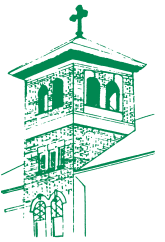




ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS



December 2025 • Vol. 44 • No. 3

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

50 Years of Grace

SHA Foundation to celebrate golden anniversary in 2026

"I cannot imagine what Sacred Heart Academy would be today, or if the Academy would even *exist* today, without the forward-thinking and generosity of the Sacred Heart Academy Foundation," says SHA Principal Mary Kay Yonker.

"That might sound dramatic," she says, "But having watched many Catholic schools in Michigan, and in our Saginaw Diocese close, we know how fortunate we are to have the SHA Foundation endowment working for us."

Yonker says the 50th Anniversary of the Foundation is certainly cause to celebrate. "Our teachers, our graduates, students and parents alike, and also the Sacred Heart parishioners—everyone should share in the pride and the occasion of 50 years of unwavering, faith-filled support."

A recent annual mailing from the SHA Foundation encourages alumni, parents, parishioners, and friends of the Academy to help celebrate the milestone anniversary of the endowment fund which primarily supports Sacred Heart Academy teachers. In an open letter to donors, SHA Foundation President Bill Myler Jr recognizes the forward-thinkers who created the Foundation, and asks everyone to consider their most generous gift, allowing the SHA Foundation to accomplish its best fundraising year ever, boosting the endowment by \$1 million or more.

Bill Myler writes, "Boosting the SHA Foundation endowment . . . will have a positive and immediate impact, and offer Sacred Heart Academy long-term stability for generations to come. One million



dollars is a lofty goal, and we will need everyone's support: first-time and long-time givers alike."

He referenced then-President Robert Sweeney's first appeal letter in 1976 which said ". . . there is a concern for quality and God-centered education in our country" which rings true today.

Bill says, "Mr. Sweeney also asked alumni, parishioners, and friends to give their annual gift serious thought as a "worthy means of continuing and strengthening the God-oriented education which has always existed at Sacred Heart Academy", and I echo his appeal," adding that there are many ways to make gifts to the Foundation.

Perhaps you and your family are interested in creating a Named Fund, or contributing to an existing Named Fund. The list of funds can be found on the www.sha.academy.net website under the INVEST tab. If your business makes charitable contributions, consider a

business gift. Or, if your employer offers a matching gift program, that is advantageous for the Foundation.

Lindsay Ley, Development Director for Sacred Heart and the SHA Foundation, welcomes the opportunity to help donors with their gift-giving. She can be reached at (989) 772-1385 or LLey@sha.net.

If, for some reason, you did not receive the SHA Foundation's 2025 annual report, contact Lindsay and she will make sure you get a copy. It contains the dates of special events planned for the 50th Anniversary Year, along with what is believed to be a complete list of everyone who ever served as a Foundation Trustee. These volunteers will be honored at an anniversary event planned for November 7, 2026, in Mt. Pleasant.

Please consider your end-of-the-year contribution(s) to the SHA Foundation thoughtfully and prayerfully.

Homecoming 2025 Scrapbook

More photos on pages 7 & 8



ABOVE: Ladies from the Class of 1975 enjoy the parade. Pictured (from left) are Sheila Butters Murphy, Doreen McCann Fussman, Denise Ahlers Jones, Julie Torpey Clark, and Jeana Bigard Falsetta. **RIGHT:** Homecoming dignitaries pose for posterity. Left, Alumni of the Year Megan Spence '03 & Andy Theisen '02; at right, Grand Marshals Amy & Pat McDonald '88.



2025 Sacred Heart Academy Homecoming Court

FROM LEFT: Freshman Attendants Kyven Rose and Sadie Wohlscheid (grandfather **Joe Wohlscheid '73**); Sophomore Attendants Caden Hoeve (**Denae Jacque '99**) and Ava Sweet; Junior Attendants Hank MacDonald (**Jeremy MacDonald '93**) and Alexis Sweet; King Noah Zeien (**Danielle Radawski Zeien '88**), Queen Madigan Anderson (grandmother **Cathie McCann Cluley '74**, great grandfather **Tom McCann '53**, great, great grandparents **Eleanor Marthey McCann '13 & Aloysius McCann '11**); Senior Attendants Brady Davis, Savannah Jones, Evan Juris, Claire Long, Nathaniel Cromar, and Cecilia Sanchez.



Homecoming 2025 Scrapbook

SHA Class of 1965



SEATED IN FRONT: Carol Wezensky Hackett, Sharon Campbell Hartman, and Bev Peltier Murray. FRONT ROW, STANDING: (On Left:) Barbara Collins Forro, Nancy Milan Martens; (On Right:) Connie Schupback Sedall, and Helen Bayer Chase. MIDDLE ROW, from left: Robert Walton, Marcia Powell, Janet Campbell Cappel, Dick Beltnick, Catherine Cashen Jarman, Jeanne McEvoy Perkins, and Claudia Schafer Joslin. BACK ROW, from left: Frank Hackett, William Swetz, Fr. John Cotter, Gary Rondy, William Thering, and Michael Hovey.

Class of 2005

20-YEAR REUNION | Classmates met up throughout the Homecoming weekend to reminisce. The group attended the parade, game, and Alumni Reception, and also toured the school. Pictured in a classic group photo are, from left: Chris O'Connell, Ryan Lilly, Brandon Ley, Karra Olson Barker, Bubba Curtiss, Krista McCoy, Whitney Thering Smith, Elena Sias, and Aubrey Maxfield Gulick.





ACADEMY NEWS

Lisa Roach, Admissions Director



Special happenings at Sacred Heart

A Day With the Artists

On November 3, 2025, Mrs. Sarah Chaffee hosted a **Day with the Artists** at Sacred Heart Academy in partnership with Art Reach of Mid-Michigan. Twenty local artists, including nearly a dozen Sacred Heart Academy students, shared their array of talents with our elementary students. Methods of art shared included dance, storytelling, makerspace quilting, beadwork, painting, clay, home-made Play-Doh, gel printmaking, creative movement, doodling, improvisational acting, and musical instruments including steel drums, piccolo, and keyboard.

The artists set up in individual classrooms, then students rotated through 30-minute sessions, so every student had the opportunity to spend time in the different settings. Nancy Hemmingson, retired SHA art teacher, chose clay modeling as her artistic medium of choice, and students had the opportunity create individual keepsakes. Another artist, retired school secretary **Shelli Lannen Sias '78**, is a maker of all things. Shelli's talents include watercolor painting, knitting, quilting and many more creative expressions. On this day, she chose to share tips on patterning and let our little artists design their own quilts from fabric squares. Shelli says "Makers like me don't like wasting materials. We see materials that other people might think are *trash* and we see *treasure*! This is called *repurposing* or *upcycling*."

Exposure to a variety of arts at a young age can ignite creative juices for endless project possibilities. We are thankful our students could engage in this opportunity, and we appreciate all the volunteers who made it possible.

Interact Club

Sacred Heart Academy recently started a new student service club for high school students, in partnership with the Mt. Pleasant Rotary Club. The **Interact Club** provides students with another oppor-



ABOVE: Retired SHA art teacher Nancy Hemmingson demonstrates a clay technique in front of an elementary class. **RIGHT:** Shelli Lannen Sias '78, wearing a sweater knitted by her daughter, Emily Sias Wilson '03, helps first-grader Teddy Stegman with his quilt design.



tunity to develop a heart to serve and give back to our community. The club will host two service projects per year; one to help the school community and one which promotes international understanding. Students may also perform other acts of community service, such as visiting with seniors in nursing homes. In November, the Interact Club hosted the Veterans Day Celebration to honor veterans in the SHA school community.

The Rotary Club is a non-profit service organization dedicated to making a positive impact in the community, in the workplace, and around the world. Locally, the Rotary Club presents a "Golden Apple" award to hardworking teachers for going above and beyond. The award comes with a trophy, visa gift card, and several other local treats. SHA first-grade teacher **Jessica MacDonald '15** received the award in August 2025. At their monthly meetings from October to May, the Rotary Club also recognizes student citizens for putting "service above self", then one of those

LEFT: A group of Interact Club students stand in the back waiting to serve refreshments at the Veterans Day Celebration on November 12, 2025, while sixth-graders perform *God Bless America*.



FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Mary Kay Yonker, Principal

2025-26 is an accreditation year

This school year is a big accreditation year for Sacred Heart Academy. Accreditation is a process where an external organization looks at many characteristics and puts a “stamp of approval” on a school. Sacred Heart Academy is accredited by the Michigan Non-Public School Accrediting Association. Every five years we go through an extensive process reviewing the benchmarks and standards.

The second edition of the National Standards for Catholic Education (NSBECS) contains 13 standards and 76 benchmarks. These are divided into four domains: Mission and Catholic Identity, Governance and Leadership, Academic Excellence, and Operational Vitality. The 13 overarching standards define the core ideas for a Catholic school and the standards are then broken down into a total of 76 benchmarks. The benchmarks provide specific and measurable criteria which determine if we are meeting the goals. Each benchmark has a rating scale of 1-4; 4 = Exceeds the Benchmark, 3 = Fully Meets the Benchmark, 2 = Partially Meets the Benchmark, 1 = Does Not Meet the Benchmark.

The Sacred Heart Academy faculty and administration have been diligently working on uploading documents and rating our progress for our accreditation visit since last spring. Deb VanSumeren, Curriculum Consultant for the Diocese of Saginaw, has been leading our process. We have used staff meetings and professional development days to thoroughly understand the process and to ensure our evidence is meeting the standard. (If I’m being completely hon-

est, we are ready for this process to be finished!)

In Spring of 2026, an accreditation team from the Diocese of Saginaw (administrators and teachers from other Catholic schools in the diocese) will do a site visit to SHA, review our evidence, and make recommendations to raise, lower, or keep our scores the same. We also have to provide several compliance documents during the visits, which will also be rated.

By the time we finish the process, even before the accreditation team comes, we will know our strengths and areas for improvement. The process is tedious, but it is very good for our school. We have never not received accreditation and we are on the right track to keep it that way! I will be excited to share with you our results and recommendations when we receive our scores next summer.

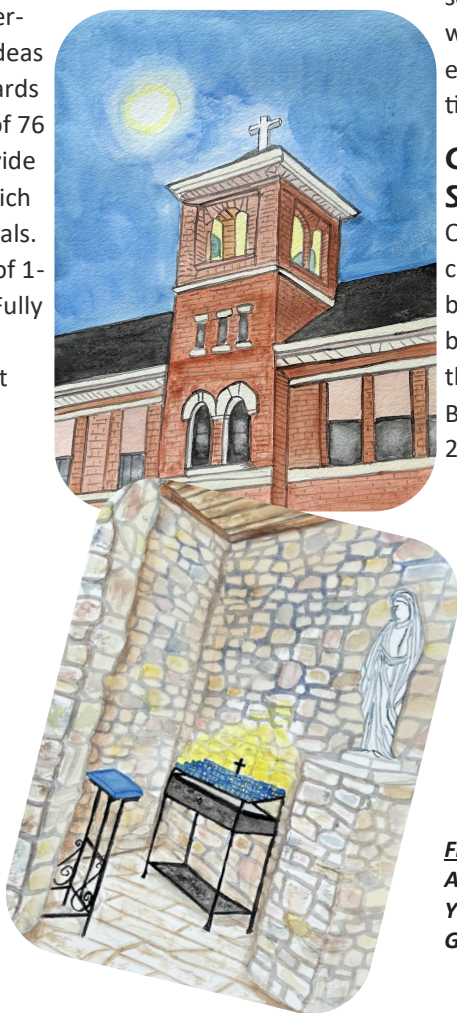
Coming soon: Sacred Heart Academy Alphabet Book

One principal and two alumnae are collaborating to create a Sacred Heart Academy Alphabet Book! The beauty of this book is in the unique illustrations painted by our alums (one from the class of ‘75 and one from the class of ‘78. Hint: They are very talented sisters)! Books will be available for purchase sometime in 2026....stay tuned!

Holiday blessings

Have a blessed Christmas season. I am very grateful for our 4,076 alumni and the gifts and talents you share with others. If you are inclined to make a gift, the Sacred Heart Academy Foundation has a lofty goal this year in honor of their 50th Anniversary; we would love for you to be a part of it!

FEATURED AT CENTER: A sneak peek of the Sacred Heart Academy Alphabet Book. It truly will be a treasure to have. You are getting a look at “B is for Bell Tower” and “G is for Grotto”.



Class Notes

Class of 1956 | JoAnn English (Grisdale) French passed away August 21, 2025, at the Casa Bella Hospice House in Florida. Her father, **Joe English** graduated from the Academy in 1928, as did siblings **Conrad '54, Molly Lixey '59, and Camey Carter '67**. JoAnn married **Jerry "Jake" Grisdale '56** in 1960, and they raised four boys. She later married Robert French in Cheboygan, Michigan. Her interests included watercolor painting, gardening, and landscaping, and daily dips in her pool. "Joey" loved to travel and host parties. Friends and family agree it would be hard to find anyone as positive, encouraging, or classy as JoAnn.

Class of 1959 | **Richard Fabiano** passed away peacefully on July 3, 2025, in Grand Rapids. A gifted athlete, he held the school record in the 100-yard dash (10.3 seconds) for over two decades, was part of the record-setting 880-yard relay team, and earned all-conference honors as a high jumper and football end. Richard was inducted into the SHA Athletic Hall of Fame in 2009. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting from Central Michigan University, where he also participated in ROTC. While in college, he earned his pilot's license and co-founded the Flying Chips—CMU's first flying club—sparking a lifelong love of flying and airplanes. Following graduation, Richard was commissioned as an officer in the United States Army. His military specialty was Armored Reconnaissance and he was awarded the Expert Badge with Pistol Bar for marksmanship. Richard cherished his family. He and **Mary Jane Sowle '59** were married in 1962, and built a life filled with love, faith, and enduring values. His siblings were also SHA graduates: **Mary Lou Claire '47, Joanne Fabiano '51, Joseph '54, and Jim '61**.

Class of 1961 | **Mary Emily Smiley** passed away on August 30, 2025, in Lawndale, California, where she lived for several decades. Emily thought the Class of 1961 was the best to ever matriculate from the Academy and would speak proudly of her classmates, their athleticism, and their successes in life. Emily's mother, **Margaret Campbell '38**, and grandmother **Rose Donovan 1910**, were also proud SHA alums.

Class of 1965 | It was recently reported that **Paul St. Germain** passed away on January 31, 2024. Paul was born in Detroit in 1946 and moved with his family to Clare. He and his sister, **Mary St. Germain '63**, were the only siblings to attend Sacred Heart. At the Academy, Paul was in the band and learned a lifelong love of music. After he graduated from Central Michigan University with a degree in music education, Paul became a music teacher in Gaylord, where he was eventually promoted to Assistant Superintendent. Upon retirement, he and his wife moved to coastal Alabama to enjoy the warm climate.

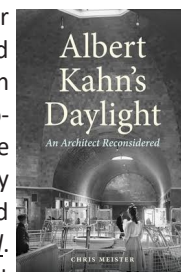
James "Jim" Lynch passed away June 17, 2025, at Covenant Medical Center in Saginaw. He and his wife, Betty, lived in Bay City and enjoyed car trips together. Jim served in the U.S. Army following graduation from SHA, then worked at Dow Chemical for 33 years before retiring in 1999. He was well-known for his sense of humor, and for coaching his sons' township recreation teams. Jim's father **John B.**

Lynch graduated from SHA in 1943, and his grandmother, **Mabel McCormick Lynch** graduated from the Academy in 1914.

Judge **William "Bill" T. Ervin** passed away on October 12, 2025, at Woodand Hospice House in Mt. Pleasant. Bill was the youngest of four brothers, **Dick '59, Bob '62, and Ron '63**. Bill earned his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Central Michigan University, his Master's Degree in Business Education from Eastern Michigan University, and his Juris Doctorate (Law Degree) from Michigan State University College of Law (Detroit College of Law). Bill opened his law practice in Mt. Pleasant in 1984, specializing in probate and family matters. He was appointed Isabella County Probate Judge by the governor in 1988 and elected several terms to serve as Isabella County Trial Court Judge until his retirement in 2019. He was the recipient of many community and civic awards, including being named Sacred Heart Academy Alumnus of the Year in 2003. He volunteered in Lenten Fish Fries, athletic Bingo, and the Irish Cup Golf Outing. Bill's children **Jim '85, Amy, and Lori Campbell '88** attended SHA.

Joseph Campbell passed away November 9, 2025, in Alexandria, Virginia, after a short but courageous battle with ALS. Joe, the son of **Arden '40 & Patricia Fitzgerald '40 Campbell**, was a dedicated civil servant for over 40 years, working for both the U.S. Department of Defense and the Office of Personnel Management. His siblings are **Bill '70, Mike '73, Tom '77, Tim '78, Catherine '80, and Kevin '85**.

Class of 1975 | **Chris Meister** has written a book about Detroit architect Albert Kahn (1869-1942), famous for many landmarks, including the Fisher Building and numerous industrial structures worldwide. Kahn and his firm also designed massive plants that produced tanks, bombers, and other munitions for the Allies in World War II. Recently published by Wayne State University Press, the book is titled **Albert Kahn's Daylight: An Architect Reconsidered**. Many SHA alumni might find it interesting that Chris dedicated his book to Sister Euphemia, who taught English Literature and Language Arts at the high school. Chris earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Central Michigan University. He married his wife, and they raised their two sons in Houston, where Chris owned a graphic design business. They returned to Michigan in 1995. Chris is the author of another book, **James Riely Gordon: His Courthouses and Other Public Architecture** which was published in 2011. He credits his secondary career as an independent scholar to the influence of his teachers over the years, and felt dedicating his current book to Sr. Euphemia, who stands out in his memory as particularly challenging on many levels, to be an appropriate tribute to them all.



Class of 1981 | **Dan Natzel** passed away on September 11, 2025. He was the son of **Bill Natzel '62** and worked alongside his father at Central Janitor Service for many years. He also worked at Wonsey Tree Service, then ventured to Florida, where he started his own successful cleaning business in Marco Island & Fort Myers. Dan enjoyed billiards, golfing, fishing, boating, and spending time with family, including sisters **Nonie Fitzpatrick '82** and Heather Natzel.

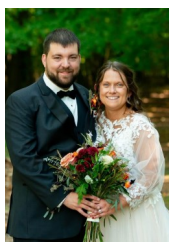
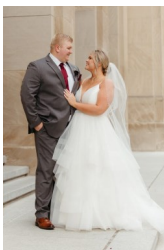
Class Notes

Homecoming 2025 Scrapbook

Class of 2006 | **Stephanie Beltinck Parrish** and her husband Jon welcomed a third son on January 7, 2025. Oliver Thomas is adored by his big brothers, Maverick, 7, and Cameron, 4. The family resides in Grand Rapids, where Stephanie works in Marketing for Byrne Electric. Baby Oliver has quite a legacy at SHA: grandmother **Colleen Beltinck McCann '74**, great grandfather **Tom McCann '53**, and great, great grandparents **Eleanor Marthey McCann 1913 & Aloysius McCann 1911**.

Class of 2008 | **Emily Thering Gitre** and her husband Grant were blessed with their third child, another boy, on October 29, 2025. Evan James was welcomed by his big brothers, Jack, 6, and Reid, 3. The family resides in Chesterfield Township, Michigan, where Emily works for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Baby Evan's grandfather is **Bob Thering '76**, and his great grandfather is **Russell Thering '38**.

Class of 2011 | **Emberly Motz** married Ty Wilson on June 9, 2025, in Lansing, and then officially celebrated the nuptials November 22 in Grand Rapids. The newlyweds recently moved to Belmont, Michigan. Emberly is a senior graphic designer for Medline, a healthcare company.



Class of 2013 | **Leah Hauck** married Andrew Dickinson at Sacred Heart Church on September 27, 2025. The newlyweds reside in Mt. Pleasant where Leah works for the General Agency.

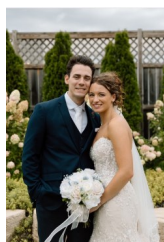


Class of 2016 | **Katelyn Eidenberger** and **Austin Neyer** were married on September 8, 2025, in Grand Rapids, where they reside. Katelyn is completing her Doctor of Pharmacy degree working at Corewell Health; Austin is a Project Manager for Clark Construction.

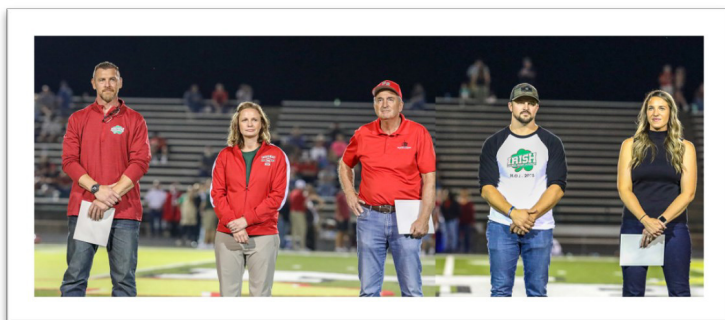


On September 19, 2025, in Charlevoix, Michigan, **Mason Houston** married Rachel Giwa. The newlyweds reside in Ada, where Mason is a Project Superintendent for The Christman Company.

Class of 2019 | **Kyle Houston** married Gracie Mindel, a Beal City girl, on August 23, 2025, in Holland, Michigan. The couple resides in Lansing. Kyle is a Security Incident Response Analyst for Jackson Financial.



More photos on pages 2, 3, & 8



2025 Hall of Fame Inductees

Pictured above during halftime of the Homecoming Game

Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees are pictured with Presenter and fellow Honoree Bill Myler Jr '76. FROM LEFT: Ben Hackett '94, Laurel Bennett Doherty '06, (Bill Myler Jr), Billy Myler '10, and Chelsea Mills Stefanelli '10. This brings the total number of Hall of Fame members to 128. A complete list of honorees, and nomination information, can be found on the school website.



Class of 1975 Reunion

Pictured above at the home of Doug & Cindy Gepford

FRONT, from left: Denise Ahlers Jones, Sheila Butters Murphy, Nancy Jo Howell Polson, Julie Torpey Clark, Doreen McCann Fussman, Chris Meister, Jeana Bigard Falsetta, and Terri Webster Ellis.

BACK, from left: Doug Jones, Mary Jo Cascarelli, Dave Somerville, Doug Gepford, Mark McCoy, Tim Bollman and Jim Campbell.



ALUMNI SACRED HEART NEWS

Sacred Heart Parish
302 S. Kinney
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
www.sha.net | 989-772-1385

FIRST-CLASS
PRESORTED
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Ithaca, MI
Permit No. 35

Alumni News For:



Homecoming 2025 Scrapbook *See pages 2, 3, & 7 for more photos!*



Class of '85

Pictured below at Hunter's Ale House

SEATED (from left): Paul Bigard, Rich Brandell, and Chuck Murphy.
STANDING, (from left): Angie Newman Stoecker, Mary Beth Cluley Rogers, Carmen Zeien Bierschbach, Maggie Morgenstern Cashen, Jean-nine Hovey Horny, Jim Ervin, Keith MacDonald, and Mike Ervin.

Class of 2000

Pictured above at Wood Shop Social

FRONT ROW, (from left): Brent Flachs, Laurie Frick, Nichole McCann Staats, Abby Kulick deRoo, Sarah Spence Lissl, Anna McKeown Ellis, Katie Beltinck Johnson, Ben Mueller, and Todd Heintz.

IN THE BACK (from left): Megan Lynch Colby, Andre Green, Annie Love, Marty Stalter, Cindy LaPalme Guthrie, Mike Chase, Nick Krueger, Brian Partie, Jim Wood, and Mark Koester.

