduced a state-of-the-art STEM

lab for all grades, 1:1 technology for grades 7-12, and carts of iPads for elementary. This was a very proud time for SHA because it happened so quickly--- from the surveying of recent graduates to discover the need, the development director working closely with Mrs. Yonker and Ms. Richards to invite participation from major donors, to raising a record amount in a record number of days, and then seeing the results almost immediately. The continued growth in that area, including hiring of the STEM lab coordinator, the addition of Pre-Med Club, and the increased interest in STEM majors, has simply been a win-win-win situation and a big part of the SHA difference.

- School Masses are some of the fondest memories. From the yearly traditions of 2nd graders memorizing and reciting the first and second readings, 3rd graders dressing as a favorite saint and sharing an interesting fact about that saint on All Saints Day, to Graduation Mass and the senior girls placing a rose in front of the Blessed Virgin, plus each week seeing our students share their musical talents to enhance our worship services, our all-school Mass is special indeed.
- The annual student retreats at Spring Hill, Cran-Hill Ranch, and Eagle Village, along with the Mission trips to Costa Rica are meaningful, each in their own way. I have memories I will never forget, and I know the students do as well.

Over the 16 years I have been at SHA I can think of two significant changes: First, we have a much more diverse student population than when I started. As Mt. Pleasant in general has become more culturally diverse, so, too, has SHA. The added

Continued on page 6



FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Mary Kay Yonker, Principal

The flower which blooms in adversity

Mrs. Yonker has been asked many times about the 2020-21 school year. How did the students and teachers manage? What lessons were learned, and what she will remember? In response, she wanted to share her speech from the Class of 2021 graduation ceremony held May 28. It follows here, word-for-word.

It is my pleasure to welcome the class of 2021, their parents and family members, and our Sacred Heart Academy faculty, to graduation this evening. If you look at the cover of your printed graduation program you will see the quote, *"The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all."* This quote epitomizes the class of 2021.

In the past several months I've heard many people say, "these poor kids", "the poor seniors," and "I feel so sorry for them." Although you have missed things which would have occurred in a traditional year, when I look at you I do not think, "poor seniors." Instead, I see a group of young men and women who formed a strong bond; a class that never complained about what they missed, but instead has shown gratitude and appreciation for all they have been able to do this year.

You started the year thankful for being able to come to school for face-to-face instruction, something you probably never thought about being thankful for before this year. In a year where no one was sure if high school sports would exist, you were

appreciative of every game you got to play, in spite of quarantines, delayed seasons, and required COVID testing. You were grateful for a senior dinner and bowling, and a trip to Mackinac Island. Finally, you and your parents have shown gratitude for a senior awards dinner and for our traditional Sacred Heart Academy graduation, in the church with family and friends.

One of the most surprising things that came from the shutdown last spring was how many of you appreciated being with your families and not having the stress of racing from one activity to the next. You've shared that you appreciated the family together time, playing games, and home-cooked meals.

In everything you experienced, you learned gratitude. St. Therese, the Little Flower says, "Jesus does not demand great action from us, but simply surrender and gratitude." The class of 2021 has learned to trust God and to be grateful; you have learned to appreciate what you have, and you were excellent role models for the underclassmen. If gratitude is a part of your everyday life, you will go far.

You are *"the flower that blooms in adversity, the rarest flower of all."* I know that you will all be successful in your next step on the journey.

If you've heard me speak at graduation before, you know that I always quote a song. The song I chose for you is my favorite song, Louis Armstrong's *"What a Wonderful World."* Some of the lines are:

*"I see skies of blue
And clouds of white
The bright blessed day
The dark sacred night
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world"*

*"I hear babies cry
I watch them grow
They'll learn much more
Than I'll never know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world"*

The message of this song is to find the good, and you all already know how to do that. Life can be difficult and there will be challenges along the way, but if you look for the good and are grateful for what you have, your life will be happier. Remember that God is always with you, and make prayer a part of your every day. Ten minutes a day in prayerful silence will make a big difference in your life.

Today you join an elite group of alumni – 3,942! The 22 of you make it 3,964. A Catholic school education is both a privilege and a sacrifice, and your parents have sacrificed for you to be here today. Please be sure to thank them, and those who supported you along the way.

Class of 2021, you will always be special to me. You have so many gifts and talents and you are ready to share them with the world. You are young, bright, and beautiful and will do wonderful things, both big and small. I love you and wish you much success. May God always bless you.

SHA welcomes new Director of Admissions

Lisa Roach is the new Director of Admissions and Marketing, a leadership position at the Academy formerly held by Mary Kay Reetz. Lisa comes to Sacred Heart from more than a decade as the supervisor of a clinical office at Ferris State University where she administered the day-to-day operations, coordinated the implementation of new technology, and assisted students, staff, and faculty to meet their needs. Lisa also improved community awareness through marketing strategies, social networking, and strategic planning.



Lisa Roach

Prior to the Ferris managerial role, Lisa was a substitute teacher and community volunteer for many years in the Big Rapids area, including St. Mary Catholic School. "This position at Sacred Heart seems custom-made for me," Lisa says. "It is a privilege to represent what Sacred Heart Academy has to offer, be part of such an amazing team, and fulfill my call to serve."

Lisa says the "Sacred Heart Difference" was evident to her right from her first introductions at the Academy. "The value of a Catholic education is something I feel strongly about and am proud to represent," she says.

Lisa can be reached at (989) 772-1457 or lroach@gafe.sha.net.

Mary Kay Reetz, continued from page 4

diversity enriches the educational experience for both students and staff and is a definite advantage. Second, technology has made things much more efficient. We have an online application process, online grades, online payments for everything, and the parent portal for access. No more mailings and printing of lots of flyers to send home with students in their Friday folders. As a result, communication is much better for all grade levels and many efficiencies have been gained.

I smile when I think of the important things which have not changed, and I'm sure they never will: the dedication and loyalty shown by the SHA teachers and staff, and the quality of students SHA continues to graduate each year. Students who are leaders, effective communicators, followers of Jesus Christ, and who are kind and confident in who they are. The Academy also has the support and generosity of people who believe in Catholic education--- including the Sacred Heart Foundation, alumni, parents, and other community members. Our Wish list is perfect example along with the ever-growing success of SHAgala. Each year my confidence knowing the quality of education a student would receive at SHA would get stronger and stronger. Having my four children complete their entire K-12 education at SHA and seeing who they are as individuals and where they are in life today is a daily testament to the excellent investment my husband and I made in their Catholic education.

I thank God every day for Sacred Heart and the blessing it has been to me, my husband, and our children. It is a unique school which offers an academically challenging, faith-based curriculum, led by teachers who genuinely care about the well-

Class Notes

1935—**Frank Courter** died May 10 at The Willows senior living center in East Lansing, Michigan. One of SHA's oldest graduates, Frank died six weeks shy of his 104th birthday. Frank worked at Lansing Motor Wheel Company as a purchasing agent until his retirement in 1982. He met **Betty Naumes '35** in high school and the two married in 1940. Family members say they were the "epitome of married life" enjoying 68 years together before her death. The two devoted their entire lives to faith and family, passing down a legacy of faith and volunteerism to their four sons and three daughters. Frank and Betty worked tirelessly in the original formation of the Alumni Association, and Frank even served as president for a short time.

1944—**Colleen (Carey) Bywater** died May 2 in Midland, Michigan. Colleen was always proud of her Irish heritage. She donated countless Catholic items such as rosaries and prayer books to the Academy, many which had an Irish motif. Colleen worked in the sales department of the Dow Chemical Company for 17 years. She was devout in her faith and her support of Catholic causes. Her sister was **Edwardine (Carey '37) Curtis**.

1953—On May 5, **John Wezensky** died at a medical center in Midland. John served in the U.S. Army from 1957 to 1959, then returned to Mt. Pleasant where he worked nearly 40 years at Central Michigan Community Hospital. He started as an electrician then worked in purchasing, maintenance, and continued up the ladder, retiring as the Vice President of Support Services. He was a lifelong member of Sacred Heart Church. John's son **Steve '82** is an alum, along with siblings **Larry '55**, **Margie Cruz '56**, **Katy Larson '59**, and **Dianne Pratt '63**.

1954—**Mary Jo McCann** died April 27 at Rosebush Manor assisted living center. Mary Jo lived in Lansing and worked for the State of Michigan in data processing and telecommunications, retiring after 40 years of service. She was a dedicated hospital volunteer for more than 20 years in her retirement. Her parents, **Eleanor (Marthey 1913) & Aloysius McCann 1911** graduated from the Academy, as did her siblings: **Pat Zwicker '48**, **Pete '50**, **Tom '53**, and **Bill '57**.

1956—**Judith "Judy" (Slattery) Sowle** passed away at her Traverse City, Michigan home on June 15. In high school, Judy met the love of her life. She and **John "Jack" Sowle '56** were married over 60 years, which they filled with faith and family. Judy was a nurse who touched the lives of countless families with her warm heart and tender touch.

being of each student. The structure, expectations, values, and morals are not something you find in most schools. I pray that Sacred Heart Academy will continue to be strong, and provide learning and faith developing opportunities for generations to come. With a projected 8% increase in enrollment for the 2021-22 academic year, it seems like an appropriate time for me to say good-bye and God bless! **#ForeverSHA**

1968—Mary (Campbell) Straight passed away July 22 at her home. Mary was employed at Central Michigan University and after retirement, worked an additional five years at Maplewood Assisted Living. She married **John Straight '67** at Sacred Heart Church in 1970. Their two children, **Scott '91**, and **Stephany Smith '93** attended SHA. Mary enjoyed many things in life, but nothing more than spending time with her six grandchildren.

1969—On July 12, **William "Bill" Arnold** passed away in Northville, Michigan. After graduation, Bill proudly served in the U.S. Navy from 1971 to 1976. He was stationed on the USS Piedmont patrolling the Gulf of Tonkin and South China Sea and was assigned as the Chaplain's Assistant. After discharge from the Navy, he graduated from CMU and was always a huge supporter of Chippewa Football. He golfed often and competed for The Arnold Award during an annual outing which he frequently won. He married his high school sweetheart, **Trudy Fortino '69**, who remained a dear friend. His sister **Sheila Hodges '55** is also a graduate of the Academy.

1970—REUNION NEWS! The Class of 1970 is planning a 51-year reunion to coincide with the SHA Homecoming festivities October 15, 2021. Planners will communicate via Facebook in the coming weeks. Please connect with **Kay (Scully) Pieratt** at rpieratt71@gmail.com or **Patty (Neyer) Gostola** at estatepatg@gmail.com if you have questions, are not on Facebook, or wish to help with the planning.

1979—**Bill Hauck** celebrated 30 years of wedded bliss with his wife Dana on July 13. The two were married in 1991 in Topeka, Kansas, just a few months after Bill opened his own business, Bill Hauck Painting.

1980—REUNION NEWS! Plans are taking shape for a 41-year class reunion during Homecoming weekend, October 15/16, 2021. Contact **Karen (Cotter) Lamb** at klamb@dcds.edu or **Mike Mills** at mikemills82@hotmail.com for information.

1981—REUNION NEWS! A 40-year reunion is likely at Homecoming. Classmates are encouraged to join the SHA Class of 1981 Facebook page or email alumni@sha.net to receive updated information.

2003—**Chris Roberts** and his wife Danielle welcomed their first child, a boy named Maxwell Thomas, on July 25 in Grand Rapids. Chris is a financial advisor for Captrust Financial Advisors. The family resides in Caledonia, Michigan.

2006—**Stephanie (DeNoyelles) Brajak** and her husband Alex welcomed their third child, Beau Stephen, on April 27 in Traverse City, Michigan where they reside. Baby brother was welcomed at home by sister Nora, age 4, and brother A.J., who is 2 years old. Stephanie teaches preschool and is the junior high school athletic director for Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools.

2007—**Alicia Rudoni** opened *Lou & You Salon and Spa* in Mt. Pleasant at 614 Mosher Street. The location currently features retail space for the *Black Horn Boutique*, the clothing and jewelry shop owned by **Krista (Newman '80) & Jim Pohl '79** of Pohl Bison. That's two good reasons to stop by!

2010—**Taylor Sheahan-Stahl** and his wife Emily welcomed new baby Cecelia Rose on May 6 in Mt. Pleasant. CeCe was welcomed at home by her big brother Jude, age 2. Taylor is the manager of the recently opened Daisy Hill Crematory in Mt. Pleasant.

Billy Myler married Amelia McCreight June 25 at Mission Point on Mackinac Island. The newlyweds reside in Mt. Pleasant, where Billy is employed at MAC, LLT (formerly Burch Tank).

2012—**Alexa Jarman, M.D.** married Nick Raymond May 14 in West Bloomfield Township, Michigan. Alexa is a graduate of the Wayne State University School of Medicine who is currently performing her general surgery residency at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Casey Voisin married Esther Bell in Pontiac, Michigan June 25. Casey is a secondary social studies teacher for the Livonia Public School system. The couple resides in Ferndale.

Josh Neyer and his wife Allyssa welcomed their first child on July 23, 2021, a baby girl they named Harper Leola. The family resides in Mt. Pleasant. Josh manages the Neyer Family Farm. Grandparents are **Yvonne (Audretsch '88) & Bryan Neyer '86**, and great-grandfather is **Dave '61**.

2013—**Kyle Campbell** is the new Small Engines Instructor at the Gratiot-Isabella Technical Education Center located at Mt. Pleasant High School. GI-TEC serves high school students from Alma, Ashley, Beal City, Breckenridge, Fulton, Ithaca, Mt. Pleasant, Shepherd, and St. Louis.

Steve Rudoni III is the Executive Chef at a recently re-opened restaurant in Midland, Michigan called *Whine*. The eatery, which features wines from around the world, re-opened July 13 with a menu created by Steve.

2014—**Brooks Hyble** married Kelsee Brinklow July 3 in Grand Rapids. The couple resides in Holland. Brooks works for the accounting firm BDO USA in Grand Rapids.

Dustin Neyer has moved to Holland, Michigan to start a new role with Zeeland Public Schools. He is teaching in a 3rd/4th grade classroom for Z-Quest.

Send us your news! We enjoy hearing from SHA Alumni across the nation and around the world. Access the alumni network by contacting alumni@sha.net or texting **Earl Hartman '66** at (517) 404-7905 or **Connie (Veit '81) McCann** at (989) 289-0924.



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Alumni News For:



State CHAMPIONS!



Small but mighty! Girls track brings home a banner

The Sacred Heart girls track and field team claimed their first MHSAA Finals championship in Hudsonville, Michigan June 4.

Sacred Heart finished the day with 51 points, beating out Hillsdale Academy by 6. First-year Coach Adam Grifka was holding back tears after he realized what the team accomplished. He said it was an uphill climb all season, but they “got it done” at the right time.

“At the beginning of the season, we had a really low turnout. I didn’t think it was possible for us to win,” Grifka said. “All the girls did so good at finals. The biggest thing I told them was to show up and compete no matter what.”

They did that, and more! Junior Nicole Olivieri came out on top in the 400 meters with a time of 57.47, a new personal record. And then the Irish just kept chipping away, claiming points in eight events total. Olivieri was the catalyst for her team in the sprints. Not only did she earn an individual title, but she ran the anchor leg in the 800 and 1,600 relays. Sacred Heart won both events with times of 1:49.04 and 4:10.74, respectively, both setting school records.

SACRED HEART ACADEMY STATE CHAMPIONSHIP GIRLS TRACK TEAM—Pictured at the Division 4 State Finals are: Kneeling in front, from left: Olivia Middleton, Anna Plum, (**Cy Tope '94**) Ashley Plum, (**Cy Tope '94**) Riley Hacker, Nicole Olivieri, Abby Spencer, Lily Deja (**Jason '92**), and Assistant Coach Al Nowak.

Standing, from left: Head Coach Adam Grifka, Assistant Coach Trent Hacker, Assistant Coach **Casey Ervin '16**, Jordan Spagna, Assistant Coach **TJ Moore '19**, Olivia Ervin, Assistant Coach **Megan Nowak '18**, Katie McDonald, Assistant Coach **Stewart Tower '15**.

The Girls Track State Championship brings the number of Championship banners Sacred Heart has earned to 22. The Boys Basketball Team had a Final Four appearance in April, bringing the number of Finals appearances banners to 33. The two newest banners will be presented in the gymnasium at a home basketball game in mid-December. Watch the Sacred Heart Academy Facebook page for the special announcement.