

Wendy Endres Awarded Top Alumni honor for 2023

Wendy (McConnell '91) Endres says she was completely surprised to receive the top Alumni Award for 2023. "I'm sure there are others more deserving," she said. "I am only doing my part to help where and when I can." But helping where and when she can, is a whole lot of help.

Wendy has been the Chairperson of the SHAgala dinner/auction for the past seven years and has worked not only to involve new parent volunteers but has been in the lead role as the 2023 event logged its highest proceeds ever, breaking records for SHAgala income and for donations to the teachers. Wendy has been a classroom volunteer, chaperoned field trips and 5th & 6th grade leadership camp and has been actively involved in athletics to support the sports her boys play. She and her husband, Ryan, who is a past president of the SHA Athletic Association, have teamed up on many efforts for the Academy. They have volunteered for parish events and sold parish raffle tickets in addition to SHAgala cash raffle tickets.

Wendy is passionate about Catholic education, and it shows in all she does for the Academy. "My parents (Jim & Karen McConnell) taught us to always stand up and advocate for what is right, to always be kind, and to give back when you can. They gifted me, my sister **Amanda Jasinkiewicz '95**, and my brother **Nick '97**, with a wonderful faith-based education. At Sacred Heart Academy, I was reminded daily to be community minded. I learned to be independent, become a leader, and strive for excellence in all areas of life," she said.

Wendy says she gives back because she wants to see SHA thrive for another 133+ years. She also wants her children to experience exactly what she did at the Academy. "I want them to be passionate about giving back and be enthusiastic learners and youth leaders."

"SHAgala was always a perfect way for me to give back," Wendy said. "I wanted to support the teachers who support our students in and out of the classroom."

There is no doubt Wendy sets a great example for her boys and for many others. Even in her work role as a speech-language pathologist, Wendy can be found working evenings and weekends, when patients need her. Although she works for a school system, it is common for Wendy to be at one of the local assisted living homes on the weekends. "Those patients need the help, and it is hard to find professionals," she says, "I am happy to work a little harder when needed because it will improve someone else's life. It really is the right thing to do."



Wendy (McConnell '91) Endres is pictured with her Sacred Heart Academy Students. Joseph (left) is a freshman, and James (right) is a junior.

Wendy says the years since graduation from the Academy passed very quickly. "The Class of 1991 was the best class to ever walk the halls at SHA. We were close knit, true friends," she said, adding that she sees many classmates on a regular basis and most of them stay in touch. Social media and texting have allowed them to easily communicate. "When you need a friend, a high school classmate is always there to help or listen. The Class of 1991 were true friends: loyal, genuine, and irreplaceable. I love them all, and each one of them touched my life in a beautiful, positive way," Wendy said. "I always remind my boys that to have a good friend, you need to be a good friend and the Class of 1991 was, and still are, the best of friends!"

Wendy says SHA has many alumni who could receive the Alumni award. "There are people who show up daily with selfless commitment to Catholic education. Our school is truly blessed."