

A publication for alumni, parents, and friends of Father Gabriel Richard / Saint Thomas High School

Legacies

WINTER 2024





FATHER GABRIEL RICHARD
HIGH SCHOOL • ANN ARBOR • EST. 1868

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FGR Varsity Girls Basketball team members celebrate after their buzzer-beating win at the Breslin Center advanced them to the MHSAA State Final Game in March.

Photo credit: Patrick Hoban

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE



Dear FGR Community,

As I enter my eighth year as principal, I am continually amazed at how the Lord has blessed FGR with such outstanding and supportive families, faculty, and friends. This support manifests itself in the countless hours you spend as you help prepare for the annual auction; through Lenten Lunch donations and serving directly in Mexico; and through your commitment to the pro-life cause.

Our faculty challenge students to read, reflect on, and critique original texts that formed Western Civilization to better understand themselves and our rich Catholic tradition. FGR faculty and students are also encouraged to live out the 1% Challenge in which at least 14 minutes and 24 seconds of every day is spent in prayer before Our Lord in the chapel. Virtues cultivated in the classroom will also lead to virtuous living in social interactions and extra-curricular activities. Students who participate in athletics, the arts, and robotics, among our many other clubs, pursue excellence by maximizing their strengths, improving upon their weaknesses, and by fostering a supportive and encouraging community.

Our alumni are a rich part of St. Thomas and Father Gabriel Richard High School's tradition, too. Whether it is through your witness of praying on the Camino, your summer commitment to perform in the annual *Dramalums* production, or volunteering your time to present to students, we are proud of your accomplishments and love to hear from you.

We are pleased to share these stories with you and hope that you enjoy reading about the many fantastic opportunities FGR offers to its families each year.

In Christ,

Christopher Dotson
Principal

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ALUMNI NEWS



A MESSAGE FROM JOE JORDANO, PRESIDENT OF FATHER GABRIEL RICHARD HIGH SCHOOL

"Wow!" Is the word that was echoing through my mind as I read through the articles in this edition of *Legacies*. Wow, are our students impressive. Wow, are our alumni doing great things. Wow, is our faculty doing an incredible job forming the hearts, minds, and souls of our students. Wow, are our benefactors some of the most generous people in the world. Wow, has the Lord blessed us abundantly this year. Wow, wow, wow!

Our theme for the 2023-2024 academic year was "KNOW Greater Love." The essence of our theme is what led four of our recent graduates to spend their spring break hiking the Camino and sent one of our recent graduates on mission with NET Ministries. Our students' desire to grow more deeply in love with Christ and to walk as His disciples is evidenced by nearly a third of our graduates choosing to attend Catholic colleges and many more choosing non-Catholic colleges with strong Catholic ministries.

By far, one of the highlights of the year was the renovation of our sanctuary. Thank you, thank you, thank you, to all who contributed to this project! You have given FGR faculty, staff, and students a truly remarkable gift. The beauty reflected in our new sanctuary elevates our hearts and minds in the holy sacrifice of the Mass and during our daily prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. What a difference a beautiful sacred space makes in encountering our Lord in prayer!

With the sanctuary renovation nearly complete (we're still waiting for our custom statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph to arrive from Italy), we are eager to move on to Phase II of the chapel renovation: new carpet throughout and new chairs. Both will help unify the multipurpose space in the back of the room with the chapel in the front of the room. No longer will students struggle to kneel on crippling vinyl tile and have their feet blocked from extending beneath the seat by ill-placed crossbars. Just as you helped us realize Phase I of our renovation project, we would be ever grateful for your support of our Annual Appeal benefiting Phase II. Our Annual Appeal will be hitting your mailbox early in 2025.

In addition to the chapel renovations planned and the seven-figure updates we will be making to our classroom HVAC units, we have entered full swing into our *Fields of Dreams* initiative—an initiative within the Diocese of Lansing's Stewardship for Saints and Scholars capital campaign for Catholic education. This initiative is an effort to expand our campus to the two vacant parcels adjacent to FGR on which we plan to build a new multisport athletic complex with a new turf field, team rooms, our first ever track, and

much more! Please visit www.fgrhs.org/fieldsofdreams to learn more or contact me directly at jjordano@fgrhs.org.

As we look to reach more students and families with the gift of an FGR education, we are ever mindful that we can't fulfill our mission on our own. We stand on the shoulders of our alumni and their parents, and we rely on your time, talent, and treasure to advance our mission. Despite our 156-year history, we are mindful that we have not always done the best job staying connected to our alumni and we know that needs to change. A big step in bringing about this desired change was the hiring of **Chris Russ '08** as our first director of alumni relations in many years. Many of you already know and love Chris. For those who don't, I can't wait for you to meet him! He bleeds Irish green, and we could not have found someone better to engage our alumni and represent the mission of the school to all he encounters. If you are inspired by the ways **Tom Butman '05**, **Dr. Alaina De Biasi '08** and others are giving back to FGR; if you want to schedule a reunion; or if you just want to get reconnected with your alma mater, please contact Chris at cruss@fgrhs.org.

On behalf of our students, families, faculty and staff, thank you for all of your support! Please keep us in your prayers and know that you remain in ours.

With deep gratitude and eager anticipation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Jordano".

Joe Jordano
President

CLASS OF 2024 BY THE NUMBERS



121 graduates



\$13,970,000 in scholarships offered



96.4% college bound



1 NET missionary



1 preferred walk-on for the University of Michigan Wolverines



32% attending Catholic Colleges



3 students considering public service as firefighters



1 graduate entered religious formation

The FGR Class of 2024 started high school amidst a global pandemic, their freshman year peppered with extended periods of online schooling. During their high school years, life and learning eventually returned to normal and this spring, they graduated during traditional Commencement Exercises held at Hill Auditorium on the evening of May 23. The 121 graduates gathered to celebrate their vast accomplishments having solidified their future goals in the prior months.

Ninety-six point four percent of this year's graduates are heading to college, while several of their classmates have entered firefighting academies, potential sports careers, and directly to the workforce. Fifty-six percent of students who applied were accepted to the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, including **Tomás O'Meara** who was invited to join the Wolverine football team as a preferred walk-on. Thirty-two percent

of this class opted to continue their education in a Catholic environment as they chose institutions such as The University of Notre Dame, Catholic University of America, Marquette University, Ave Maria University, Benedictine College, and Franciscan University of Steubenville, among others. Three students have chosen to attend Hillsdale College. All told, the Class of 2024 earned more than \$13,970,000 in scholarship offers.

During their four years of high school, this class participated in countless athletic competitions, concerts, plays and musicals, art shows, and robotics competitions. They attended All-school Mass twice weekly through their sophomore, junior, and senior years. They were some of the first to take part in Households at FGR and saw the return of Special Olympics Field Day as the entire school hosted a fun day for adults and older children with disabilities.

CLASS OF 2024 COLLEGE CHOICES

Albion College

Ave Maria University

Aveda Institute of Ann Arbor

Baylor University

Benedictine College

Binghamton University

Butler University

Central Michigan University

College for Creative Studies

Eastern Michigan University

Ferris State University

Franciscan University
of Steubenville

Grand Valley State
University

Hillsdale College

Holy Cross College

Hope College

Loyola University - Chicago

Marquette University

Michigan State University

Michigan Technological
University

Montana State University

Northern Michigan
University

Northwood University

Ohio State University

Penn State University

Quinnipiac University

Roger Williams University

Saint Mary's College

Samford University

School of Art Institute
of Chicago

Schoolcraft College

Siena Heights University

Spring Arbor University

St. John Fisher University

The Catholic University
of America

Trine University

University of Alabama

University of Dayton

University of Detroit Mercy

University of Florida

University of Michigan -
Ann Arbor

University of Michigan -
Dearborn

University of Notre Dame

University of South Florida

Valparaiso University

Villanova University

Washtenaw Community
College

Wayne State University

Western Michigan
University

BISHOP KELLY AWARD WINNER, PATRICIA BONAR '24, IS CALLED TO SERVE

For Patricia Bonar, one of this year's top scholars and the recipient of FGR's prestigious Bishop Kelly Award for leadership, citizenship, service and scholastic achievement, thirteen years of Catholic education have led to an inflection point in her life. The newly graduated alumna says she's spent hours in the chapel this year saying to God, "What on earth?" She's gotten an answer, but only for the next chapter: she'll spend the year with NET Ministries, traveling around the country helping carry out its mission to "engage young Catholics with the Good News." She admits she doesn't know what comes after that, but she's confident God does. "God has asked me to sit where I am and let Him lead me," she says.

Photo courtesy of Kelly Bonar

This radical trust has been fostered in Patricia through thirteen years of Catholic education. After attending Spiritus Sanctus Academy in Plymouth for her kindergarten through eighth grade years, she started at FGR in 2020. The youngest of Jerry and Kelly Bonar's seven children, Patricia had watched all her older siblings attend FGR, and she was excited to follow in their footsteps. She especially credits the women's

cross-country team with easing her transition to high school. As a freshman, she got to run with her older sister, Carrie, and would remain on the team for all four years of high school. "It's a hard sport, but it's always worth it because of the friendships [you form]. It caused me to grow because it challenged me to get out of my comfort zone, and the friendships I've made on that team are amazing."

As Patricia grew in strength and determination through athletics, she grew in understanding and love of truth through academics in high school. Her literature classes in particular “changed her life,” she says. She mentions Mr. Edmund Miller’s class during her sophomore year, saying it opened her eyes to the way stories can communicate the reality of the world. She also loved AP Literature, especially reading *Brideshead Revisited* and its portrayal of conversion from sin back to a life of faith. “Literature taught me a lot about truth and beauty and goodness.”

It wasn’t just literature, though; Patricia says all her classes at FGR helped her. “There were so many classes and so many good experiences,” she says. “It was all fruitful.” Theology classes helped her grow spiritually, giving her a deeper love for her faith and fostering her prayer life. Senior year, **Miss Therese Benz ’15**’s intensive theology course “made me realize how much I still don’t understand.” And it’s clear Patricia wants to understand; her love of learning and truth shines through as she talks about her coursework at FGR. She mentions history and philosophy classes that helped her learn to think and write better, and AP Chemistry and AP Calculus classes that brought previously acquired knowledge into focus. The teachers were great, she says, “and I really appreciated having those puzzles fit together finally, to give me a better understanding of what’s happening in the world.”

Her time in high school edified Patricia through her academic work and enriched her through opportunities for service. Her father, Jerry, helped organize the Stadium Cleanup program, and Patricia accompanied him through all her years at FGR. She values her memories of early mornings at the Big House. “What was meaningful about it was the community aspect, even if it’s a dirty job like picking up trash, being able to see other people and spend time with them. And afterwards, everyone being at Mass together. There’s something very unifying about serving together.”

Patricia also had the opportunity to be a leader for the Kairos retreat, and she served as an FGR Household small group leader. She’s a fan of the Households program and the way it connects older and younger students. “I really loved being a Household leader. If I wasn’t a leader, I wouldn’t have tried as much as I did to meet the younger girls, and they’re amazing. I’m so glad Households exists because I got to meet these people. In the end, the point is relationships, and I’m happy Households gave me a reason and a way to do that.”

Another meaningful part of Patricia’s service to the community came in the form of a lifelong passion. She loves music and started piano lessons as a first grader. Her dream was to play music for Mass; she describes a warm feeling of excitement in her chest whenever she thought about the prospect of playing the piano for the liturgy. During her freshman year, COVID precautions precluded All-school Mass, but as a sophomore she finally got the opportunity. Three years of playing for Mass was a big commitment, and not without its challenges, but, she says, “It felt like a call. I had a certainty that it was what I wanted to do and what God wanted me to do, so I kept going. I love music at Mass, and it was worth it to keep going.”

Perhaps it’s no coincidence that Patricia dreamed of ministering to her community through music from a young age, and that she dedicated herself to that ministry as a high school student. Through her senior year, as almost all of Patricia’s classmates chose colleges and made plans to continue their educations, she did the same. She even made a deposit and planned to enroll at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, but the whole time, she felt a pull in a different direction.

A trusted mentor had suggested that she should consider applying to NET Ministries, and for a while it felt impossible. Finally, though, Patricia applied to be a NET missionary and found out she was accepted in early

July. She started training in mid-August and will work with NET until next summer, when she'll decide whether to do a second year with NET, attend college, or pursue another path. She's doing her best to "sit where she is," as she believes God has asked her to do. "God's time is the best time. I don't know what's going to happen after this, and that's okay because He does."

In this uncertain place on the precipice of adulthood, Patricia admits she is nervous, but it's also clear that she has a deep-seated joy and trust in God's plan for her. She feels strongly that all her years of Catholic education have helped lead her to this moment. "I love FGR. I'm very grateful to have gone to FGR. It's made me the person I am today. I am grateful for the things I've been able to learn, the teachers I've had, the community they've established. I will miss this place because it's where I've grown up. I only could be taking this next step because of the opportunities I've had at FGR."



Patricia Bonar '24 Receives the Bishop Kelly Award.



The annual ceremony calls to attention the outstanding achievements of soon-to-be graduates as well as underclassmen. Each year, FGR honors specific seniors with the following significant awards.



PRINCIPAL'S AWARD

Angelo Ciarelli and Ava Hall

The *Principal's Award* is given to the senior who has exhibited outstanding qualities of encouragement to fellow students and teachers, a sense of service, and a history of achievement. The emphasis of this award is not so much on the "visible" efforts, but rather on those efforts which often go unnoticed. The Principal's Award for the class of 2024 was presented to **Ava Hall** and **Angelo Ciarelli**.



FATHER CAREY AWARD

James Kendzicky and Veronica Fredericks

The *Father Carey Award*, selected based on the number of varsity sports played, success and awards in those sports, and captain nominations, is given to the top male and female senior athlete. Father Carey award winners should also be great examples of what a student-athlete is by maintaining a high performance in the classroom while also demonstrating a commitment to service and their faith. This is the longest standing honor awarded at FGR, dating back to 1946 at St. Thomas High School. The Father Carey award winners for the class of 2024 are **James Kendzicky** and **Veronica Fredericks**.



IRISH SPIRIT AWARD

Veronica Fredericks and Ryan Henseler

The *Irish Spirit Award* honors the seniors who have displayed the most enthusiasm and spirit over the past four years and have inspired their classmates. The 2024 Irish Spirit Award is awarded to **Veronica Fredericks** and **Ryan Henseler**.



DEACON LAWRENCE AWARD

Delaney Hughes and Ryan Henseler

The *Deacon Dave Lawrence Award*, presented by **Miss Mary Lawrence '12**, is given to the student-athlete who consistently displays leadership amongst their team and peers, who is always helping others, who consistently places the needs of the team above their own, who strives to improve and is always working to make themselves better, who shows respect for their coaches, the officials, and the other team, and is an athlete that has a strong faith. This is not an award for the best athlete or the athlete that plays the most sports, but rather the best teammate and leader. The Deacon Dave Lawrence award winners for the class of 2024 are **Ryan Henseler** and **Delaney Hughes**.



"I AM THIRD" AWARD

Elizabeth Benz and Luke Buonerba

The *"I Am Third" Award* is presented to the senior male and female who most live out the motto of putting God first, others second, and themselves third. The I Am Third Award recipients for the class of 2024 are **Elizabeth Benz** and **Luke Buonerba**.



NATIONAL MERIT FINALIST AND COMMENDED STUDENTS

Angelo Ciarelli

Each year, of the 1.6 million students who take the PSAT, the top 15,200 scorers nationwide are named *National Merit Scholarship Finalists*. This year, **Angelo Ciarelli** earned that distinction. Similarly, two members of the class of 2024, **Hannah Currie** and **Elijah Moser**, were honored by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as *National Merit Commended Students*, a distinction earned by just 50,000 students nationwide.



HEIDI LENGYEL AWARD

Luke Schultz

The *Heidi Leigh Lengyel Determination Award* was started by Heidi's FGR classmates back in 1993 to honor her remarkable courage and perseverance amidst severe hardship. Despite – or perhaps because of – her longstanding battle with Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome that had her wheelchair bound through most of her high school, college, and young adult years, Heidi was an inspiration to everyone she encountered. Heidi passed to Eternal Life in July 2009, but her legacy lives on at FGR and among her friends and family. Through the extraordinary generosity of her parents, Steven and Marilyn Lengyel, the recipient receives a \$2,000 award.

The Heidi Leigh Lengyel Determination Award is presented to a student who has shown personal dedication, perseverance, and courage throughout high school, and like Heidi, serves as an inspiration to many. The 2024 Heidi Leigh Lengyel Determination Award was presented to **Luke Schultz**.



GOLDEN APPLE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Sr. Laura Pressprich, SGL '05

This award is new this year and will be given annually to the teacher who pursues academic excellence and promotes a love of learning, both in and out of the classroom, the *Golden Apple Award* for Excellence in Teaching is voted on by his or her peers and reflects the recipient's commitment to our school and students. This year's recipient of the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching is **Sr. Laura Pressprich, SGL '05**. Sr. Laura has inspired countless students to love chemistry, as evidenced by the number of alumni who go on to study chemistry in college.



MHSAA SCHOLAR ATHLETES

Allison Wicks, Marie Shibata, Gianna Klinkhammer, Elizabeth Benz, Thomas Marshall, and Angelo Ciarelli

Michigan High School Athletic Association, each year, awards senior student-athletes across the state of Michigan with the *Scholar Athlete Award*. The criteria for the award include a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale; and must have also previously won a varsity letter. Applicants also show involvement in other school and community activities; submit two letters of recommendation and a 500-word essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics. A Class B school is permitted to nominate 4 male and 4 female student-athletes for this award. This year, the MHSAA received a total of 1,607 applications from 445 schools.



BLESSED PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI AWARD

Mary Carolyn Mayer and Gianpaolo Patti

The *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati Award* is a campus ministry award given to a senior who manifests the heroic virtues of this saint and demonstrates a deep personal and communal faith that leads to boldness, depth, charity, longevity, and joy that makes them a powerful witness of Christ to others, reaching far beyond FGR and their parish. The Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati Award recipients for the class of 2024 are **Mary Carolyn Mayer** and **Gianpaolo Patti**.



TOP SCHOLARS

Top Scholars are those students who have acquired a cumulative grade point average of a 4.01 or higher after seven semesters of high school. They wear gold honors cords at graduation and are recognized for their academic achievements with a display in the school.

Congratulations to the Top Scholars for the class of 2024:

Elizabeth Benz, Patricia Bonar, Ella Caplea, Angelo Ciarelli, Hannah Currie, Sofia D'Agostino, Madeleine Fleury, Elsa Garred, Ava Hall, Mariel Horvath, Gianna Klinkhammer, Audrey Lang, Thomas Marshall, Elijah Moser, Noemi Sanabria, Marie Shibata, Kaitlyn Single, Caroline Valdes, Allison Wicks, Paige Zael.



HEART OF SERVICE AWARD 2024

This year's Heart of Service Award was presented to Catherine LaVasseur at Commencement Exercises for the class of 2024 on May 23 by Señora Janie Herrera, FGR Assistant Principal. The FGR Heart of Service award, first presented in 2004, is the school's highest honor for educators and servant leaders who are outstanding blessings to the hearts, minds, and souls of the students of FGR. The recipients are role models who went out of their way, often working behind the scenes and far off the clock, to create a great high school experience for our students. The following speech was given at Commencement.

Let's do some math. Through 20 years of teaching, we estimate that this year's recipient has taught roughly 2,200 students, spent 18,000 hours in the classroom, prepared more than 4,000 lesson plans, and answered infinite questions about homework and math problems. Add to that the impossible-to-count number of prayers she has prayed for her students and colleagues, the thousands of times she cheerfully exclaimed, "Hello, Friend", the Kairos retreats she has assisted with, the lunch duty and front door assignment calendars, the color coding of these documents, the drug testing she organized, and the uniform checks she has completed,

and you have what adds up to one amazingly dedicated, faith-filled, supportive, humble, and fantastic educator, colleague, and friend.

God is the center of her life, and He has been at the center of her teaching, her career, and our friendship. We have laughed and cried and prayed, and I count knowing her as one of the most tremendous blessings of working here at FGR. It is my deepest pleasure to present this year's *Heart of Service Award* to Mrs. Catherine LaVasseur.

Beginning in 2003, Catherine has taught practically every math course offered at FGR. Honors Geometry, Geometry, Geometry Essentials, Algebra I, Honors Algebra II, and Precalculus are all classes for which Catherine has prepared, with Honors Geometry being her mainstay for nearly the whole of her tenure. She developed the Statistics course at FGR, even taking college courses herself to prepare for it. Known as the “LaVasoraptor” for her strict, yet loving, classroom management style, she is the staunchest dress code supporter, and an educator who issues clear and direct expectations and standards and holds her students to them.

Her style may sound onerous, but students appreciate being held to standards and the success of her methods is evident in the fruits they bear.

But don’t take my word for it. Several of her students turned colleagues had wonderful comments to make when asked about Catherine:

Mary Lawrence, a 2012 graduate and current Literature Department Leader noted that “Catherine was the best math teacher I ever had! Even as a student, I was so impressed by her ability to hold her students to high standards, and I continue to admire her as a colleague. She knows her content so well, loves her students deeply, but above all, she loves the Lord. Her constant trust in HIM is truly an inspiration. She is incredibly kind and thoughtful. It has been a privilege to have been taught by her and to work with her!”

Theresa DiFranco, FGR class of 2019, now serves as the Admissions and Communications Assistant. Theresa shared this with me about Catherine: “Some of my fondest memories from high school are from Mrs. LaVasseur’s class. She had a knack for knowing exactly when it was time for a story, a laugh, a lesson, or time to get serious, which made her classroom a place of true freedom. We got the work done, but we got it done while also having fun. Mrs. LaVasseur’s caring heart was always evident to me, even

and especially when she challenged me to be better, and her joy and love for God is never ending.”

Now, lest you think all of Catherine’s former students choose non-math related careers, I want to share with you what **Joe Fitzgerald**, class of 2017 and current FGR math teacher has to say about Catherine. This perfectly epitomizes Catherine’s service to FGR.

“Mrs. LaVasseur terrified me as a young freshman when I first came to FGR back in 2013. But I ended up having her for three years of my high school math career, and she was the best math teacher I have ever had.

Now as a colleague, I can say that Catherine IS a perfect example of service. As a first-year teacher, I wasn’t sure how I would figure out exactly how to teach my class. Catherine, upon hearing of my hiring, immediately began unit-planning and curriculum planning my whole year for me. She gave me extensive resources such as her content, tests which she had developed over the years, and most importantly, her guidance. I have been blessed to have had a great mentor who works tirelessly and is as giving as Catherine is. Just last month, upon my return from deployment, Catherine again handed me a binder with everything I needed to complete the year. I had no worries, and she had included things that I hadn’t even thought about. This school wouldn’t be the same without Catherine in it. But I promise to strive to be as good a teacher and mentor as Catherine is for me.”

Catherine is officially retired from FGR as of April 2024, but I expect we will be seeing her around the school next fall willing to help wherever she is needed most, taking on any task that needs to be done cheerfully, efficiently, and thoroughly. And for that we are grateful, because FGR minus Catherine LaVasseur equals a lesser FGR. Thank you, Catherine!



Summa cum Laude Speaker, **Caroline Valdes '24**.

SUMMA CUM LAUDE SPEAKER, CAROLINE VALDES '24, CHALLENGES CLASSMATES TO LOVE OTHERS

Top Scholar, Caroline Valdes had the honor of addressing her classmates at Commencement Exercises this year. While noting that many graduation speeches include “advice or inspiration to go out and change the world,” she did not feel qualified to give a speech like that. Yet, as she reflected on her time at FGR, she did realize she had some beautiful experiences to share.

During her junior year at FGR, Caroline learned how to see and love others as they are. “When I EM’d (Eucharistic Ministered) that first time, I was overcome with Christ’s love for each and every one of you,” she told her fellow graduates. “No matter if you were one of my best friends or if I only knew your name, the Lord showed me just how much He loved you, that He was excited to be received by you. The idea that I was witnessing each of you receive your greatest good, the One Person who will fulfill you, who can love you perfectly and give you exactly what you need was humbling.”

Caroline went on to share an insight that her sister, **Catherine (Valdes) Wack '15**, shared with her that during her high school years she realized that each one of her own classmates was one of God’s greatest gifts to their own families. Caroline enumerated ways that members of the class of 2024 showed her Christ’s love in big and small ways. “My life would not be nearly as good without you in it,” she said. “Be it carpools, lending pencils, awkward smiles in Panera, homework help or a shoulder to cry on, those things matter. You were an answer to someone’s prayers, a gift in their life. And maybe you think that everyone would do that, but the important thing is that *you* did it. Only you had the opportunity, and you decided to give yourself over to love; no matter if you failed before, no matter how small of a way, it matters. And that’s been what these four years are about. It wasn’t about getting perfect grades or giving speeches or getting the diploma. It’s been about learning how to go out into the world and give yourselves over to love. The whole point of these four years was to help you get to Heaven. I hope, that as you go out into the world, you will keep changing it by giving yourselves over to love. And I hope that each one of us continues to say yes, because I can’t wait to enjoy Heaven with you all.”



ROBOTICS EARN SPOT AT WORLDS

If the Byting Irish robotics team were a child, it would be a preschooler. The team started competing in 2019, but due to the pandemic has had only four normal seasons to participate in FIRST Robotics competitions. The results have been striking, and this group of FGR students is surely the most motivated and accomplished four-year-old you've ever seen!

Team 7660, also known as The Byting Irish, was founded in 2019 by FGR parent Lisa DeFelice with the help of then physics teacher Vincent Burns. The prestigious global FIRST organization runs a standardized "game" each year. In January, they reveal certain functions that each team's robot is expected to execute. The teams build their robots, then compete against other teams in tournaments, first regionally, then state-wide, and eventually global competitions if things go well.

The inaugural 2019 team had about 20 students, and they had a "phenomenal rookie season," according to DeFelice. The team and its robot made it all the way

to States that year, setting a high standard for future Byting Irish teams. In 2020, COVID put a stop to all FIRST activities, and the 2021 season was conducted virtually with a recycled robot, but in 2022, Team 7660 was back in the game. Once again, they built a strong contender, found success at competitions, and made it to States. In 2023, the team struggled with planning and ended up having to use a "kit" robot. They didn't make it to States, but they learned a lot of lessons along the way, and the team grew to 60 students, divided now into varsity and junior varsity.

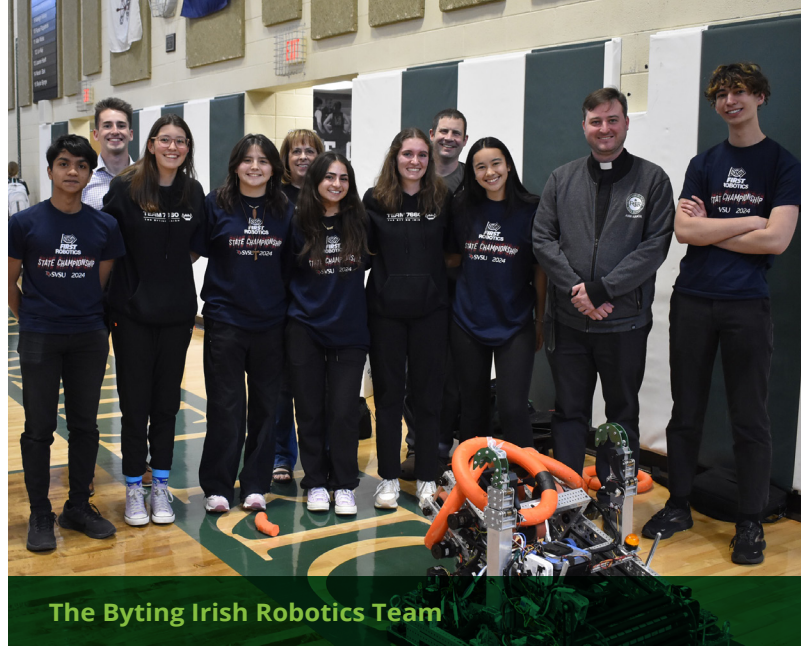
Through it all, Lisa DeFelice says they've learned a lot

about sticking to their core values. Fittingly, there are only two, she says: “keeping things simple and sharing knowledge.” Every game has “stretch” goals that are included to challenge the most elite teams, but the Byting Irish keeps it simple by being realistic and strategic about the aspects of the game that are within its reach and building a robot that can accomplish those key elements. As part of the process, they share knowledge with other teams, which is common and encouraged in the FIRST community.

The 2023 season spurred the rising seniors to make a plan for 2024, with a goal of advancing further than before. And it paid off: in a few short months between January and April 2024, through many ups and downs, Team 7660 advanced to triumph at local competitions, to qualify for States, and to eventually make it to the FIRST Robotics World Championship in Houston, where they competed among 600 teams from countries around the globe.

Despite struggles in the early qualification rounds, the Byting Irish were part of the winning alliances at both local tournaments in which they competed. In early March, they won at Milford High School with Team 67 and Team 503, and in mid-March they came out on top again at Skyline High School, allied with Team 67 and Team 4362. Back-to-back district victories were unprecedented in team history and fulfilled the team’s big goal for the season: qualifying for the state competition. In early April, they traveled to Saginaw Valley State University for the State Championship. In the words of electrical team member **Yohannan Joel ‘25**, Team 7660 “pulled off an enormous upset” at States, where it became an alliance captain and carried the day, winning the entire 40-team APTIV division, bringing home their third blue banner of the season, and qualifying for the World Championship.

The State Championship was a big highlight for many team members, including **Alexa Daniels ‘25**. “It was amazing to see all of the hard work we had put in pay



off in such an outstanding way.” She also appreciated the chance “to see so many other people [who are] passionate about STEM and robotics, come together and form a community. Everyone is incredibly kind and generous with their resources; and the culture there is truly beautiful to watch and be part of.”

Not having expected to go to Worlds, the team scrambled to raise the necessary funds and find transportation for the trip. In the FIRST spirit of sharing resources, they combined forces with Lake Orion’s Team 302, the Dragons, to share a bus to Houston. Through a long bus ride and four busy days of competition, the Byting Irish remained in good spirits. After placing 39th of 74 teams in their division, they went on to be chosen for an alliance that made it to the finals, an incredible accomplishment for the team. Each day of the World Championship, Yohannan sent “Captain’s Logs” by email to the community at home, sharing details of each match and other updates on the team’s progress. As the team held on through the ups and downs of the competition, Yohannan asked supporters for prayers that they would maintain “a spirit of fun and gratitude,” a testament to the ultimate values that FGR’s students take out into the world.

Team 7660 ended its 2024 season on its highest note yet, and with their customary indomitable spirit, the members of the team are already looking ahead to next year. For Yohannan, the World Championship

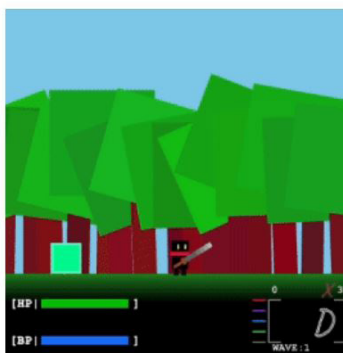
was a reminder to return to the team's core value of keeping it simple. He says, "Seeing the efficacy of robots, especially in the top global teams, take advantage of a simple and robust design reminded me that simplicity should always be a core aspect of our team's design process." Lisa Defelice agrees, and she says the team has taken many lessons from the 2024 season that they plan to use to help make their 2025 robot the Byting Irish's best yet. For **Arianna Prezecki '26**, that process is her favorite part of being on the team: "I particularly appreciate the whole build season. Going through the ups and downs with such a supportive team makes every meeting an enjoyable experience."

Ultimately, while the whole 60-person Byting Irish team rejoices in its triumphs at higher-level competitions, the team's activities promote the flourishing of all its members and of the community. In the 2024 season alone, junior varsity Byting Irish gained experience by building a non-competing robot, many team members mentored local grade-school students interested in robotics, and the team won multiple awards, including one for Gracious Professionalism after helping competitors with their robots. "It's not just about the winning," DeFelice says, "We are also trying to make opportunities for every interested kid to learn and grow." Making the Father Gabriel Richard community proud, the Byting Irish have surely shown that they can do both.

FGR CODES

With the recent addition of computer programming classes at FGR, students have gained the opportunity to submit coding projects to Carnegie Mellon University student coding competitions. Last year, two students, **Nathan Ezin '26** and **Catherine (Rina) Biskner '24** earned the second and third place awards respectively. Nathan's game, "Style", earned a second-place prize in the Creative Project with Images and Sound category, while Rina's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" placed third in the Creative Drawings category. Computer programming 1 and 2 give FGR students a chance to learn Python coding language in a self-paced environment. This year, we are also piloting a College Computer Science course that could earn students four college credits through the program at Carnegie Mellon University.

Second Place

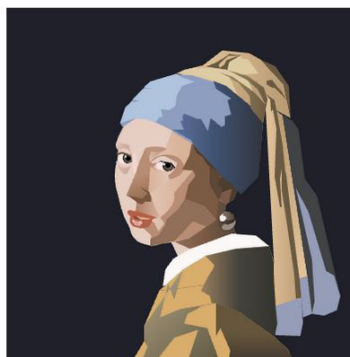


Father Gabriel Richard High School

10th Grade

Nathan Ezin '26
Carnegie Mellon 2nd Place Finalist

Third Place



Father Gabriel Richard High School

12th Grade

Rina Biskner '24
Carnegie Mellon 3rd Place Finalist



INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

SPRING BREAK PILGRIMS – FOUR SENIORS WALK THE CAMINO



From their grade school days at Spiritus Sanctus Academy and through four years at Father Gabriel Richard High School, Sarah Thomm '24, Marie Shibata '24, Camilla Mosher '24, and Mariel Horvath '24 stayed strong in their love for God, their friendship, and a thirst for adventure. During the spring break of their senior year, they took a step forward in all three of those areas with an ambitious undertaking: hiking the Camino Inglés, or English Way, of the ancient European pilgrimage Camino de Santiago.

The Camino de Santiago, or Way of St. James, dates to the ninth century and the discovery of the apostle's tomb in Spain. Every year, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims hike the various routes leading to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. To obtain a certificate of completion, pilgrims must hike at least the final 100 kilometers of any of the routes. To meet this requirement in the short time of their spring break, the FGR girls decided to walk the 120 kilometers (75 miles) of the Camino Inglés, starting in Ferrol, Spain on Easter Monday, and ending at Santiago de Compostela on that Friday.

Sarah, Marie, Camilla, and Mariel first got interested in the Camino after **Therese Benz '15**, their senior year theology teacher at FGR, mentioned it in class. The four of them started dreaming about the possibility. "I knew I wanted to walk the Camino the first time I ever heard about it," Camilla says. "I really loved the spiritual aspect, and I loved the idea that hiking the Camino is a journey you take in order to get to a destination, you aren't just hiking for the sake of hiking; in the same way that our lives on earth are journeys that lead us to God." At first it didn't seem possible, but as they researched the logistics, they realized it might be. Sarah convinced her own mom, and then made a "PowerPoint of Persuasion"

- a detailed slide deck that helped get the other parents on board. By February, flights were booked, and they were set to leave on Good Friday.

Sarah Thomm says that "though planning a backpacking trip in a foreign country surely took years off my life . . . it was a joy to do it." The idea came from the girls themselves, and two mothers, Jennifer and Peggy Shibata, decided to go along as well. All four girls were still 17 at the time, but not yet being legal adults didn't slow them down: they took charge of gathering their gear, getting their paperwork in order, and planning their hiking days and overnight stops. When their first flight to Spain was canceled, they stayed overnight in Chicago and tried again the next day. Exhausted but still eager for their adventure, they made it to Easter Mass in Madrid and then traveled to Ferrol to begin their pilgrimage before sunrise on Monday morning.

Even on the shortest Camino route, the limited time frame meant the FGR pilgrims had to hike an average of



15 miles per day. Add packs full of gear, hilly terrain, and less than ideal weather, and they quickly realized this was not going to be an easy week. "I didn't know my feet could hurt that much," says Mariel. One day, it rained for three hours straight, a barrage against which no gear could protect them. "After about 20 minutes, nothing is waterproof," Jen Thomm says ruefully. "There were sore ankles, knees, hips, feet, and shoulders," according to Peggy Shibata, and after a week of hiking and a long plane ride home, all the pilgrims arrived back in Michigan aching and swollen.

But despite - or perhaps in part due to - the physical challenges, the experience was meaningful and spiritually fruitful for all of them. For Mariel, the company helped motivate: "Laughing with my friends and enjoying their company always served as a good distraction from the difficulty of the hike." Sarah is grateful for the way her friends absorbed each other's "intense emotion." She says, "This trip was a true reminder of the beauty of friendship and the love of Christ that these girls reflect in sharing life with each other." Camilla agrees. "I am especially grateful to have such amazing friends who wanted to share this experience with me, and who share my love of God and of adventure."

"You see everyone at their best - eager and excited to start a new adventure - and at their worst - sleep deprived, "hangry", after eight hours of hauling 25 extra pounds through all sorts of terrain," Jen says. "The six of us have a bond for life." She also found the trip personally fruitful, offering her hike for a specific intention. And Peggy appreciated "the time to just *be*, without the day-to-day worries of normal life. I was able to be quiet with my thoughts, reflect on God's goodness, contemplate my own imperfections, and rejoice in the blessings I've received, all without distraction."

The culmination of the trip was the group's arrival at the tomb of St. James, at Santiago de Compostela, which everyone agreed was the highlight. The pilgrims describe being overwhelmed with emotion when they



entered the square and saw the cathedral. "It was an indescribable feeling," says Mariel. After seeing many pictures and videos of the historic and holy place, and after journeying on their own feet over a hundred kilometers to reach it, the girls and their mothers had finally made it. "I could not have been more humbled in that moment, to see our efforts come to the point that, at times, we thought would never come. This is what I imagine stepping into Heaven may be like," Sarah says. "Minus the bagpipes maybe."

Completely worn out but filled with joy, all six pilgrims received their certificates of completion of the Camino and drove back to Madrid to fly home the next day. Their pilgrimage was over, but the effects on their lives remain. They all agree that the experience is one they will never forget and one that has changed them. Marie, in particular, feels like walking the Camino shaped the course of her life. "It sounds dramatic, but it truly was the catalyst that led me to combine different interests of mine into a cohesive whole. Walking through the country of Spain ignited a fire in me to pursue environmentalism more fervently. Seeing the natural beauty of Spain and the wonders of creation in such a peaceful and relatively untouched environment inspired me to create a career goal of helping to preserve and protect the earth that God has entrusted to us."

Her mom, Peggy, found purpose on the walk as well. "It was a very tangible reminder of the way that I want to try to live my life, putting one foot in front of the other to just keep moving onward, regardless of the circumstances whether they be filled with pain, suffering, joy, or contentment. If the focus is on the immediate, progress forward may seem too hard. If the focus is too much on the ultimate end goal, progress may be too overwhelming. Our hope is in keeping the attention on and achieving intermediate milestones."

In 2023, 446,032 people walked the Camino. The girls and their mothers were six of the roughly 42,000 pilgrims who made the pilgrimage in April of 2024. In June of 2024, current FGR Chaplain, Fr. John Vinton, and Literature Teacher, Edmund Miller also made the trip.



INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

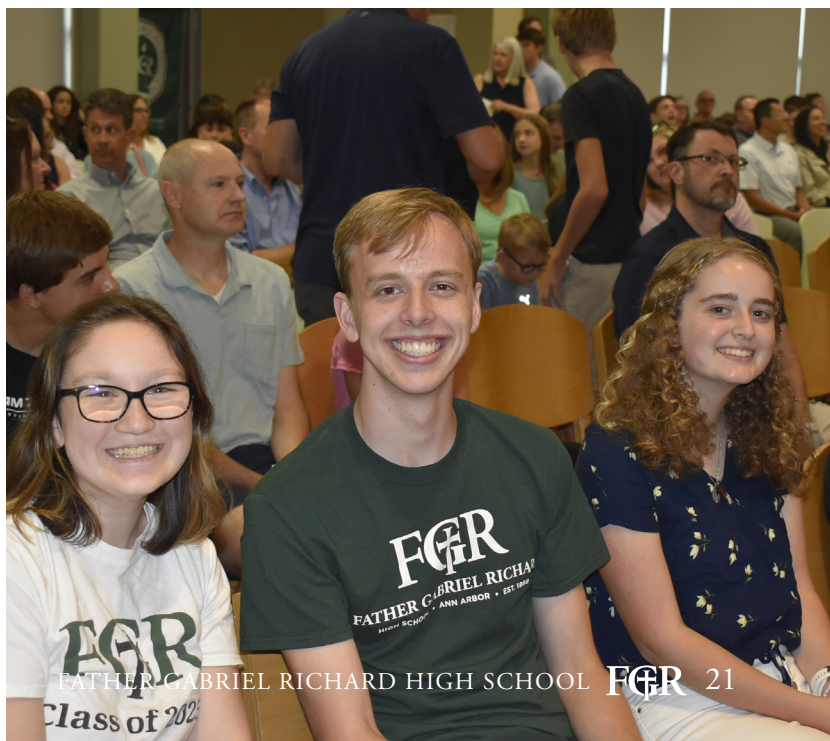
GENEROUS DONATIONS TO OUR ANNUAL APPEAL YIELD HEAVENLY RESULTS



The summer saw a huge transformation in the Divine Mercy Chapel at FGR thanks to the generous donations to our annual appeal and efforts of all involved in the Car Raffle sponsored by Class of '05 alum, Tom Butman. Presiding at Green and White Night Mass on August 16th, Bishop Boyea blessed the new altar, containing the altar stone from the original one, and other new fixtures as we kicked off the school year with an overflowing congregation.

The renovation is the culmination of two years' worth of discussion and planning. Students and faculty, who expressed a desire for a more edifying space, were a motivating factor in the decision to undertake the project. In his remarks to the community, FGR President, Joe Jordano, said it best:

"On your way in this evening, you might have noticed the stenciled quote in the foyer of the main entrance. It begins with, 'Be it known to all who enter that Christ is the reason for the school . . .' And as Catholics we believe that the Eucharist is the Source and Summit of our faith because Jesus Christ is really present, body and blood, soul and divinity. Knowing that, we thought it was time to give Christ our King a more fitting throne here at FGR – we felt it time to build a sanctuary that better reflects what we believe . . . that will be awe-inspiring to all who worship and pray in this space . . . and that will draw us more deeply into prayer at Mass, in Adoration, and at all other hours of the day when staff and students take up the 1% Challenge spending 14 minutes and 24 seconds (or 1% of the day) in prayer before Our Lord.



Now what I love about this project is that it was a true community effort. So, please bear with me as I thank the various groups of people who made this happen.

- If you sold a car raffle ticket these past two years, if you bought a car raffle ticket, or if you recorded ticket sales from the car raffle, you made this happen.
- If you contributed to our annual appeal last year, you made this happen.
- If you serve on FGR's Board of Trustees or on our Finance Committee, you made this happen by offering your wisdom, your discernment, and your support.
- If you asked that we make our chapel more awe inspiring, if you provided feedback on our various iterations of design, or if you served on

the committee that selected the statues and the tabernacle, you made this happen.

On behalf of all of the students and staff who will benefit from the beauty you have created, THANK YOU!"

The renovated space is serving our population well. Mass is celebrated before school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 7:20 am and draws crowds of 40-50 students and staff each day. All-school Mass is celebrated on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:30 am. Adoration is held each Friday when school is in session and praise and worship events happen during lunch and on Friday evenings. Classes regularly visit the chapel for quiet reflection. Physically and metaphysically, it truly is the center of our school.

For a complete list of donors, please see our Annual Report on page 48.



INTENTIONAL DISCIPLES

Pro-Life Club attended two Marches for Life this past year: the national one in Washington and the Michigan March for Life in Lansing. These students witness to the right of each child to be born.



INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP



MEXICO MISSION TRIP



Similarly, students attend the Mexico Mission Trip each year to attend to the material needs of the residents of the Neza Garbage Dump north of Mexico City, as well as an orphanage and home for the elderly.

“The Mexico mission trip was one of the best experiences I have ever had. It was really humbling to see how other people are living on a daily basis. At the same time, it was nice to experience God in those same areas.” – Jon Robinson, FGR Football Coach, Dean of Students, and first-time mission trip attendee.



A young woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a black long-sleeved top, is playing a violin. She is looking down at the instrument. The background is a blurred stage setting with warm lighting.

Ireland Perttunen '26 performs her award-winning piece at FGR's Spring Concert and Art Show in May 2024.

CREATIVITY

FGR VIOLINIST HITS HIGH NOTE AT STATE FESTIVAL

When two-year-old Ireland Perttunen '26 heard a recording of violin music, she decided that was the instrument she wanted to play. So, her parents, Bruce and Bernadette Perttunen, purchased a tiny violin on which she was able to learn to recognize the different notes, and by age four, she was playing. Thirteen years later, Ireland has studied under the direction of members of the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. She has also attended the String Preparatory Academy at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance here in Ann Arbor, and is a member of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Civic Youth Ensemble Program.

This past school year, Ireland medaled at the State Solo and Ensemble Festival held at Huron High School in March, earning a first division rating. She encored her performance piece from that competition as a featured solo at the annual Spring Concert on May 16.

For her performance at Solo and Ensemble Festival, she prepared nine scales to play from memory, two minutes of a concerto, and then was required to play two short excerpts of sight reading. She got one minute to review each before presenting to the judge. "That was definitely the hardest part for me. I do better listening to a piece and then playing it," she says. "It was State Festival, so all the violinists there are really good." For Festival, each performer is shown to a room where their judge and an announcer are sitting. Ireland commented with a chuckle, "It's a little nerve-wracking, because it feels a little bit like the judge is staring you down, but both my district judge and my state judge were nice." The nerves continued when the performers saw the scores posted for their peers. Her nerves turned to happiness when her own score was posted, revealing a near perfect 96/100!

While her younger self appreciated the music, now that she is older, Ireland enjoys the expression aspect of violin playing. She loves the motivation and excitement of preparing pieces and auditioning. Since the 2023-2024 school year was her first in the band class at FGR, she had not previously had the experience of Solo and Ensemble Festival, and she enjoyed it tremendously. "I am really doing a lot more things with my violin this year," she says. "It has been really fun. I go and play for the nuns at Madonna University and have played for the retired priests at Clergy Village."

Ireland loves the piece that she played for Festival for its variations in tempo and dynamics. However, another piece also captured her heart. "I practiced Mozart Concerto #39; Fourth Movement which I thought was my favorite piece overall. Especially when you hear a recording of a full symphony, it's just like 'wow! It's so incredible that you can have so many instruments

working together to make this beautiful sound." Ireland practiced this piece for an audition with the Civic Youth Ensembles of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra this summer. Her audition earned her the position of Concertmaster for the Civic Philharmonic Orchestra for the 2024-25 season.

Of her FGR band experience, she says "Mr. Normandin is doing an absolutely wonderful job. Everyone has a couple different parts, but he makes it work so well with all the sounds coming together. I also think, personally, that learning some shorter pieces is a good way to fine tune my memory for different rhythms."

While she doesn't expect to make a career as a violinist, Ireland does plan to find a college program that will allow her to continue playing and performing. This past summer, not only did she prepare to audition for the DYSO, but she was also one of the pit musicians for the Dramalums production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.



Ireland with her beloved dog, Clover. Photo courtesy of Ireland Perttunen

Although her study of the violin does take a fair amount of her time, Ireland also makes time for her other hobbies and interests. She plays field hockey for FGR, is a member of the Pro-Life Club, and was Sophomore Class Secretary. She loves reading fiction and spending time with her one-year-old dog, Clover. Ireland enjoys her science classes and plans to pursue a career in the medical field.

The benefits of studying the violin have transferred into other areas of her life including learning fractions when she was in elementary school. Ireland notes that the violin also has benefitted her faith life. "It also really helps connect to my faith. I enjoy playing for the sisters, and it makes everything more beautiful, especially when I can play for Mass." Ireland reflects on the fact that, while she is playing for herself, she is also playing for God, and she wants to make it as beautiful as she can for Him.



Photo courtesy of Ireland Perttunen

VOCAL PERFECTION

Lilya Heidelbaugh '24 received a perfect score of 120/120 at the Michigan State Vocal Music Association State Voice Solo and Ensemble Festival for her performance of *Va Godendo* by Handel, Laurie's Song by Copland, and advanced sight singing exercises. Also, this past year, Lilya was a featured soloist at the FGR Christmas Concert and starred as *Cinderella* in the spring musical presented by the FGR Drama Club. Lilya is continuing her studies at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance this year.

Lilya performed "O Holy Night" as a solo at last year's Christmas Concert and Art Show.



The cast of the 2023 *Dramalums*
production of *Big Fish*

CREATIVITY TAKES CENTER STAGE

The FGR Drama Club works year-round to perfect their craft and bring stories to stage to glorify God.



The cast of the 2023 fall play,
Arsenic and Old Lace.

BIG FISH

Summer of 2023 saw the 19th Dramalums production move to Lydia Mendelssohn Theater in the Michigan League with the profound and heart-warming tale of a father/son relationship in *Big Fish*.



Kevin Heemstra '07 as Edward Bloom with ensemble



Heemstra with Thomas McClelland '23 (center) and Joey Stout '25



Heemstra with Joey Labbé '23 as Will Bloom



Abby Labbé '20 as Sandra Templeton Bloom with Heemstra



Hannah Frank '23 with Joey Labbé '23



Nick Chmielewski '23 with Heemstra



Abby Labbé and Heemstra



Susanna Davis '23 as The Witch reveals the future



Jacob Doman '22 and ensemble perform in the circus



Young Will, played by Niko Heemstra, with his real-life father and onstage mother



Tommy Labbé '25 learns to fish



"Red, White, and True" dancers from left to right: **Mikaela Papa '25, Bella Wampler '26, Sophia Canzano '22, Nora Smith '25, Susanna Davis '23, Hannah Frank '23, Elsa Garred '24, Audrey Lang '24**



Nick Chmielewski '23 and **Jacob Doman '22**

ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

As the fall play in 2023, *Arsenic and Old Lace* showcased the comedic talents of our actors.



IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME

Putting pen to paper last winter, the Drama Club wrote and produced "It's All Greek to Me," a one-act play based on Greek mythology.



CINDERELLA

Closing out the 2023-2024 season, the Drama Club brought the classic fairy tale to life.

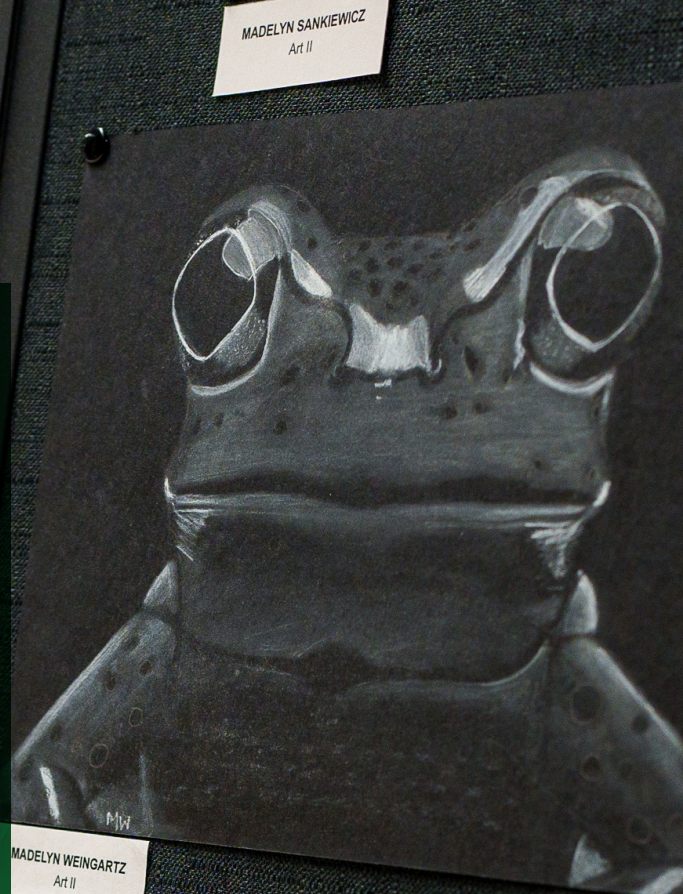




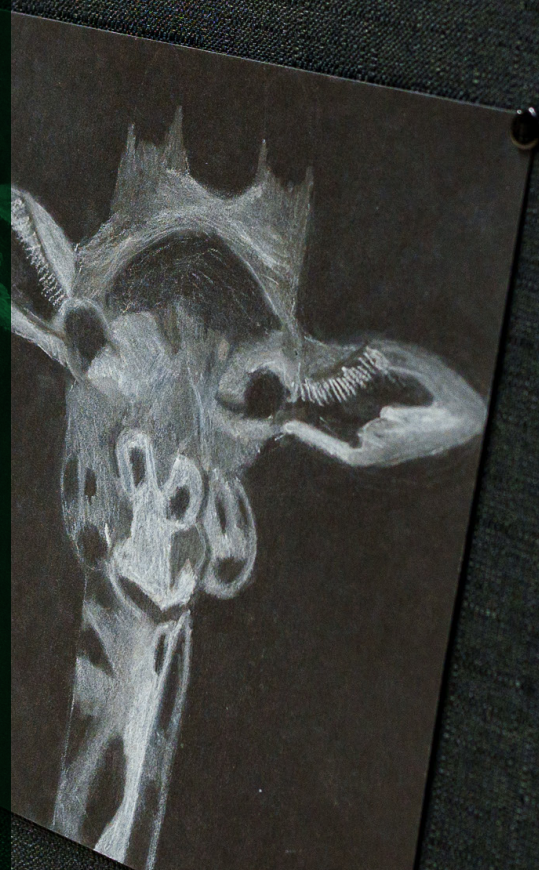
SPRING CONCERT AND ART SHOW

Twice a year, our vocal, instrumental, and visual artists unite to present concerts and art shows to inspire and delight FGR community members. The Christmas Concert and Art Show in December is a festive showcase of the pieces students had practiced and produced during first semester, while the Spring Concert celebrates the culmination of the year!

This year, we were honored to feature the artwork of several of our alumni in the Spring Art Show, while alumni of the Madrigals program joined current students for an impromptu performance of "Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal"



MADELYN WEINGARTZ
Art II



NATHANIEL GARBARZ
Art II



The artwork of alumni artists **Sarah (Rauen) Korty '04**, **Cecelia Lawrence '10**, **Nina (Sapienza) Kucab '15**, **Theresa DiFranco '19**, and **Miriam Wong '18** added a special touch to the Spring Art Show.



Saige Edmondson '25 takes a shot at the Breslin Center

TAKING SPORTSMANSHIP TO STATE FINALS

The play was called “Victory,” and on the evening of March 22, 2024, it delivered on its name for FGR’s varsity girls basketball team. Michigan State University’s Breslin Center filled with the cheers of students and fans as the team played West Catholic in the Division 2 state semifinal. Down 32-33 with seconds to go in the game, the Irish came through for the win as junior **Charlotte Miller '25** sank an electrifying buzzer-beating three-point shot. The jubilant crowd screamed for joy, knowing the team was headed to the final the next day.



Vanessa Rodriguez '26 moves the ball down the court

Coach Tim Cain credits the thrill of that moment to the hard work of his team. "The girls never put their heads down," he says. "They were dialed in to listening and running the play." But the preparation started months and even years earlier, when Coach Cain came to FGR with the goal of building a winning girls basketball program. Hard work makes the difference, he says, along with team communication and a philosophy of unselfish play. The team members train before and after school, while playing games multiple times a week during the season. "They've sacrificed so much sleep," their coach says with admiration. In return, the players give credit to the staff who supports them. "Our success didn't just come from the players, it starts from the coaches and our AD," says player, **Ava Rodriguez '26**. "They worked countless hours to make us better."

While the team members train with determination, the relationships among the teammates help foster the team values of communication and unselfish play. **Charlotte Miller '25** has been playing basketball since first grade, and says of her FGR team, "It is the most close-knit group I have ever gotten to be a part of."

Coaches and players dedicate themselves to the success of the team, she says: "We get through the hard stuff together and lift each other up because we're a family. Many programs claim to be a family but at FGR it really shows."



Veronica Fredericks '24 takes a shot in the Semi-Final Game at the Breslin Center

It shows in the team's success, in their joy, in the way their triumphant season galvanized school spirit and the pride of the community. It also shows on the court, Coach Cain says, specifically in the statistics. "We have girls who are extremely talented, who would be scoring big on other teams. But we have balanced scoring because we play together, and that's what makes us successful." **Charlotte Miller** agrees. "As a group we are very unselfish, we share the ball well and get the best shot we can."

In pursuit of excellence, the 2023-24 girls basketball team had its best season in 30 years. It secured four trophies: its league tournament, Operation Friendship, districts, and regionals. Except for the final game of the state playoffs, where the team fell 33-41 to Detroit Edison Public School Academy, the team won every single game of their season. The state final was a disappointment, but the coaches and players barely paused to regret the loss. They're already looking forward to this year.

Ava's twin, **Vanessa Rodriguez '26**, counts playing at the Breslin Center as the "highlight" of the season for her and doesn't think her team has seen the last of the place. "Just being there and feeling the atmosphere of the nerves, excitement and hearing the student section was crazy. Although it didn't end the way we wanted to, I know we're going back there and winning it all this [coming] year."

Coach Cain echoes her attitude. "We only have one expectation for next year," says Coach Cain. "We want five trophies." He's confident that the team can triumph: their strong relationships with each other, their work ethic, their unselfishness, and the support of the FGR community make an unbeatable combination.

Ava Rodriguez agrees: "My biggest hope for the team going forward is to continue to grow from our success from last season so that this season we will be champions! We're coming back stronger, faster, quicker, and better than ever. We will make our Irish fans proud again."



ALUMNI SHOW SUPPORT

Members of the 1993 - 1994 championship girls basketball team returned to support their successors in the regional championship game on Tuesday, March 19.

From left to right we have: **Aries (Ake) Haefflinger '94**, **Tom Kempf** (coach of 1993-94 FGR girls basketball championship team), **Lisa (O'Brien) Hogan '94**, **Julie Arbour** (former FGR volleyball coach), **Ed Arbour** (former FGR softball coach), **Emily (Carr) Vigo '94**.

ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS

2023-2024 TEAM TITLES



GIRLS BASKETBALL

MHSAA DISTRICT AND REGIONAL CHAMPIONS,
STATE FINALIST



GIRLS LACROSSE

MHSAA SEMIFINAL CHAMPIONS,
REGIONAL FINALIST



BOYS ICE HOCKEY

JILEK CUP CHAMPIONS,
MHSAA REGIONAL CHAMPIONS



GIRLS FIELD HOCKEY

MHSFHL QUARTERFINALS



BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

REGIONAL RUNNER UPS (2ND PLACE) IN DIVISION
2, (TEAM BEST IN THAT DIVISION),
QUALIFIED FOR STATES FOR THE FOURTH
CONSECUTIVE YEAR

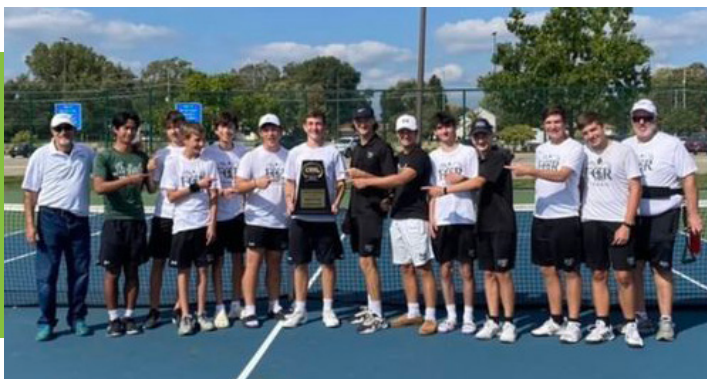


FOOTBALL

MHSAA DIVISION 5 PLAYOFFS ROUND 1 WINNER,
SEASON RECORD 8-3

CATHOLIC LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2023-2024 school year yielded five Catholic League Championships for FGR.



BOYS TENNIS

Boys Tennis won the St. John Paul II Quad and the League Championship in the fall of 2023.



GIRLS FIELD HOCKEY

FGR Field Hockey also captured the league last fall.



GIRLS BASKETBALL

Girls basketball secured the Catholic League Championship on their way to the MHSAA State Finals in the winter of 2024.



GIRLS TRACK

In the spring, Girls Track won the league championship before qualifying for States in six events: 4x800, 4x200, 1600, Shot Put, Discus, and High Jump! On top of that, the team placed 3rd overall which is the highest they have ever placed in regionals as a D2 team!



GIRLS LACROSSE

Girls Lacrosse also brought home the Catholic League title in the spring of 2024, while Boys Lacrosse was a finalist.



BOYS VOLLEYBALL

Boys Volleyball won a district championship in its inaugural season.

INDIVIDUAL ACCOLADES

Beyond the success of our teams, individual student-athletes were recognized for their accomplishments on and off the field.



TOMÁS O'MEARA '24:

All-State Honorable Mention – Football



DAVID EDER '24, NICHOLAS DUNPHEY '24, NATHAN KELLY '24:

All State 2nd Team – Hockey



EMMA RUSHING '24:

All-State 3rd Team – Girls Lacrosse



OLIVIA KAJI '24:

All-State 3rd Team – Girls Lacrosse



ANNIKA ANDERSON '24:

All-State Honorable Mention – Girls Lacrosse



KENNA TROST '26:

All-State – Tennis



VANESSA RODRIQUEZ '26:

Detroit News 1st Team, Detroit Free Press 1st Team, Associated Press Player of the Year, Best of the Best BCAM (All-State)



CHARLOTTE MILLER '25:

Detroit News 1st Team, Detroit Free Press 1st Team, Associated Press 2nd Team, BCAM 1st Team



GAVIN GAISOR '26:

Boys Track Regional Champion in the Shot Put, qualified for the State Championship

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

- 36 student-athletes were named to the All-Catholic team
- 28 were named to the All-League team
- 15 were named All-Academic
- 40 were named to the Catholic League Scholastic All-Catholic Team



FGR SPORTS IN ACTION 2024





ATHLETE SIGNINGS CLASS OF 2024



Caleb Renfer
Spring Arbor University
Baseball



Jon Szuba
Northwood University
Lacrosse



Emma Rushing
Benedictine College
Lacrosse



Tomás O'Meara
University of Michigan
Football



Lydia Fraiser
St. John Fisher University
Volleyball



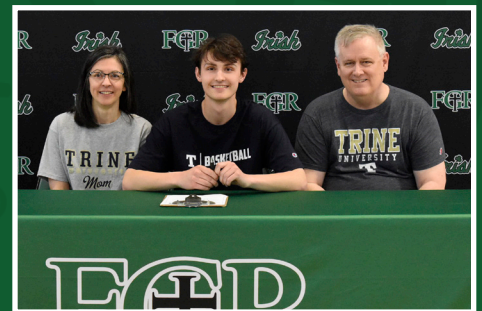
Kassie Sankiewicz
Hope College
Cheer



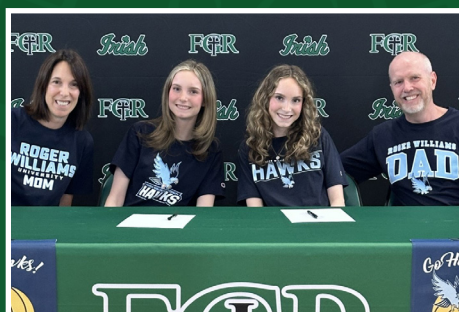
Erin Stuk
Hope College
Cross Country and Track and Field



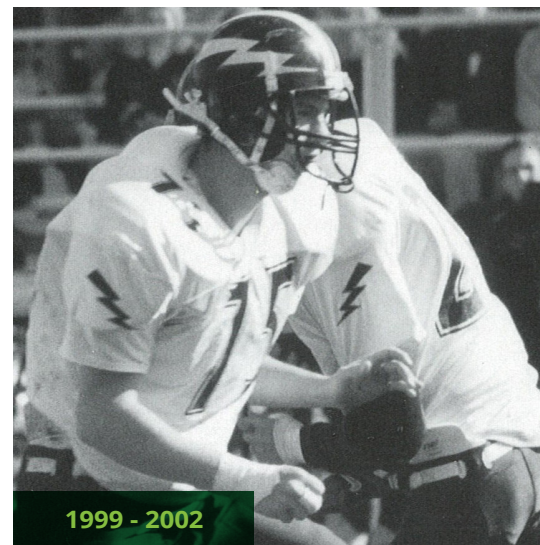
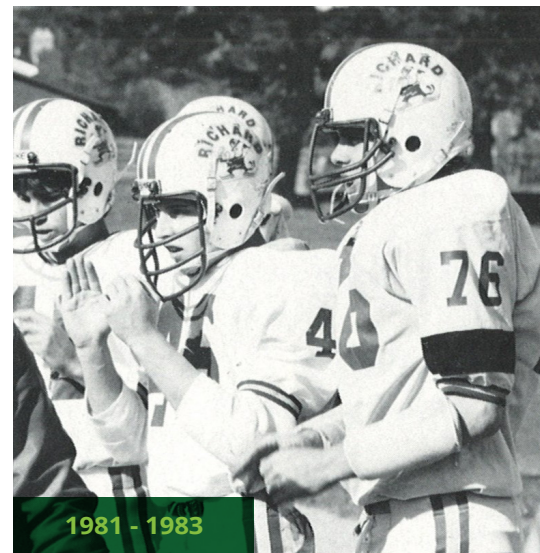
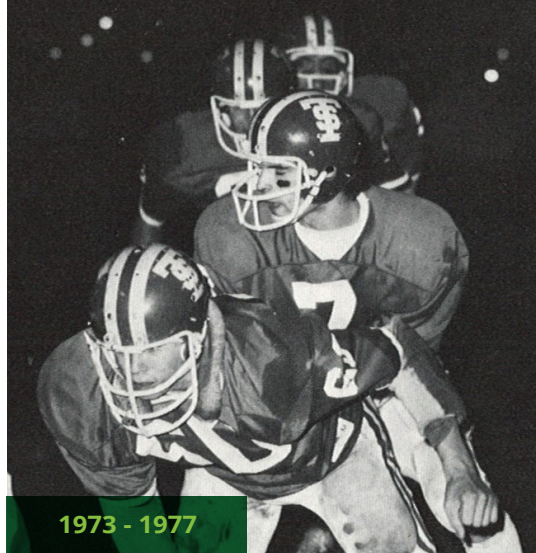
Eli Everts
Franciscan University of Steubenville
Lacrosse



Thomas Marshall
Trine University
Basketball



Francesca and Olivia Robinson
Roger Williams University
Volleyball



FGR FOOTBALL HELMET HISTORY: LIGHTNING BOLTS, SHAMROCKS, AND WINGS

Sportsmanship is an essential pillar of the mission of Father Gabriel Richard High School. Athletics at FGR provide students avenues through which to develop physically, mentally, and spiritually. They also give the FGR community valuable opportunities to come together to cheer on the young men and women who represent our school through their athletic achievements.

This passionate community can be seen in full force every fall cheering on our FGR football team. We dug through decades of yearbooks to assemble the visual history of FGR football helmets. From lightning bolts and leprechauns to shamrocks and stripes, follow this QR code to our website to see how St. Thomas and FGR football helmets have changed over the years.



ANNUAL REPORT

Chief Financial Officer's Report



Father Gabriel Richard High School was able to achieve remarkable things in the past year with the sustained support of our families, friends, and benefactors. The school welcomed the largest freshman class since 2017 and was able to graduate a senior class that was 18% larger than the one that came before it. FGR invested the most money in the campus and its programs since the building addition of 2016 while providing a record level of need-based and scholarship tuition support. Many thanks to all who serve the mission and community of FGR with their gifts and resources!

The most prominent and symbolically important investment of the year was the renovation of the school's chapel. Over \$300,000 was put to the purpose of elevating the stature and dignity of the sanctuary in order to underscore the school's highest purposes: to draw students and the community to Jesus Christ, engage them in sacred liturgy and a deep sacramental life, and present them with the truth of the Gospel. Civilization reveals what it values and silently teaches its young people through the created environment it builds. The new sanctuary was intentionally designed to draw deeper awareness of and reverence for the Mass and Christ's True Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. The investment touched every aspect of the sanctuary space, from the floor that was

lifted over two inches and surfaced in wood to distinguish the sacred space all the way up to the lighting. The new chapel sanctuary draws the eye upward with a reredos that literally "lifts high the Cross." It bears witness to a profound truth expressed in the motto of the Carthusian order, "Stat crux dum volvitur orbis," - the Cross stands firm as the world turns.

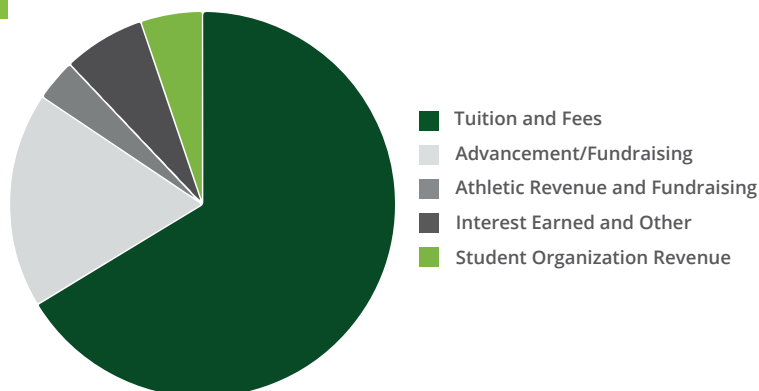
Other campus investments include almost \$400,000 invested in IT and other technical infrastructure upgrades. The largest part of this was used to acquire laptop computers for faculty and selected classroom uses and to dramatically expand Wi-Fi capabilities throughout the building. The school upgraded its network of over 90 security cameras to fully digital equipment supported by state-of-the-art software. FGR places a very high priority on student and campus safety, and these investments are important aids in delivering on this commitment. An additional \$180,000 went to repair and improve sidewalks and sections of the parking lot. After 20 years, the parking lot has reached the end of its expected life, and this is a first step in a plan to completely resurface and restripe it.

Last year, FGR invested well over \$1 million in scholarships and need-based financial aid for the first time in school

2023 - 2024 ACTUAL

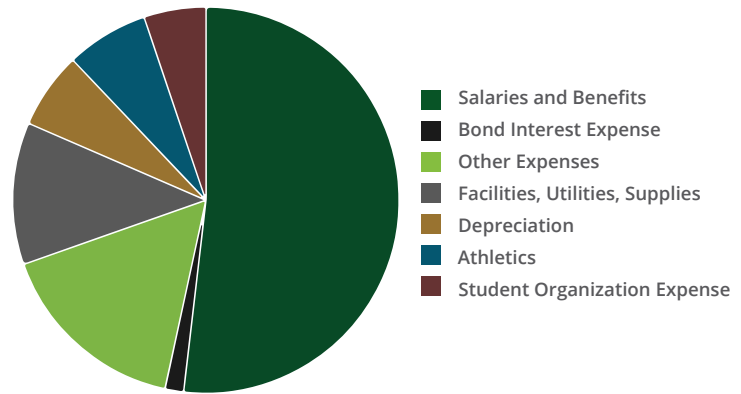
FGR REVENUE

Tuition and Fees	5,756,542
Advancement/Fundraising	1,570,208
Athletics Revenue and Fundraising	306,525
Interest Earned and Other	595,882
Student Organization Revenue	451,039
- TOTAL ORDINARY INCOME	8,680,197



FGR EXPENSES

Salaries and Benefits	4,455,704
Bond Interest Expense	133,307
Other Expenses	1,393,203
Facilities, Utilities, Supplies	1,023,249
Depreciation	550,000
Athletics	593,311
Student Organization Expense	445,274
- TOTAL EXPENSES	8,594,049



history. This cost has grown rapidly, more than doubling over the past five years, as the school has broadened its commitment of being accessible to all families with a sincere desire for Catholic high school education. Also, the competitive environment for high school education in the region has made academic scholarships based on High School Placement Test (HSPT) performance more common. FGR began to offer these types of scholarships five years ago and we now have recipients in all four grades. While these scholarships are “expensive” in one sense, there is evidence that they have helped to attract outstanding scholars. In fact, the incoming class of 2028 has a remarkable nine students who scored at the 99th percentile on the HSPT. Bravo!

FGR completed 2023-2024 with a net profit of \$77,000, \$22,000 ahead of budget. While the school sets budgets to achieve modest operational profitability each year, it has accumulated record liquidity, largely due to Covid

aid programs, capital gifts, and careful planning. It is prepared to embark on a multi-year investment program that will allocate significant cash to addressing its aging, original physical plant. The first step will be to replace all 28 classroom units and lab for a total of \$1M during the summer of 2025. Five rooftop HVAC units will be replaced over time. FGR has taken a disciplined approach to planning and providing for these types of projects in a way that protects the operational consistency and sustainability of the school.

FGR finished the 2023-2024 fiscal year with tremendous optimism. Our financial strength and institutional fitness have never been better. As always, we thank our families, alumni, and benefactors profusely for the support that allows this great school to flourish.

Michael J. McClelland

Michael McClelland, Chief Financial Officer

FGR BALANCE SHEET 2023 - 2024

ASSETS

Bank Deposits	612,476
Deposits - Diocese of Lansing	4,683,773
Deposits - Bond Requirement	501,219
Accounts Receivable	156,957
Facilities & Equip. - Net of Dep.	9,434,160
Total Assets	15,388,585

LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL

Prepaid Tuition and Fees	457,136
Long-Term Bond	4,817,222
- Total Liabilities	6,559,134
Other Liabilities	1,284,776
Funds Held and Total Capital	8,829,449
Total Liabilities & Capital	15,388,583

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Weingartz
Mr. Kenneth Weingartz

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Hylant
Intra Corporation
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Mr. Alan Wegienka and Ms. Angelline
Geoklian Seow
Mr. and Mrs. David Zbozen

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Andraos
Anonymous
Anonymous
Mrs. Mary S. Belanger-Macguidwin
Mr. Kevin and
Mrs. Lisabeth (Dockham) Benson
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Mrs. Emily Burak
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Mr. Thomas Single
Step Ahead Podiatry PLLC
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 Ms. Nancy Tolkacz
 Tyner Furniture Company
 Mr. and Mrs. John Underwood
 Mr. and Mrs. David Valdes
 Mr. and Mrs. Adam Van Dis
 Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Varblow
 Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Varick
 Mr. James Wahl
 Dr. and Mrs. Brent Ward
 Ms. Maribel Wasmiller
 Mr. and Mrs. Clay Welch
 Ms. Jennifer Welch
 Ms. April Welliver
 Mr. William Wertz and Mrs. Amanda Brown
 Mr. and Mrs. Mark Westerberg
 Mr. and Mrs. Josh Wicks
 Mr. and Mrs. Jared Williams
 Mr. and Mrs. Mike Williams
 Mr. Richard Williams and Marian J. Williams
 Ms. Kimberly Wilson
 Ms. Lee Winkler
 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wittenborn
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wittenborn
 Mr. Larry Wolf
 Mr. Tim Wright
 Ms. Eunyoung Yim
 Mr. Matthew and
 Mrs. Megan (Flaherty) Zakerski
 Mr. and Mrs. Matt Zawistowski
 Mr. John Zebrowski
 Mr. and Mrs. David Zini
 Ms. Allie Zureki

Please note: These gifts do not include gifts made to our Fields of Dreams Initiative.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information. If you notice an error in our reporting, please report it to our Advancement Office at advancement@fgrhs.org and accept our sincere apology.

We ♥ our Volunteers

We are grateful for the time and talent that our volunteers contribute each year. From our auctions to Lenten Lunches, to set up and clean up for events, we could not do it without the help of generous parents and friends!

Linda Aldrich	Meghan Elliott	Joseph Joshua	Yolanda Munguia	Margie Sauter
Debra Amos	Jeff Ellis	Bree Juarez	Erin Munson	Linda Schneider
Betsy Baron	Amy Esper	Suzanne Kaji	Justin Munson	Heather Schofield
Daniel Benz	Miriam Everts	Angela Kalkofen	Sandy Muzzatti	Jennifer Schofield
Lisa Benz	Nathan Everts	Kelly Klein	Stacy Newton	Sheila Schorer
Jill Berenson	Carine Ezin	Michele Knezek	Dawn Norman	Angie Schubert
Sara Berkemeier	Moser Family	Michelle Kolozsvary	Renee Olejnik	Michelle Schwartz
Caroline Biskner	Barbara Ferris	Sharon Koss	David Olelnik	Crystal Stencil
Cricket Bodary	Mary Fill	Kari Kummet	Desiree O'Meara	Karina Stevens
Ashley Bogdas	Chris Fischer	Erica Labbé	Lynn Palko	Anne Marie Szuba
Jennifer Borgstahl	Meg Fitzpatrick	Rachel Leitzinger	Anna Papa	Art Szyniszewski
Suzanne Breck	Julie Flaherty	Julie Levine	Helen Patti	Jill Tait
Amanda Brown	Mary Flanagan	Marcus Loerk	Dawn Pedinelli	Jen Thomm
Lisa Buonerba	Krisztina Fleury	Amelia Long	Bernadette Perttunen	Ramona Thompson
Leah Canetta	Julie Frank	Susan Long	Araceli Peters	Cheryl Trost
Andrea Caplea	Catherine Galdes	Celina Longe	Kristy Peterson	Kelly Ann Varady-
Laura Cesa	Sheryl Gehringer	Andrea Lynn	Andrea Pfaffenbach	Szyniszewski
Julia Chen	Monica Gobba	Beth Maier	Rachel Potts	Jana Ward
Steve Cira	Molly Griffin	Christi Mangan	Katia Prezecki	Krystin Weeks
Kathy Cook	Susan Guindi	Linda Marcarelli	Beth-Ann Putlock	Jennifer Welch
Marcella Cornell	Jill Hagan	Sherry Mayer	Sandy Quinn	Mihaela Williams
Hannah Cousino	Cheryl Hall	Diana McCarter	Maureen Rapoza	Daniel Woike
Kristina Covington	Erika Heegan	Karen McClelland	Christina Raupp	Rhonda Wright
Juliet Culp	Rev. Dn. Lawrence	Chris Messina	Donna Riddell	Jamie Zawistowski
Ann Currie	Hendricks	Cathy Miller	Sarah Riddell	David Zini
Jennifer D'Agostino	Sarah Hensler	Lora Montgomery	Amy Roose	Katherine Zini
Matt Dent	Patrick Hoban	Claudia Morales-Farfan	Carrie Ross	
Carolina Dudley	Sheila Hoeft	Shelley Moreland	Michelle Rourke	
Laura Dyer	The Hoefts	Arwen Mosher	Allison Rupp	
Debbie Eggleston	Ashley Humphries	Megan Munafo	Renee Sample	

RUBY JUBILEE SHINES BRIGHT: 40TH ANNUAL FATHER GABRIEL RICHARD HIGH SCHOOL AUCTION GALA RAISES OVER \$350,000



Held at the picturesque Fox Hills Golf and Banquet Center, the event brought together over 260 guests who came to celebrate the importance of the authentic Catholic education offered at Father Gabriel Richard High School. The evening's festivities were expertly led by Master of Ceremonies, actor and FGR father Jeff Hephner, who kept the energy high.

The 40th annual Father Gabriel Richard High School Auction Gala, aptly themed the Ruby Jubilee, was a resounding success, raising an impressive \$350,000 to support the FGR scholarship fund. The evening of elegance was made possible by the unwavering commitment of sponsors, donors, volunteers, and the school community.

Julie Dreyer, proud mother of four FGR alumni, delivered a heartfelt testimony to the significance of Catholic education and the profound impact Father Gabriel Richard High School had on her four sons. She attributed their success to the values and foundations instilled in them during their time at FGR, which ultimately led one of her sons, **Fr. Nate Dreyer IVE '03**, to pursue a calling to the priesthood. Julie expressed her deepest gratitude to the generous donors who contributed to the scholarship fund, making it possible for her sons to attend FGR and reap its many benefits.

The auction gala's phenomenal success is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the event committee, volunteers, and the entire Father Gabriel Richard High School community. The funds raised directly support FGR's mission to provide an authentically Catholic, academically excellent education to its students, preparing them for college, life, and most importantly, heaven.

As FGR celebrates its history and looks to the future, it is noteworthy that the Ruby Jubilee set a shining example of what can be achieved when a community comes

together with a shared vision and mission.

The school's gratitude to its generous sponsors, donors, and volunteers cannot be overstated.

The Annual Auction gala is the largest fundraiser of the year at FGR. Held annually in November, we welcome all St. Thomas/FGR community members past, present, and future to join us for an evening of food and fun, community and camaraderie, enchantment and entertainment all in support of the FGR mission.



Actor and FGR Parent Jeff Hephner delighted as Emcee.



Auction goes applaud during the Raise the Paddle Scholarship Appeal.



LeeAnn McKeon holds up her half of the winning raffle ticket as FGR Principal Christopher Dotson and Chaplain Fr. John Vinton look on.



Mr. Tom Monaghan converses with FGR auction pioneer, Jane Dorr.



DRIVEN TO GIVE BACK: FGR ALUMNUS TOM BUTMAN '05

At Father Gabriel Richard High School, Christ is the center of everything we do, and in light of that fact, the school community is incredibly blessed to be able to celebrate Mass together this school year in our newly renovated chapel. The chapel renovation project is the culmination of two years of planning and fundraising, and the finished product is a physical manifestation of the reverence and gratitude we feel for Our Lord and His physical presence in our school.

We are deeply grateful to all our community members and generous benefactors who contributed to the project. FGR is especially grateful to FGR alumnus **Tom Butman '05** and Gene Butman Ford for donating the Car Raffle grand prizes for each of the past two years! Those two school raffles raised over \$115,000 that went towards the chapel renovation.

Tom Butman expressed that part of his motivation for giving comes from his family's longstanding commitment to stewardship. "Our family has been passionate about giving back to non-profit, Christian-led and Catholic education organizations way before me," Butman says. "My father started donating raffle vehicles to the United Way of Southeast Michigan in the early 1990's. Gene Butman Ford donations equated to almost \$1.8 million in donations through the car raffle at St. Francis, which lasted from 1998-2019. Some years the kids were able to raise over \$100,000!"

For the past two years, we have been blessed by the Butman family's decision to bring their generosity to FGR, "In 2022, I approached Joe Jordano at the annual Wine Auction and suggested we start donating to FGR," Butman says. "At that time my daughter was

attending the school and I felt that God was calling us to increase our support of the school. It has been great to watch the school rally around the raffle. I appreciate the competitive spirit the young people and their Households exude during the event. Our goal is still \$100,000 and I believe next year we will get there."

Tom graduated from FGR in 2005 and experienced the transition from the school's previous location in downtown Ann Arbor, to our current home on Whitehall Drive. After graduating from FGR in 2005, Butman went on to Northwood University where he studied Automotive Marketing and Management. He received his Bachelor of Business Administration in 2009. He now serves as the General Manager of Butman Ford – a family-owned dealership that has been a pillar of the community in Southeast Michigan for decades. "Being the General Manager of an automotive dealership is rewarding and challenging," Butman says. "Gene Butman Ford has been in business for 66 years and

we have been blessed to work with the best people in Southeast Michigan. Our mantra at the dealership is, "Your Best Choice!" and we want to make that a true statement every time a guest comes into our store. To us the "Best Choice" mentality includes professionalism, honesty, empathy, respect and accountability. Knowing that my team represents these pillars is also one of the most rewarding parts of my job."

Butman says that he can trace his appreciation for those virtues back to his time at FGR, "Coach Ed Maloney and Ms. K-M were both important influences on me. Coach was a uniquely positive person who knew how to motivate our team when the chips were down. We went from a 0-9 record my sophomore season to a 7-3 record my junior year which ended in a state championship playoff bid. It was a great time to be part of fighting Irish football and Coach Maloney's guidance has stuck with me."



On the surface, choir and football may not seem like they have much in common, but Butman says that his experience singing at FGR taught him many of the same lessons as football, “Both football and choir involved many people working together for a common goal. I was blessed at FGR to experience both types of teams. Both were made up of very different types of people but both groups were passionate about working towards each individual member being their best. Ms. K-M is someone who makes everyone feel like they are the most important person in the room. Her way of mentoring and nurturing talent is second to none. She helped me to find my true potential and my only regret was not becoming a Madrigal.”

Through his generous support of the FGR Car Raffle, Butman is giving back to the school that helped to shape the man he is today, “FGR helped shape my faith,” Butman says. “Kairos helped me to connect with my fellow classmates in a way I would have never expected. It helped solidify my faith. Choir helped strengthen my faith through music and artistic expression. Football helped secure me in my faith when we prayed before and after every game (and even during practice). FGR is a unique school where people can express their faith openly.”

Tom’s family is now one of the many multi-generation FGR families that are a part of our school community. We can’t think of a better endorsement than having attended FGR and also choosing to send your children here to experience the same education and opportunities.

“I am happily married to the love of my life, Jennifer. We have been together for 10 years and married for seven. Jennifer works with Michigan Medicine as a nurse. We have two wonderful children, **Ava Paron '23** who also graduated from FGR and is now a sophomore at MSU and our son Jack who is six, loves playing soccer, and attends St. Paul school in Ann Arbor.”

Exemplifying FGR’s goal of developing lifelong learners, Butman possesses a deep love of local history and architecture, “We are renovating an old house and have been working on it since 2018. I am an architecture and design nerd. Michigan has always been a force for design, especially during the mid-twentieth century. Mid-century modernism is something both Jen and I appreciate, and we help to preserve that history through our home and objects we collect.”

In addition to their contributions to the FGR car raffle, Gene Butman Ford sponsored a hole-in-one contest at the 2024 Deacon Lawrence Annual Golf Outing. A Ford Bronco lease was the prize for anyone who could hit a hole-in-one on the 17th hole!

Butman is an alumnus who has chosen to return and share his time and gifts with FGR, and he hopes other alumni will join him in doing the same.

“The experience has been rewarding,” says Butman. “The faculty, students, parents, and alumni that are involved at FGR are excited and driven to see the school succeed. Enrollment is strong and we want to continue that trend. Catholic education is more important than ever. FGR produces young people that are driven, empathetic, and have a moral compass that our great nation needs more than ever. They are the leaders of the future, and we need to support them. Whether you donate your time or resources, it is one of the most rewarding gestures you will experience.”



5TH ANNUAL DEACON LAWRENCE GOLF OUTING

Held on July 19, 2024, at Rolling Meadows Golf Course, or "The Home Course", as Dcn. Dave Lawrence called it, more than 80 golfers enjoyed a day of golf, food, fun, and prizes. While no one made a hole in one on the 17th hole to win a Bronco donated by Tom Butman '05 and Gene Butman Ford, it was a great day in support of Athletics at FGR and in memory of Deacon Lawrence, who passed away in July of 2020, and the lessons he provided as coach, teacher, deacon, friend, father, and husband.



Golfers warm up on the putting green before the 5th Annual Deacon Lawrence Golf outing begins.



Matthew Labbé '18 and **Brendan LaFave '23** look confident about their chances to win the tournament.



Two participants focus as they line up their next shot from the fairway.



FGR staff and volunteers check in golfers and sell raffle tickets.



Brendan LaFave '23, **Matthew Labbe '18**, Andy Hager, John Wright



Rylee Bates, **Nic Wilder '16**, Ben French, George Smolboski



Alex McGlade '25, **Caleb Renfer '24**, **Luke Buonerba '24**, **John Putlock '25**



Jim Knittel Jr., FGR President Joe Jordano, Jimmy Knittel III

Q&A

WITH DR. ALAINA De BIASI '08



This past spring, Father Gabriel Richard was honored to welcome Dr. Alaina De Biasi '08 back to FGR as she presented to our law class on her work with local, state, and federal entities to develop new and better policies aimed at violence prevention. Dr. De Biasi is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Wayne State University.

As one example of her work, De Biasi explained how her team was better able to identify and map high crime areas in Detroit by directly interviewing residents. Using this information, it was decided to increase the police presence in those specific areas, resulting in a drastic reduction in violent crime. After her visit, we asked De Biasi a few questions about how her time at FGR started her on the journey that led to her current rewarding and fascinating work.

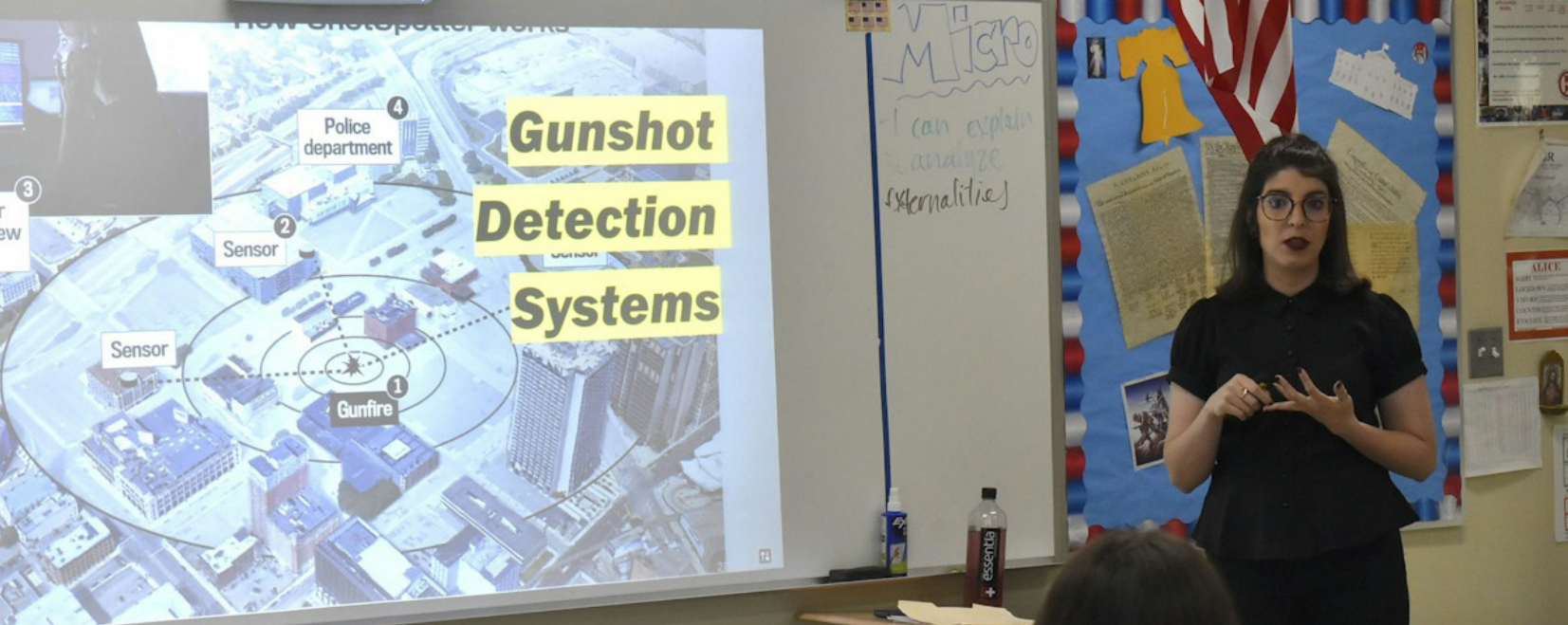
You're an FGR alum - class of 2008. What do you remember or value most about your high school experience at FGR?

FGR helped me develop a strong work ethic. My time as an FGR student not only prepared me for undergraduate studies but also laid a strong foundation for my success in graduate school.

Do you see any seeds that were planted at FGR bearing fruit in your life today?

Undoubtedly, the seeds of strong work ethic and faith sown during my years at FGR continue to bear fruit in my life today. The rigorous academic environment and values instilled at FGR shaped not only my approach to work but also my commitment to integrity and excellence.

After FGR, you attended University of Michigan-Dearborn, University of Maryland, and Michigan State University. What courses of study and extra-curricular activities did you pursue at those institutions and how did you decide to follow that academic path?



As an FGR student, I took a forensic course taught by Mrs. Cynthia Duncan. That course opened my mind to careers in Criminal Justice. During my time at UM-Dearborn, I completed three internships in various aspects of the Criminal Justice field. These internships helped me decide which path in Criminal Justice to pursue. Early on, I recognized my passion for conducting applied research that could inform policy and practice. So, I applied to graduate school. I was admitted at the University of Maryland, where I started my PhD journey, and completed my PhD at Michigan State University. I would encourage students interested in Criminal Justice to pursue internships and, if they are interested in research, to reach out to professors to see if they have any opportunities to support their research projects.

You're now an Assistant Professor at Wayne State University in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. Can you tell us about your work there? What is the most rewarding part of your job?

I conduct research in violence prevention, with a focus on gun violence. I work with law enforcement agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of their violence prevention initiatives and to build programs aimed at violence reduction. The most rewarding part of my job is being involved in initiatives that significantly reduce violence. I also enjoy working collaboratively with residents in neighborhoods most affected by violence to develop violence prevention strategies. In addition to

my research, I also teach and greatly enjoy mentoring students.

Tell us a bit about yourself today. What sort of personal interests do you have? Tell us a bit about yourself, your hobbies, interests, family, etc.

My husband and I just celebrated our eight-year anniversary. We enjoy playing board games with friends and working in our garden. I also love doing activities with Francis, my 120 lb dog. He has taken two courses in nose work and enjoys doing agility in the summers.

You recently came back to FGR to give a guest lecture in one of our law classes. Thank you for taking the time to do that! How was that experience?

Thank you for having me! I enjoy opportunities to share my research and provide mentorship to students. It was a great experience, and I would love to return!

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I often attribute my smooth transition to college to my high school experience. Attending FGR not only provided me with a strong academic foundation but also instilled values that guided me through the challenges of higher education. Mrs. Duncan's forensic class, in particular, was pivotal in shaping my career path.

CLASS NOTES



FGR SIBLING VOCATIONS

Sr. Amaris Salata, FSE '08 took her final vows with the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist in Meridian, CT on May 26. Just a short time before, on May 11, her brother **Dcn. Christian Salata '10**, was ordained to the transitional diaconate in the Diocese of Lansing.



Joe Fitzgerald '17 returned to his position teaching math at FGR in April after deployment with the Air National Guard. FGR President, Joe Jordano was honored to receive an American Flag that was flown over the skies of Syria on a combat sortie aboard an F-16C+ Fighting Falcon assigned to the 119th Fighter Squadron on behalf of FGR. We are grateful for Fitzgerald's service to our country and to our school. In addition to serving as a member of the 127th Security Forces Squadron at Selfridge Air National Guard Base and teaching math, Joe now serves as Director of Households at FGR. In March 2023, Fitzgerald completed the "10 toughest days in the Army" to become the only member of the 127th Wing to earn the Army's Air Assault Badge in recent memory.



REUNITED!

The Class of 2014 came together for their 10th reunion on the Detroit Princess Riverboat.



The Class of 1979 met for their 45-year class reunion. Members of the class had drinks outside at The Session Room on Friday night and gathered again on Saturday to tour the old school building and enjoy dinner together at Tice's Pizza House.

FGR/ST. THOMAS ALUMNI LEGENDS: DENNIS FITZGERALD '54

A graduate of the Class of 1954, Joseph Dennis Fitzgerald (March 13, 1936 – January 14, 2001) was a Pan American Games Gold Medalist; MVP of the 1960 Michigan Wolverines football team; a professional and university football coach; a U. S. Marine; and he is a Father Gabriel Richard Alumni Legend! Read more about Dennis Fitzgerald online at FGRHS.org/news.

This article was first published in our *Legacies* e-newsletter, which is sent four times per year. To ensure that you don't miss an issue, visit www.fgrhs.org/alumni to update your contact information and provide an email address.

ALUMNI SIBLINGS TAKE THE FIELD

The second annual Alumni Lacrosse Game in July gathered alumni of the Lacrosse program together to compete against current varsity players. The lacrosse program is certainly a family affair as evidenced by the number of siblings who played together. Kristi Fitzgerald (mother of two lacrosse alums) Photography captured these photos of brothers at the game.



Eli '24 and Ian '27 Everts



Joe '17 and Mikey Fitzgerald '22



Ciarelli Brothers (Alfonso, Angelo '24, Vincenzo '22, Dominic '18, Joseph '16, Antonio '14)



Sean '23 and Riley Cesarini '20



Chris '13 and Alex Wilder '17



Landon '24 and Preston Polcyn '21

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI'S MESSAGE



My first few months at Father Gabriel Richard High School as Director of Alumni Relations have been some of the most rewarding and energizing months of my professional life. It's been an absolute pleasure to meet so many incredible St. Thomas and FGR alumni and to learn more about the exciting things that our alumni are accomplishing!

Whenever possible, I'm looking for opportunities for alumni to connect with the current life of the school. In this issue of *Legacies*, you'll read about alumni artists, professors, businessmen, coaches, and teachers who are coming back to FGR to share their insights and gifts.

If you're an FGR alum, we want to celebrate your achievements and milestones! Send us new baby photos, wedding announcements, news about vocations, and details about professional awards and achievements.

I'm also thrilled to help FGR alumni connect with one another:

All alumni are invited to our Advent Evening of Reflection on **Friday, December 13 at 7:00 pm**. Take a break from the busy holiday season to pray and spend time with God and with the FGR community.

We're hosting a **3-on-3 alumni basketball tournament on Saturday, December 28 at noon**. Do you and your friends think you can take home the trophy? Be sure to register your team as soon as possible. A QR code for the registration link is available on the back cover of this magazine.

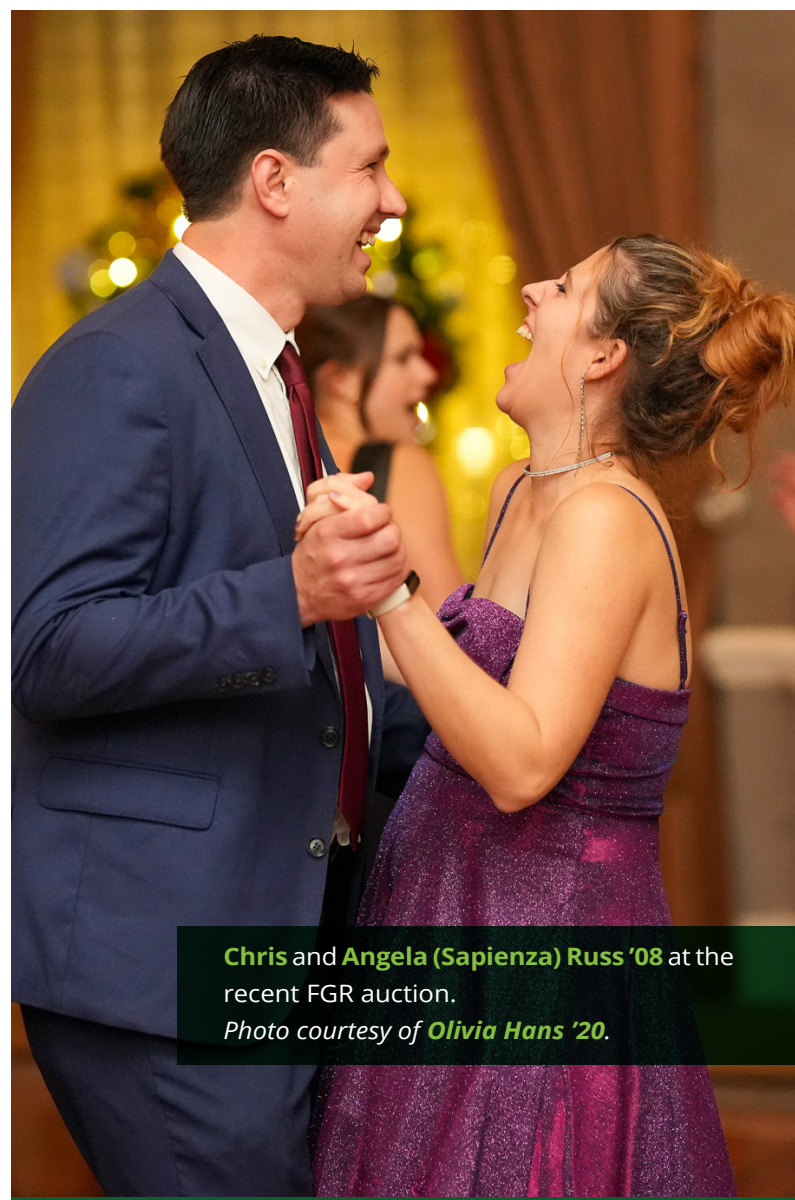
We already have a date saved for the next **Deacon Lawrence Annual Golf Outing**! This event aims to honor the memory of Deacon Lawrence and the lessons he provided as coach, teacher, deacon, friend, father, and husband. The 2025 outing will take place on **Friday, July 18**. Be sure to save the date.

I also want to hear from alumni who are planning class reunions! I can help you get in contact with other alumni, and FGR would love to provide the space for your class event. My email is cruss@fgrhs.org, please reach out anytime. I would love to meet and hear your ideas for how we can build a stronger alumni community here at FGR.

May God bless St. Thomas and FGR Alumni. Go Irish!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Russ".

Director of Alumni Relations
734.358.4598
cruss@fgrhs.org



Chris and Angela (Sapienza) Russ '08 at the recent FGR auction.
Photo courtesy of **Olivia Hans '20**.



Fr. Gabriel Richard High School
4333 Whitehall Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734.662.0496 | www.fgrhs.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

FIRST ANNUAL 3-ON-3 CHRISTMAS CLASSIC ALUMNI BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Saturday, December 28 | 12:00 noon

TRIVIA NIGHT PRESENTED BY BOOSTER CLUB

Saturday, February 22, 2025

FGR DRAMA CLUB PRESENTS:

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Thursday, March 27 – Saturday, March 29, 2025 at 7:00 pm

Sunday, April 6 at 2:00 pm

Milan High School Auditorium

200 Big Red Dr., Milan, MI 48160

42ND ANNUAL AUCTION

Saturday, November 15, 2025

St. John Resort in Plymouth



For details and to register for these and other events, please visit fgrhs.org/events.

RECONNECT AND REUNITE

Visit fgrhs.org/alumni to update your contact information and share news. Contact Chris Russ, Director of Alumni Relations, at 734-662-0496 ext. 212 if you would like assistance in planning your reunion.



Get St. Thomas/FGR news delivered to your email inbox four times a year! Visit fgrhs.org/alumni to sign up for the new *Legacies* email newsletter.

FGR Misson

Father Gabriel Richard High School, a Catholic school community, exists to build up the Body of Christ through the intellectual and spiritual formation of its students. Rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, FGR cultivates in each student a sense of awe in response to the beauty of truth. Strengthened by the Sacraments, students are equipped to live at the service of others through academic excellence, intentional discipleship, creativity and sportsmanship.

Core Values

Love God. Love Others. Love Learning. Pursue Excellence.

