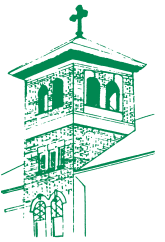




ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS



August 2025 • Vol. 44 • No. 2

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

HOMECOMING
EVENTS

Friday,
October

3

2025



4 p.m.

Parade through
Downtown

7 p.m.

Irish Football
vs. Vestaburg
at Community
Memorial Stadium

Halftime of Game
Athletic Hall of
Fame Presentation

8 p.m. (Doors Open)

Alumni & Friends
Reception
at Sacred Heart
Parish Center

Class Reunions
See "ClassNotes"
announcements
pages 7 & 8

Hall of Fame to induct four Irish athletes



BEN
HACKETT



LAUREL
BENNETT

The Sacred Heart Athletic Hall of Fame, initiated in 1980 to honor individual efforts which have contributed to the school's athletic success over the years, will welcome four new members during halftime of the October 3 Homecoming football game. This will bring the total number of honorees to 128.

BEN HACKETT, CNP, 1994 | Ben was an All-State player and leading scorer and receiver in football. He also earned All State honors in basketball, leading the Irish with a 15 points-per-game season average, and 728 career points. In track, Ben established the school record for the high jump event.

Ben attended Western Michigan University and received a degree in Computers and Information Technology. He later returned to school to pursue a passion in medicine, becoming a Nurse Practitioner. He is currently working in a Cardiac Care Unit. Ben resides in Tuscan with his wife Stacey, son Logan, and daughter Madeline.

LAUREL BENNETT DOHERTY, DO, 2006 | Laurel was a two-time 800 meter State Champion, establishing State meet records both times. She set school records in the long jump, high jump, 400 meter run, 800 meter run, 300 meter hurdles, and individual cross country meet as well. Her long jump and 800 meter run records remain to be beaten. Laurel was

also part of school record-setting 1600 meter and 3200 meter relay teams.

Laurel is a primary care physician who graduated from MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine. She and her husband, Richard Doherty, reside in Grand Rapids with their two sons, Leo and Bennett.

CHELSEA MILLS STEFANELLI, 2010 | Chelsea earned 12 varsity letters in basketball, volleyball, and softball. She was the named MVP of both her basketball and volleyball teams. In basketball she amassed 809 career points. In softball she earned All-State honors and held the school records for home runs and triples. As a senior, she was honored as the Morning Sun newspaper female Athlete of the Year.

Chelsea is a social worker at the University of Michigan Health System. She and her husband, Alex, reside in Plymouth.

BILLY MYLER, 2010 | Billy was a two-time team leader in scoring, receiving, and interceptions; plus he set school records for points, touchdowns, receptions, and interceptions. His record for receptions still stands today. He was also a two-time First Team All-State selection in football. Billy became the sixth player in school history to record 1000 points in basketball, and was a four-year letter winner in baseball, finishing his career in the top 10 of all time in hits, runs, and stolen bases.

Billy and his wife Amelia reside in Mt. Pleasant with their two children, Emmy Lou and Cassel. They own a fabrication company called Lodestone Fabrication.

Campaign reaches \$1.5 million goal

Sacred Heart Academy's \$1.5 million "Faith in the Future" capital campaign, has achieved its original fundraising goal. The Academy and parish leadership team, along with the campaign chairpersons, **Megan (Spence '03) and Andy Theisen Jr '02**, have expressed gratitude to each investor for helping to complete the many important projects which help position the Academy for success in the years to come.

"We are forever grateful for the support received in just one year," says Sacred Heart Development Director Lindsay Ley. "We are celebrating the success of the campaign with the opening of the Prayer Grotto in mid-August, and we will enjoy the positive impact of 'Faith in the Future' for many years to come."

Ley said the generosity of donors and the fiscal leadership of Konwinski Construction, Inc, the general contractor of the many projects, were keys to overall success. "The selection of service providers, who watch expenses as carefully as we do, allowed us to pursue additional projects for the Academy," she said, adding that the school has the opportunity to build a state-of-the-art indoor turf room for Sacred Heart Athletics, providing student athletes with a safe, all-season training environment.

SHA extends sincere gratitude to the exceptional contractors who not only delivered high-quality work, but also completed their projects under budget:

- Konwinski Construction, Inc. / **Andy Theisen Jr. '02**
- Bill Hauck Painting / **Bill Hauck '79**
- Assmann's Inc.
- Custom Heating & Plumbing
- Block Electric Inc.

- Green-Side Up Landscaping
- Straus Masonry
- Duke Roofing
- E & S Graphics
- GrafX Central



Homecoming Honorees 2025

Friday,
October

3



Grand Marshals: **Amy & Pat McDonald '88**

Alumni of the Year: **Megan (Spence '03) & Andy Theisen Jr. '02**



"Love Story"

Saturday, February 14, 2026



SHA AA
LENTEN FISH FRIES

People's Choice Best Fish Fry
First Friday of Lent—February 20, 2026



SACRED
HEART
ACADEMY
FOUNDATION,
INC.

Celebrating 50 Years in 2026
~Watch for event announcements~

Class of 2025



The SHA Alumni Association gained 34 new members when Sacred Heart Academy's Class of 2025 graduated Friday, May 23. Pictured at Sacred Heart Church the evening of graduation are:

Front Row (white caps and gowns), left to right: Kallie Smith, Taryn McGuirk, Ellie Morrow, Addison Shull, Jenna Morrison, Trinity Dent, Ishwarya Shankar, Megan Szymczak, Ellery Garver, Sophia Hauck, Nicole Goenner (James Goenner '86, Theresa Audretsch '89), Cecilia Lossio, Chelsea Lynch (great grandmother Mabel McCormick 1914 Lynch), Hannah Roslund, Erin Judge, Brooklyn Taylor

Back Row (red caps and gowns), left to right: Joseph McDonald, (Pat '88, grandfather Jerry '50, great grandfather Fred 1918), James Endres, (Wendy McConnell '91 Endres, grandmother Roxanne Endres '66 Gruss), Carter Farrell, Ayden Wills, James Struble, Brody Cherry, Jason Boge, Ryan Wiggins, Gabriel Egan, Joseph Likavec, Matthew McConnon, James McDonald (great grandfather Fred 1918), Luke Hacker, Aidan Baker, Grady Pieratt (Sarah Groves '95 & Scott Pieratt '96, grandmother Kay Scully '70 Pieratt, great-great grandmother Anna O'Hara 1919 Scully), Wyatt Browne (Jeff '93, great grandmother Luella Hauck '31 Smith), Dylan Hunter (John '97), Jackson Verleger



From 6th grade send-off to graduation goodbyes

Members of the Class of 2025 were just as excited to take their 6th grade trip (in 2018) as they were to graduate in May. From adolescents to adults, the educational journey at SHA is full of adventure!



ACADEMY NEWS

Lisa Roach, Admissions Director



More evidence of the SHA Difference

SHA's newest alumni

On May 23, 2025, Sacred Heart Academy graduated 34 seniors, our largest graduating class in years! Every single student in the class of 2025 left SHA with a plan. Most went onto a four-year college or university (several of whom were on scholarships) while others were able to enter the workforce through a vocational or apprenticeship program. Of course, one important attribute the entire class shared was the fact that they are good people with a solid moral compass, willing and able to make a positive impact on society.

At Sacred Heart Academy, we expect a little more of our students.

We expect them to learn about our Catholic faith through theology classes, every day, in every grade. We expect students to make eye contact when engaging in conversation, and we expect them to see a need, then fill the need – and they do! Sacred Heart graduates not only meet these expectations but exceed them, time and time again.

Over 70 percent of this year's graduating class enrolled in at least one college class during their high school career, and the class, as a whole, earned over 5,500 community service hours, far exceeding their graduation requirements. This class of hard-working young adults is committed to making a difference in our world. They're ready to share the **SHA Difference**. It's real!

Theology of the Body

Twice each year, our secondary students have the opportunity to engage in religious retreats, planned by our incredible youth minister, Abby Jones. While the retreats are always fantastic,

Mrs. Jones raised the bar this spring by planning a 7th – 12th grade retreat for our students and staff. Her emphasis was for all to know that we were made for love, dignity, respect, and we are so loved by God.



Father Matt, a small group leader, engaged in a trust fall with some senior girls at the Theology of the Body retreat.

Typically, retreats are grade specific or include two concurrent grades. This smaller setting allows students to strengthen relationships with their peers and participate in small group discussions which feel safe and promote sharing. The Theology of the Body (TOB) retreat, themed "Passion, Purity, Purpose - God's Plan for True Love," included all grades. Mrs. Jones was able to recruit enough small group leaders so

students wouldn't miss out on the ability to ask questions and share their thoughts in a more personal and close-knit format.

If you're not familiar, Theology of the Body (TOB) is the topic of a series of approximately 130 lectures given by Pope John Paul II during his Wednesday audiences between 1979 and 1984. Through TOB, St. JP II teaches about human sexuality and God's intended purpose for us and our bodies, as His creation. The retreat sparked many insightful conversations and even helped several students discover their passion.

For enrollment information

If you, or someone you know, is interested in enrollment information about Sacred Heart Academy, please contact Lisa Roach, Admissions & Marketing Director, at (989) 772-1457 or lroach@sha.net.



FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Mary Kay Yonker, Principal

Ten years... and counting!

Ten and a half years ago, when I “threw my hat into the ring” to apply for the role as principal of Sacred Heart Academy, I never imagined where I would be today. I have been blessed by this leadership role that I began on January 5, 2015. God’s plan was bigger than mine; He led me to SHA (with the help of some alumni and parents), and gave me this role for a reason. My faith has grown since coming to Sacred Heart Academy and I have been so grateful for this opportunity.

I didn’t realize I would be the longest-serving principal in the history of the Academy, nor did I imagine the sense of belonging I would find in a Catholic school supported by a Catholic church and a dedicated foundation, with teachers who fully believe in the mission. My children always attended parochial schools, as our faith is an integral part of our family, but my work history was teaching and administration in public schools, where the separation of church and state was real.

At Sacred Heart I have been privileged to be part of some amazing experiences, for which I am very thankful. Even before I became principal, I was welcomed by other parents at athletic events. There was also a group I have always affectionately called “The Basketball Ladies”, women who attend SHA athletic events - not just basketball games, in support of our young athletes. They embraced me and we became forever friends. Among them:

- Jean Richardson, mother of SHA graduates **Carmen Bullock '79**, **Kelly Browne '80**, and **Mark Richardson '85**
- June Powell, wife of **Jerry Powell, '50**, and mother of **Paul Powell '84** and **Amy Powell '87**
- Leona McDonald, wife of **John McDonald '51**, and mother of SHA graduates **Gary McDonald '78**, **Karen Prater '79**, **Mary Srodulski '82**, and **Dan McDonald '84**
- June (Verleger) Stalter, mother of SHA graduates **Terri Nelson '78**, **Wendy Currie '81**, and **Jody Block '89**
- Betsy Fagan

The group has lost members over the years, and others have added, but the original superfans who greeted me included:

- **Betty (Rea '64) Berryhill** and
- Katherine “Kate” McNerney, wife of **Dick McNerney '47** and mother of **Kathy Andres '81** and **Jennifer Elkow '86**

These parishioners have been regularly attending athletic events for decades, starting when their kids or their kids’ friends played, and continuing through the years. The women, tried-and-true supporters, are classic examples of the many generational fans who continually support the Irish at athletic and academic activities, and many others do the same. This amazes me.

The number of athletic banners added to the gymnasium wall in 10 years is impressive (14 state finalist and runner-up banners and 7 state championships)! To celebrate the school’s four-peat girls Cross Country championship, the year both the boys and the girls won the Cross Country state championships, the first-ever girls track and volleyball championships, and see the creation of a girls soccer team were certainly milestones. Watching the boys play in the basketball finals a year ago and the success of the football team as the boys embraced 8-man football and now return to 11-man play this fall brings pride to the school.

On the academic side, the opening of the STEM science lab after one month of fund-raising secured the \$500,000 we needed for the investment - that was a banner day! The STEM Lab and the expansion of our science curriculum at all levels, K through 12, continues to be one of the reasons parents choose our school. A wide



Mrs. Yonker says watching SHA students grow in faith and be received into the Catholic church has been a great joy. Seeing Molly '20, and Emma '22 are pictured above with their parents, Mary Kay & Steve Yonker.

range of extra-curricular activities; art, music, and band; hands-on learning opportunities; and ideal class sizes are also desirable.

Attending several March for Life trips with Father Don and bartending every year with Father Loren at the Homecoming Alumni and

(Continued on page 8)

Class Notes

1950—Mildred “Dani” Barz (Bush) McDonald passed away May 22, 2025, at Comfort Care Assisted Living in Mt. Pleasant. Dani’s love for children extended beyond her own: **Maurine Weisenburger ’71, Mary Ellen Bush ’71, Patrick Bush ’72, Cathy Thiel ’74, and John Bush ’75**; as she was a daycare provider for others. She also worked at Vic’s Grocery Store for 10 years and spent 32 years working in food service and custodial services at Central Michigan University and Eastern Michigan University, retiring in 1991. Dani cherished her family and enjoyed hosting Sunday dinners.

1952—Lucille Scully Tilmann passed away peacefully on July 25, 2025, at the age of 91. Lucille dedicated her life to caring for her family, which included her husband Earl, 4 children, 8 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. She was also deeply involved in the St. Joseph the Worker faith community in Beal City, where she generously donated her time to help with funeral luncheons and other parish activities. Lucille’s mother, **Anna O’Hara (1915) Scully**, graduated from the Academy, as did her sisters: **Mary Cole ’39, Margaret Millard ’42, and Rose Ann Fortin ’47.**

1954—Joan Corcoran Sell passed away April 16, 2025, in Traverse City, Michigan. Joan and her twin sister **Jean Harts-horn ’54**, along with their siblings **Mary Gupchik ’52 and Patrick Corcoran ’55** were proud SHA grads. Joan lived what could be described as an adventurous life: Living and working in Houghton Lake after graduation, obtaining her Radiation Tech certification, then traveling to California for work in Downtown San Francisco. Returning to Michigan, she joined a ski club and met her future husband. Their years together were spent traveling the U.S. in their motorhome, skiing in Europe, golfing, wintering in Florida, and enjoying the peaceful waters of northern Michigan from their retirement home on Clam Lake in Bel-laire.

Thank you!

*to those who receive the
Alumni News via email.*

- You help us save money AND
- You receive your news-
letter much more quickly

*Sign up to receive
your newsletter via email:*
alumni@sha.net

1961—Rochelle “Rocky” Heintz Flake passed away April 29, 2025, surrounded by her loving family. She was the first of eight Heintz children to graduate from SHA, followed by **Bob ’62, Jeff ’65, Mike ’66, Joe ’68, Kathy ’69, Dan ’72, and Pat ’73.** Rocky became a nurse in 1963 through a specialized college graduate program. Her 59-year marriage left a legacy of family and friendships deeply rooted in her Catholic faith. Rocky was a talented seamstress whose signature quilts ultimately became a metaphor for her life. She was the common thread stitching together a patchwork of lives spanning five generations of families and countless friendships lasting for decades.

1962—Michael “Mike” Truax passed away on March 29, 2025. Following graduation from SHA, he attended the University of Michigan, where he earned a degree in engineering. He spent his entire working career in civil engineering and took pride in every project he helped create. He was known for his jokes (mostly inappropriate), his creativity, and his ability to fix almost anything. Mike served in the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant and photo navigator stationed in Guam. He was awarded the Air Medal Strike/Flight Award for meritorious achievement during sustained aerial flight operations. His love for the Great Lakes was matched only by his fondness for travel, euchre, Schlitz, and scotch, along with Michigan football. **Forrest “Jim” Youngs ’63** is his brother.

1965—REUNION PLANS!

Please note: Class Reunion happening during SHA HOMECOMING weekend October 3 & 4, 2025 in Mt Pleasant. **We are relying on this Alumni News issue to spread the word about our 60th Class Reunion - There will not be a mailing!**

Friday, October 3rd

4:00 p.m.: Meet at church parking lot to ride in the PARADE

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

8:00 p.m.: ALUMNI Gathering at Sacred Heart Parish Center / Seating is reserved

Saturday, October 4th

5:00 p.m.: MASS at Sacred Heart with **Fr. John Cotter ’65** as Celebrant

Alumni picture immediately following Mass at church

6:30 pm: Buffet DINNER at The Stir, 4855 E. Bluegrass Road, Mt. Pleasant / Pay at the restaurant

Out-of-town-classmates: A block of rooms has been reserved with a discount under **SHA Class of 1965 - 60th Reunion** at the COMFORT INN and SUITES —You can choose one or two nights - Hot Breakfast included; Reservation deadline is September 3; call Brittany at 989-956-0446.

To RSVP for the reunion or with any questions TEXT **Janet Campbell Cappel** at 989-423-5034. Let’s HOPE and PRAY we can all share together as we celebrate this joyous milestone

🍀 🍀 🍀 and Irish Tradition!

Class Notes

1975—REUNION NEWS! The Class of 1975 will host their 50th class reunion the weekend of Sacred Heart Academy's Homecoming, October 3, 4 & 5. The reunion lineup includes meeting at The Bird Bar & Grill at 3 p.m., then watching the parade from the NW corner of Main & Broadway at 4 p.m. Following the parade, a tour of the Academy, bite to eat (possibly Freddie's), and then the homecoming game at 7 p.m. and Alumni & Friends Reception at the Parish Center at 8 p.m. On Saturday plans include 5 p.m. Mass at Sacred Heart, then Cindy & **Doug Gepford** will host the class at their home starting at 6 p.m. Please check the SHA Class of 1975 Facebook page for updates; our plan is to keep it simple. If not on Facebook, contact **Julie Torpey Clark** (989) 854-1036, **Jeana Bigard Falsetta** (989) 621-0882, or **Sheila Butters Murphy** (989) 560-7494.

1978—After 21 years of service at Sacred Heart Academy, **Shelli Lannen Sias** retired from her school secretary role at the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year. Principal Mary Kay Yonker said Shelli was more than a secretary, she was "the best Ambassador our school could ever have." Mrs. Yonker praised Shelli's knowledge of the Academy and its traditions, along with her support of the faculty and the students. "Shelli was our number one reference for everything," she said. "It's hard to say farewell, but we are happy she gets to enjoy her retirement."

1985—REUNION NEWS! Class of '85 to host a 40th Reunion gathering on Saturday, October 4th, in conjunction with Homecoming activities. Details TBD. Updates will be sent directly to members via text message or social media.

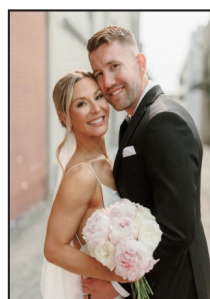
2000—REUNION NEWS! The Class of 2000 will host a 25th class reunion in conjunction with Sacred Heart Academy's 2025 Homecoming, October 3 & 4. For information, please email **Brian Partie** at hello@brianpartie.com. You won't want to miss any of the reunion fun!

2007—**Alicia Rudoni** and Cody Pifer welcomed baby girl Finley Lou on May 6, 2025. Alicia is the owner / stylist at Lou & You Salon and Spa in Mt. Pleasant and the SHA Cheerleading Coach.

2009—"It's a boy!" for Taylor and **Jimmy Cardon**, who welcomed baby number two in Grand Rapids June 12, 2025. Leo James Cardon is adored by his big sister Piper, age 2, and his Grammy **Carolyn Strauss '79 Cardon**. Great-grandmother would be **Anne McConnell '54 Strauss**.

2011—**Eric Fox** married Angelina Mesina on March 25, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland, where they reside. Eric is a sales consultant for Spartan Solar.

2013—**Steve Rudoni III** is the new Executive Chef at Mountain Town Station in Mt. Pleasant. Steve grew up in and around the kitchens of his family-owned restaurants. After graduation from SHA, he began his cooking career at Mountain Town & Camille's on the River. He was the saucier chef for years until he had the opportunity to teach cooking classes at Mid-Michigan College. While teaching, he impressed a student who knew of a restaurant in Midland needing his talents. As Executive Chef, Steve transformed Whine - a tapas-style wine bar - into a full dinner menu of his own creation. He came back to Mt. Pleasant as the Executive Chef of Camille's Prime almost three years ago, and is now heading up the culinary team at Mountain Town Station as well.



2014—**Dustin Neyer** married Laura Ayan on May 31, 2025, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The couple resides in Kalamazoo. Dustin is the principal at Davis Elementary in the Decatur Public School District.

2015—On February 24, 2025, **Riley Terwilliger Fletcher** and her husband Nick welcomed baby Max Michael Fletcher. He joins big brother Thomas at home. Riley works with her husband at his State Farm Insurance Agency in Bay City. The family resides in Essexville.

2018—**Hadyn Terwilliger** married Dillan Walton in October 2024 in Cadillac, Michigan. Hadyn is an Environmental Health Sanitarian at the Central Michigan District Health Department. The newlyweds reside in Midland.

2020—**Austin Lobsinger** graduated from Central Michigan University in December 2024 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technology. He currently resides in Mt. Pleasant and is employed with Fisher Companies in their IT department.

Send us your news! We want to hear from you! alumni@sha.net



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Alumni News For:



From the Principal

(Continued from page 6)

Friends reception have also been fun and memorable experiences.

Fundraising efforts such as the Safety & Security initiative, the close-to-our-heart Miles for Miracles and SHAgala events, and the most recent Faith in the Future campaign are all points of pride. I am especially excited about the official opening of the Prayer Grotto built in memory of Connor J. Puhlman. Every effort over the years has been important and some uniquely special but the Prayer Grotto is the one closest to my heart. I can't wait to see the students and parishioners praying there, and the community as well.

A day doesn't go by that I don't think of the challenges over the years; it isn't always easy. Our school and parish community have suffered losses and dealt with grief. Connor's death, just prior to his junior year; Denise Terwilliger, who was a school board member when she lost her cancer battle; and our beloved Fr. Don's passing at age 87. These losses and others tested our faith, making us stronger and more resilient as we learned the impact each person has in our life. At weekly school Masses - which may be the number one benefit of my job! - I pray that our students and their families are kept safe from harm, and I thank God for the strength of our community.

We are challenged by the teacher shortage in Michigan, and typi-



Mrs. Yonker delivers her address to the Class of 2025 at the graduation ceremony in Sacred Heart Church on May 23.

cally hit a bit harder because of our inability to compete with public schools' benefit packages. However, our school is blessed to have the SHA Foundation, established in 1976. The Foundation always steps up in a big way, rewarding our teachers and helping us maintain a competitive pay scale which makes a difference for our number one resource: our teachers. The Foundation celebrates a 50th anniversary in 2026, truly an occasion to rejoice.

I use this column each issue to celebrate: Our teachers and the staff got our students through COVID like no other school. SHA was first with one-to-one technology in our region and we continue to lead with relevant coursework - and the basics, too - which give our students a head start in college and real life. There is always something special happening at Sacred Heart Academy. Follow us on Facebook and you will

see!

Personally, each graduation ceremony brings me to (happy) tears when I see we are meeting our mission: we are graduating students who will fulfill God's purpose in the best of ways. None have made me more proud than my own daughters, of course: **Maggie '18, Molly '20, and Emma '22**. The Class of 2025 was an exemplary group, and the classes coming behind them have the same potential.

I am honored to be part of the **SHA Difference**, and happily enter my 11th year at the Academy. Thank you for your continued support.