



# ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS



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James Thering '89, Alumni Director Earl Hartman '66, Assistant Director

## Homecoming 2026

# Foundation Trustees to serve as Grand Marshals

As the SHA Foundation celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it creates a perfect opportunity for the SHA Alumni Association to honor the entire Board of Trustees as GRAND MARSHALS of the school's Homecoming celebration.

In 1976, the SHA Foundation was crucial to keeping the doors of our beloved Academy open. The founding members and every person who served as a Trustee over the years will be represented by the participation of the current trustees as Grand Marshals.

Each member is pictured below, with the year they started on the board listed. It should be noted that Mike Kostrzewa '68, is the longest-serving trustee the Foundation has ever had, and Bill Myler, who is the organization's third president in 50 years, is now the trustee to serve the most years in the leadership role.

### SHA Foundation Current Board of Trustees

Names listed left to right in each row

Michael C. Kostrzewa '68 (1981)  
Linda Heintz (2016)  
Bill Myler Jr. '76 (1989)

Shelli Lannen '78 Sias (2001)  
Andy Theisen Sr. '78 (2009)  
Lori Sheppard '78 Trainor (2015)

Joe Fox '78 (2008)  
Eric R. Janes (2006)  
Connie Veit '81 McCann (2022)

David F. McGuire '82 (2004)  
Michael Ervin '85 (2006)  
Pat McDonald '88 (2010)

Andy Theisen Jr. '02 (2019)  
Taren Fabiano '04 Barberi (2022)  
Alexa Holtgreive '09 Doerr (2023)



## Connie Veit '81 McCann Alumnus of the Year

"There may never be a more reluctant award winner," said Alumni Director James Thering of the 2026 Alumnus of the Year. "She actually tried not to accept, telling us how many other people were more deserving."

However, those familiar with **Connie Veit '81 McCann** know she is deserving of the annual award. She devotes countless hours to school, parish, alumni, and Foundation efforts. It is a running joke in her family that she doesn't know—or at least use—the word "no", and certainly not when anyone from Sacred Heart needs help.

Once an SHA parent, she was on the original SHAgala planning committee and has stayed involved over the years. She was also employed by the parish for nearly 10 years, dedicating her work hours and volunteer life to raising money for the Academy and the SHA Foundation.

Since moving into semi-retirement, working at Clark Family Funeral Chapel, Connie continues to dedicate time to Sacred Heart and its many activities, including:

- Sacred Heart Women's Group
- Hope Ministry
- SHAgala volunteer
- Alumni Association & SHA Alumni News
- SHA Foundation Trustee
- Fish Fry Volunteer

Over the years, Connie has connected with alumni in many ways, and worked hard to clean up class lists so the Alumni Office can communicate with SHA graduates via text and email. She helped the

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## Boys basketball has a new top scorer

Senior Noah Zeien (**Danielle Radawski '88 Zeien**) scored 16 points in the league championship basketball game February 20<sup>th</sup> to become the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,361 points, passing **Colten Nelson '19** for the top spot. By season's end, Noah had amassed 1,393 career points for the record book. He is the ninth boys player to reach 1,000 career points.

Noah started the year 11<sup>th</sup> on the all-time list and passed **Doug Kunik '86**, **Mike Funnell '68**, **Billy Myler '10**, **Bill Collins '64**, **Hedlun Walton '92**, **Grady Pieratt '25**, **Caleb Simons '07**, **Mike Hackett '67**, **Bill Myler '76**, and **Nelson** during his climb.

Karis Terwilliger finished her junior year in third place on the all-time girl's scoring list with 1,339 career points.

She is the seventh girl's player to reach 1,000 career points, having accomplished that feat on January 13, 2026, with a 37-point outburst against Saginaw Nouvel. And she kept soaring up the list from there!

She trails only **Sara Hansen '14**, and **Colten's** triplet sister **Scout Nelson '19**, who holds the top spot. Karis began the year in 10th position on the all-time list and passed **Kelly Epple '81 Hansen**, **Delaney Scully '22**, **Elena Sias '04**, **Sophie Ruggles '18**, **Erica Hansen '13 DeLaRosa**, **Kelsey DeNoyelles '08 Baker**, and **Avery Gamble '16** this season.



**ABOVE:** Noah Zeien (center, holding the banner) takes a moment to celebrate with his Varsity teammates and coaches on February 20 when he became the school's all-time leading scorer. It was a short break, though. Not wanting to lose momentum, Noah went right back into action with his team. **RIGHT:** On January 13, 2026 when she scored her 1,000th point, Karis Terwilliger (second from left), had her photo taken after the game with her banner and her sisters, SHA Alums (from left:) Anna Terwilliger '22, (Karis), Riley Fletcher '15, and Hadyn Walton '18.



## Alumnus of the Year

Continued from page 1

Foundation during nine years of unprecedented growth, including the creation of many Named Funds. Connie also led a fundraising campaign for the STEM Lab at SHA, which reached its monetary goal in less than 30 days to ensure renovation

could be completed during the school's summer break.

At Homecoming, Connie will be a double award recipient. As a group, the SHA Foundation Trustees will serve as Grand Marshals of the 2026 Homecom-

ing festivities, so she will be honored in that way as well.

"The Alumni award is wonderful and I am honored," Connie says. "It puts me in a group with previous winners who are people I admire and respect very much."

# 50th Anniversary of the SHA Foundation

## Anniversary year is special in many ways

Like wedding and corporate anniversaries, the 50th anniversary of the Sacred Heart Academy Foundation is a milestone which celebrates years of focus, dedication, and positive impact.

After receiving the 2025 annual report of the Foundation last fall, many people shared their memories from 1976, recalling the financial hardship of the Academy and the parish.

"My mom, **Shirley Honeywell '49 Sheppard**, was the parish bookkeeper and she told me they would literally open the drawer each week and decide which of the bills to pay, and which could be put on hold a bit longer," said **Lori Sheppard '78 Trainor**.

The Bishop of the Saginaw Diocese appointed a Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in July of 1976 specifically to oversee the closing of the high school. The Pastor was instructed to lessen the cost to the parish by eliminating the high school portion of the school complex.

**Mick Natzel '67** very clearly remembers because he was teaching and coaching at the Academy. He recalls, "Several weeks into the 1976 school year, the principal wanted to meet with me. He confided in me and shared a very disturbing message, that the school was financially broke, and there was not enough money to pay the teachers [that] Friday."

Mick said a small and zealous group of Sacred Heart Academy pioneers took action and were able to assemble the mezzanine funding for the school, to lessen the financial strain on the parish. There was also discussion about raising tuition, however, raising the tuition to a level to meet the needed operational monies would have jeopardized the school as well.

Under the leadership of William Myler Sr., John Ward, **Gerald Cotter '22**, and Joseph Hauck, the Sacred Heart Academy Foundation, Inc. was founded in 1976, with a mission to bridge the gap between the tuition money collected and



the true cost to educate each student. After the start-up, a board of trustees was created with **Robert Sweeney '41** serving as the organization's first president. Mick said, "The Bishop was not pleased with this concept. He continued to oppose any funding for schools outside of the parish, but the SHA Foundation successfully forged forward, with Foundation trustees raising money for the good of Catholic education," Mick said.

Contributions are still being accepted toward the \$1 million anniversary goal. If you have not yet invested in the Foundation this year, please plan your gift accordingly.

The success of the Foundation will be celebrated at a 50th Anniversary Event scheduled for Saturday, November 7, 2026 at Sacred Heart Academy. Invitations will be sent to Foundation donors, Named Fund families, and to families of those who served as Trustees over the years so that we many honor all who have helped over the years. For information about the event, contact Development Director Lindsay Ley at (989) 772-1385 or [LLey@sha.net](mailto:LLey@sha.net).



**Mark your calendar!**

**SHA Foundation**

**50th Anniversary Celebration**

**Saturday, November 7, 2026**





# ACADEMY NEWS

Lisa Roach, Admissions Director



## The SHA Difference is hands-on learning

### St. Patrick's Day guest reader

On St. Patrick's Day, everyone is Irish at Sacred Heart Academy! This year, elementary students received a special treat... and it wasn't just from a leprechaun! Although our younger elementary students set out leprechaun traps that successfully caught a few leprechauns, their real treat was much more memorable.



This year was special because Mrs. Mary Kay Yonker was a guest reader for "March is Reading Month." On March 17, 2026, Mrs. Yonker stepped away from the principal's office to connect with our kindergarten and second grade students by reading two of her favorite children's books to them. She read Hooray for St. Patrick's Day!, by Joan Holub to the kindergarteners and St. Patrick's Day in the Morning, by Eve Bunting to the second graders.

As a fly on the wall, it was easy to see Mrs. Yonker was in her element. The students gladly responded by smiling, giggling, and raising their hands to answer her questions about the books - and they even told her a few St. Patty's Day jokes. When it was time for Mrs. Yonker to move from kindergarten to second grade, she formed a parade! Students continued their laughter as she played festive music and they marched to the upstairs classroom. Oh, what fun!

THIS is the kind of interaction that sets Sacred Heart Academy apart from other schools. It wasn't just taking time out of her typical 12-hour day to read to students. It was dressing up, engaging with the students, and exhibiting true joy through her voice, her smile, and the sparkle in those beautiful baby blue eyes! We are blessed to have such an incredible leader and role model, who truly loves connecting with students to form long-lasting, genuine relationships.

**RIGHT: Community volunteer and SHA Alum Connie Veit '81 McCann is pictured (seated in the middle) with second graders from Ms. Laurie Simon's and Mrs. Kelly Epple '82 Hansen's classes following their final Junior Achievement lesson in March.**



LEFT: Mrs. Yonker leads the Kindergartners on a St. Patrick's day parade. ABOVE: The principal reads one of her favorite St. Patrick's Day books.

### Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement USA is the nation's largest nonprofit organization which offers K-12 lessons to help students learn how business works, and how they can be successful. Each year **Connie Veit '81 McCann** volunteers as a classroom consultant for Junior Achievement in our second-grade classes, bringing JA's "Our Community" series. The weekly lessons teach students about daily life in a community, including the people who work there, the money decisions they make, and the importance of being involved and responsible community members. There are other JA classes in first and fifth grade at SHA, also led by community volunteers.

Our school continues to thrive because our alumni and parishioners are dedicated to making sure our students succeed. This is just another example of why the Sacred Heart difference is real. We are truly blessed!





# FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Mary Kay Yonker, Principal

## Winning at twinning at SHA

A friend recently noted we have many sets of twins at Sacred Heart Academy. She saw the names in the SHAgala program, where students are listed with the classroom projects offered in the Live Auction. We do have several sets of twins, I confirmed, which led to an interesting discussion about teaching twins (there are key strategies), the perfect environment for twins (which Sacred Heart is), and being a twin (for those of you who don't know: I am one!).

Teaching twins involves recognizing them as individuals with unique learning styles, strengths, and needs rather than as a single unit. With its small class sizes, individualized learning key strategies include addressing them by name (not as "the twins"), fostering individual identities and capabilities, avoiding direct comparisons, and collaborating with parents to decide if they should be in the same or separate classrooms. Sacred Heart has always respected our parents' right to be involved in the placement of their twins, as there are benefits to having them in the same classroom or in different rooms for learning.

**Anna (Groves '01) and Shane McConnell '01** have two sets of twins enrolled at the Academy. They wholeheartedly agree that the academic environment at SHA allows their twins to grow intellectually and retain their individual identities, too. Anna says the smaller class sizes, increased structure, and academic accountability have helped their sixth grade and ninth grade twins be successful.

"For Stella and Nora (current 6th graders) we preferred the same classroom, same teacher for the younger grades," Anna said. "It was easier to keep track of assignments, we had one point of contact, and it just made me feel better to have them together. But when we brought Maeve and Jack (current 9th graders) to Kindergarten round-up and the principal asked what we thought about putting them in separate rooms, my first instinct as a Mom was 'No', but both Maeve and Jack shouted 'Yes! Please?' I was always thankful the conversation happened in front of them because they were obviously ready."

Anna noted later that although Maeve and Jack were in the



*Mrs. Kelly Eppe '82 Hansen (left) and Ms. Laurie Simon (right) are pictured with the three sets of twins in second grade at Sacred Heart Academy this year. From left: Nathan and Joshua Ferry, Addy and Lily Mullin, and James and Jeffrey Blackman.*

same grade learning the same things, they each got to have their own experiences to talk about at home, which was nice.

Greg and Sarah Hall, who have daughters Brooke and Audrey in fourth grade, say the SHA teachers have been wonderful, working as a team and being familiar with both of their girls. "We feel our children are receiving the instruction and attention they need to be successful individuals," Greg said, adding the twins were together for younger grades but they knew when they were ready for separation.

SHA Second Grade teachers Kelly Eppe '82 Hansen and Laurie Simon have three sets of twins in their classrooms this year. They have taught many sets of twins over the years, and report that twins typically don't act like siblings in the classroom, but more like friends or classmates. Both Mrs. Hansen and Ms. Simon agree that the SHA Elementary curriculum supports individualized instruction, so if one twin needs support different from the other, they are treated like all students, and get what we feel best meets their needs. "Even if twins are in the same class they grow and learn differently because they are different people," Mrs. Hansen says, adding that sometimes the biggest challenge is getting their names straight at first.

Ms. Simon says she enjoys getting to know the personalities of all her students, but especially likes how twins seem to hold each other accountable. "Sometimes I wish every student had an accountability partner in the classroom," she said.

Twin siblings have their own unique personalities and strengths, for sure, say Chad and Theresa (Partie) Slater, who have twin boys in third grade. "We've appreciated how the SHA teachers focus on helping each child build confidence and work toward their own goals. That approach allows both our boys to succeed in their own way and feel proud of their progress."

Our academic environment is supportive for each and every child, and you don't have to be a twin. It's just interesting, as my friend mentioned, that we happen to have eight sets of

*(continued on page 7)*

# Class Notes

## *Class of 1954*

**Patricia Horgan** passed peacefully away on March 12, 2026, at the Isabella County Medical Care Facility, with her friends by her side. A memorial service for Patricia will be held in the summer. Pat graduated from St. Lawrence nursing school in Lansing and dedicated her life to nursing. She worked in California and northern Michigan before culminating her career in an industrial role as the head of nursing at The Chrysler Corporation. Pat returned to Mt. Pleasant after retirement, where she was active in Sacred Heart Parish, enjoyed traveling, and loved card games with her friends. Her brothers, **Tom '63**, and **Dick '62**, are also SHA grads.

## *Class of 1955*

**Mary Ann (Grisdale) Schrottenboer Tuma** passed away on November 26, 2025, in Richmond, Virginia. Her siblings also graduated from the Academy: **Terry '58**, **Dan '60**, **Chuck '63**, **Pat '69**, **Susan Mas-saro '71**, **Rob Utterback '78**, and Rick Utterback. Mary Ann resided in Mt. Pleasant and was active in several local charitable organizations. She wintered in Florida for many years, then moved to Virginia permanently to be close to family. She was a woman of faith and grace, deeply grounded in her Catholic values.

## *Class of 1956*

**Rose Marie (Neyer) McFarlane**, known as "Rosie", passed away February 12, 2026, in Sturgis, Michigan, surrounded by her children and beloved brother Ken. Rosie's mother, **Kathleen (Judge) Neyer**, graduated from SHA in 1932, as did Rosie's siblings, Jack Neyer, Bob Neyer, **Ken Neyer '63**, **Jane Bacon '66**, and **Patty Gostola '70**. Rosie was "the best Mom ever" to her kids, Mike McFarlane, **Mollee McFarlane '80**, **Melissa Townsend '83**, and **Mari (David '83) Campbell '85**, even though they admit they may have "given her a run in their younger years." Rosie was an elemen-

tary teacher and administrator who taught third grade for over 30 years in the Mount Pleasant Public Schools. She loved being a grandmother, and enjoyed retiring to Florida, where she treasured time spent with visitors in the sunshine.

## *Class of 1959*

**Robert "Bob" McDonald** passed away on November 28, 2025, in Midland, Michigan, after an unexpected fall. His father, **Fred McDonald '18**, graduated from the Academy, along with most of his siblings: Jim, Dick, **Jerry '50**, **John '51**, **Mary '52**, **Marge '56**, Tom, **Kathleen '58**, **Ruth '60**, **Evie '64**, and **Bill '67**. Born into a loving farm family, Bob learned the value of hard work early in life. Those years shaped his character. He was resourceful, determined, and always willing to do what needed to be done. He carried that work ethic with him throughout his life, spending most of his career driving truck and hauling milk. His faith was a guiding part of his life. He served Sacred Heart church in many roles over the years, from altar boy, usher, and choir member, to videographer when needed, faithfully filming Sunday Masses for 15 years. Bob worked countless fish fries and was always willing to lend a hand whenever needed.

## *Class of 1962*

On January 10, 2026, **Carol (Hart) Bel-loli** passed peacefully away, leaving a legacy of faith, love, and joyful service. Carol was the beloved sister of Sam T. Hart, Ross Hart, **Janet Spain '64**, **Colleen Hart '66**, **Tim Hart '68**, Mary Shoen, and John Shoen. Their mother was **Philomene (Lawler '32) Hart Shoen**. From a young age, Carol possessed a love of learning and an abiding faith that guided her life. She spent time as a novice in religious life before discerning her vocation to marriage. Gifted in both music and early child-

hood education, Carol became a kindergarten teacher. She taught in Catholic and Walled Lake Public Schools and was widely admired for her creativity, resourcefulness, and her dedication to her students. She created a music camp that continues to thrive today, and she nurtured generations of youngsters with patience, encouragement, and love.

## *Class of 1964*

**Sue Ann (Henry) Balsemer Wischmeyer** passed away peacefully in her sleep at the Isabella County Medical Care Facility on January 28, 2026. After raising three children, Sue worked at the Mt. Pleasant Country Club as a bartender before transitioning to self-employment as a housekeeper. She was a lifelong parishioner of Sacred Heart Parish, where her love for God was reflected in her service as a Eucharistic Minister. Sue put love and care into her sewing and baking, and cherished the time spent with her family, especially her grandchildren. After the passing of her husband, Thomas, she was blessed by a second marriage to Paul Wischmeyer. Her siblings, Pat Anderson, **Bob Henry '65**, **Sharon Cook '67**, **Linda Flachs '69**, **Maureen McCall '70**, **Gary Henry '73**, **David Henry '74**, **Mary Carey '76**, **Cathy VanElls '78**, and **Laurie Henry '80**, also attended SHA.

## *Class of 1965*

On February 28, 2026, **Helen Bayer Chase** was named 2025 Citizen of the Year by the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce. Helen was honored for her overwhelming support of the central Michigan community over the years, including her participation in Chamber of Commerce, Zonta Club, and Central Michigan University activities, along with local fashion show fundraisers, just to name a few. For more than 50 years, Helen has owned The Trillium, a fine clothing store for women in Downtown Mt. Pleasant which features Estee Lauder, Brighton, and Vera Bradley items, in addition to a wide array of casual and professional clothing for women of all ages.

## Winning at twinning

(From the Principal,  
continued from page 5)

twins enrolled between grades one and eight right now. I loved being a twin. My brother and I were always in the same classroom at St. Vincent dePaul Elementary in Shepherd, as they had split classes, with two grades in each class. As we got older, we went on to Shepherd High School, and we still had most of our classes



together. The teachers did such a great

job treating us as individuals that our high school principal did not know we were twins until our mom asked if we could receive our diplomas together at graduation! (We did.)

I hope everyone can enjoy the positive relationship my twin brother and I have enjoyed, along with our other 10 siblings, formed in our faith-filled household on the family farm. My twin brother has a set of boy-girl twins and his son has a set of four-year-old twin boys. In both our family, and at Sacred Heart Academy, twins are treated as individuals who share a special relationship.

*Mrs. Yonker and her twin brother, Eddie Filhart.*



Updates and photos  
can be emailed to  
[alumni@sha.net](mailto:alumni@sha.net)

## Class Notes

### Class of 1981

**Kathy (McNerney) Andres**, the daughter of **Richard "Dick" McNerney '47**, died at her home on January 25, 2026. Kathy earned a business degree in fashion merchandising from Central Michigan University and worked retail markets in Boston and Chicago. She was living outside of Kansas City near her grown children. She enjoyed making annual trips to Michigan to travel with her siblings and reunite with high school friends. Kathy was adventurous, made friends wherever she went, and loved music and art as much as she enjoyed a good Netflix series or Hallmark movie. Her sister **Jennifer Elkow '86** also attended SHA.

### Class of 2005

**Whitney (Thering) Smith** and her husband Nick welcomed a son, **Henry Schubert Smith**, on February 3, 2026, who joins big brother **Wilson**, age 2, at home. The family resides in Cedar Springs, where Whitney works for DTE Energy. **Jerry Thering '73**, is the proud grandfather, making **Russell Thering '38**, the boys' great-grandfather.



### Class of 2013

**Erica Hansen DeLaRosa** and her husband Yoan welcomed their first child, a baby girl named **Ruby Ann**, on March 8, 2026, in Grand Rapids. Proud grandmother is **Kelly Eppele '82 Hansen**; great grandfather is **Jim Eppele '59**, and great-great grandfather is **Alphonso Eppele '27**. Ruby's mom is employed as a sanitarian at the Kent County Health Department. The family resides in Hudsonville.



On March 16, 2026, **Margo (Predum) & Nick Hire** welcomed **Vincent Charles**, their third son. He joins big brothers **Henry**, 4, and **John**, 2, at home. Both Margo and Nick work at The Mayo Clinic.

The family lives in Eyota, Minnesota. Proud grandparents are **Kim (Eppele '83) & Dave Hire '81**, great grandfather is **Jim Eppele '59**, and great-great grandfather is **Alphonso Eppele '27**.

### Class of 2014

**Matthew Motz** and his wife Claire welcomed their first child, a boy named **Jack Matthew**, on January 14, 2026. The family resides in Grand Rapids, where Jack's dad is a civil engineer for Rowe Engineering, Inc.

### Class of 2015

**Tristen Fox** and **Jessica Barker** welcomed a baby boy named **Wesley James** on June 13, 2025. Wesley and his parents reside in Perryville, Missouri, where Tristen is a support coordinator for Perry County Disability Resources. Wesley's grandmother is **Linda Eppele '90 Gould**, and—guess what?!—his great grandfather is **Jim Eppele '59**, and great-great grandfather is **Alphonso Eppele '27**.



### Class of 2021

**Wyatt Owen** graduated from the James Madison College at Michigan State University in April 2024, where he majored in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy with a second major in History. He is now working as a journal clerk for the Michigan House of Representatives.



# ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS

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*Alumni News For:*



## Summer Slam '26: The winning continues

The summer series of the **Sacred Heart Academy Athletic Lottery** happens again this year. "Summer Slam" features two **\$500** prizes each week for 10 weeks. Only 1000 tickets are sold, numbered 000 to 999. The winner is determined based on *the ticket number(s) which match the Michigan Daily Lottery three-digit mid-day drawings on Mondays and Tuesdays, June 1 to August 4.*

*During the 10-week series, participants have 20 chances to win.*

"This summer raffle has helped our budget immensely," says SHA Athletic Association Treasurer Mike Zeien (Father of basketball record-holder Noah). "Just \$25 per ticket and you



have 20 chances to win; plus you are helping student athletes at the Academy. On behalf of the Athletic Association, all the coaches and athletes, please know how much we appreciate the support."

If you purchased Summer Slam tickets last year and have not completed your pre-sale purchase, **contact Lindsay Ley** at [Lley@sha.net](mailto:Lley@sha.net) or (989) 772-1385.

Scan the QR code below to purchase now. Tickets are limited, and the first drawing happens Monday, June 1, so **do not delay!** Your support of SHA Athletics benefits student athletes at all levels and helps continue the tradition of IRISH pride.

*Thank you for your ticket purchase.*



*(Michigan Lottery License #X15439)*