

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

AT GRAND TRAVERSE AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



ONE DAY AT A TIME

GTACS REMAINS FOCUSED ON STUDENTS, THROUGHOUT COVID-19 CHALLENGES

Little did we know that six months after the jubilant grand opening of our new elementary school we would be forced to close our doors due to a global pandemic. In mid-March, teachers quickly made the switch to online learning while parents and students became experts in Zoom, Moodle, and other distance learning technologies.

In August, the school announced plans for in-person classes for all grade levels. It was a blessing to see students and teachers together in classrooms again and we celebrated each moment of relative normalcy. The high school endured another shutdown in November 2020, but returned to in-person learning in January 2021.

Through it all, we have tried to keep our focus on Jesus, on caring for one another, and on accepting each day as a gift from our Creator.

ABOVE: On what would have been the last day of school, Immaculate Conception staff members organized a farewell parade with inspirational posters. It was great to see the students' smiling faces before break!



It was difficult to get used to seeing students wearing masks but the prevailing attitude at school has been, "we'll do whatever it takes" to be together in school.

We look forward to the day when smiling faces are everywhere once again.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

What I will remember most about the past 9 months is that you can still see how beautiful a student's smile is, even with a mask on.

Casey DiMercurio
Immaculate Conception

Our culture has always been for staff to step up and help each other, no questions asked, in any situation. It is simply a way of life. With the onslaught of the pandemic and all the many ways it can mess up a day and then some, the culture remains the same--help where and when you can, with great joy.

Leana Schlueter
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



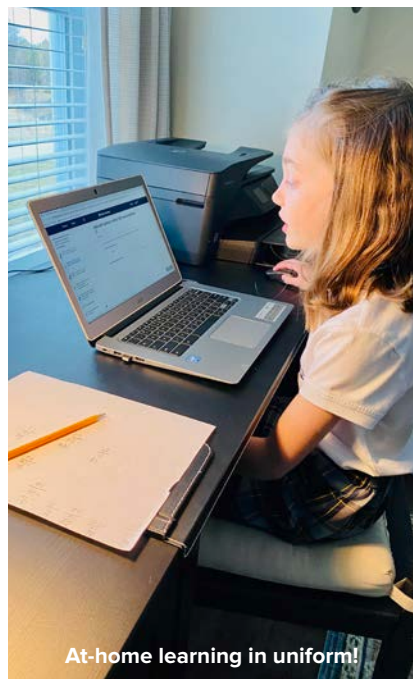
High school schedule in November



Showing our seniors some love



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton students



At-home learning in uniform!



Socially distanced middle school Mass

The thing I will remember most about the pandemic is the day we were preparing to go virtual for the first time. It seemed so surreal and historic. I made my students in my last hour of the day (who were understandably squirrely) take a moment to let it sink in what was happening. We had never in my lifetime--and maybe in anyone's life-time--done anything this extreme for public health. The kids were talking about how it felt like the "Zombie Apocalypse". Definitely one of the strangest days of teaching ever.

Liana Dunlop, St. Francis

When our school closed on March 13, I never thought that would have been our last day of in-person learning. I learned how to "Zoom," do morning announcements from my home and upload to YouTube. The loss of seeing children daily in school was something I never imagined could have happened in my career.

Maureen DeYoung,
Immaculate Conception



High school reopens January 2021



Class of 2020 yard signs

CONNECTED CLASSROOMS ARE A HIGH-TECH HELP

At the beginning of the 2020 school year, GTACS began a quiet initiative to advance the virtual learning technology that would enable us to educate children in all circumstances. With support from donor families, we have invested in e-learning platforms that are on par with those at major universities. This has included new teacher laptops, software, cameras, and large screen monitors for classrooms in every building. At a time when electronics were nearly as scarce as Charmin, that was no small feat!

The new systems will be helpful now, while we are contending with the impact of the current pandemic, but also in the years to come as we find new ways to utilize this advanced technology.

TOP PHOTO: Mrs. Thuent teaches science to high school students via Zoom during the mandatory closure of the high school from November to January. **BOTTOM PHOTO:** Fifth grade teacher Casey DiMercurio teaches both students at home and in the classroom simultaneously.



WELCOME, BISHOP HURLEY FAREWELL TO BISHOP RAICA



LEFT: Bishop Hurley visits classrooms in September.

In March of 2020, Pope Francis appointed the Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley, Bishop Emeritus of Grand Rapids, as Apostolic Administrator for the Diocese of Gaylord, just in time to shepherd us through the pandemic!

Our fifth Bishop, Steven J. Raica, served our Diocese from 2014 to 2020 before being assigned to the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama. Bishop Raica was quoted as saying, “Even in the middle of a pandemic, Christ is still the center of everything for us,” he said. “He has not abandoned us. To be open to where Christ is leading us, even with the ups and downs we face in life, is the direction we’re called to.”

OUR PATRON PARISHES

Christ the King | Immaculate Conception
St. Francis of Assisi | St. Joseph | St. Patrick

STANDING STRONG

Many seniors last year cited participation in the March for Life in Washington, DC, as one of their favorite memories of St. Francis High School. Sadly, the 2021 trip had to be canceled along with the 8th Grade trip to Washington, D.C. Kairos – another beloved tradition – will take place with modifications.



ABOVE: The majority of the St. Francis junior class attended the March for Life in Washington, DC, in 2020.

A PEACH OF A PRODUCTION

The St. Francis February 2020 musical of “James and the Giant Peach” was an audience hit and fun for the whole family!

“Bye Bye Birdie” will be gracing the Kohler Stage in March. Previously performed in 1982 and 2010, this show has particular meaning as it is a tribute to Jordan Blodgett ('10) who lost his battle with osteosarcoma in April 2020. Jordan's mother, Misha (McCormick) Blodgett ('82) was in the 1982 show and is co-director of this year's production. “Gray skies are going to clear up, put on a happy face!”



ARTS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

A scholarship has been established in Jordan Blodgett's memory to be given yearly to a graduating senior involved in the musical. For more information, contact Maureen DeYoung at mdeyoung@gtacs.org.



THE BAND PLAYS ON

MUSIC PROGRAM UNDETERRED BY CHALLENGES

The pandemic effectively silenced the GTACS Band Program for the spring and summer of 2020. However, things took a positive turn with the return to face-to-face instruction in September. High school and middle school band instruction took place outside.

The St. Francis Marching Band took over the old Holy Angels playground for their practice space and in no time morning rehearsals began to attract the interest of the surrounding neighborhood so much so that the band instituted Friday Sidewalk Shows. The band also gave a rousing performance in the elementary gym for all the 5th grade classrooms. Eventually, the Marching Band was fortunate to be permitted to attend four football games, performing on the field for Homecoming, Parents Night and a particularly memorable Spooky Music Show for the first playoff game on Halloween Night.

ALTOGETHER BEAUTIFUL

Select Ensemble Choir received a Superior rating at District Solo and Ensemble in February. Members of both St. Francis Choirs as well as members of the cast of “James and the Giant Peach” combined efforts to create a virtual performance of “You Will Be Found” as a dedication to the memory of Jordan Blodgett. Students also made a socially distanced recording in the fall. Eight students from Select Ensemble participated in a virtual solo and ensemble in November/December and are awaiting their results.





HOMECOMING

With COVID-19 restrictions in place, it was not certain that the Homecoming game would be possible. But in the end, it not only happened but it seemed almost “normal.” It was great to have the marching band, the cheerleaders, the fans, and the team together for Homecoming.

HOMECOMING COURT

HELEN LUDKA
CHARLIE HARPER

SEVILLE TARRANT
CONNOR MCINTYRE

HAILEY MILLER
MICHAEL WEITZEL

HALEY SOTO
JOSEPH FREUNDL
QUEEN KILEE MILLAR
KING BRYSON ELLALASINGHAM

HALL OF FAME

Nominations are being accepted
at www.gtacs.org/about/hall-of-fame/.

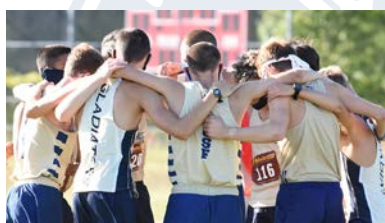
GLADIATOR ATHLETES GO THE DISTANCE

PANDEMIC WREAKS HAVOC ON SCHEDULE BUT NOT SPIRIT

The phrase, “moving target,” took on a whole new meaning this year for GTACS Athletic Director Aaron Biggar. What started in March as “three weeks to flatten the curve” became a total school shutdown for the balance of the school year, and resulted in spring sports being canceled entirely.

Everyone who participated in fall sports could add “jumping through hoops” to their training regimen, as protocols evolved numerous times and schedules were set, only to be dismantled due to quarantining team members or new sets of guidelines. Schools and coaches worked extremely hard to see their athletes finish what they had begun.

NFL Hall of Famer Mike Singletary is quoted as saying, “Do you know what my favorite part of the game is? The opportunity to play.” That is a philosophy now shared by many of our high school athletes as they have been handed a new appreciation for each match or game.



2019/2020 WINTER SPORTS

Bay Bay Reps Hockey made it to Regional finals
Gladiator Girls Basketball lost in Conference Finals
Gladiator Boys Basketball season was canceled
before Conference Final
Gladiator Wrestler Gavin Wilmoth made it to States
Downhill Skiing: Boys won Regional,
placed 3rd in State

2020 SPRING SPORTS CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19

2020 FALL SPORTS

Gladiator Boys Tennis finished 4th in State
Gladiator Boys and Girls Cross Country won Regionals
Gladiator Boys Cross Country placed 3rd at States
Gladiator Girls Cross Country placed 13th at States
Gladiator runner Zealand Tarrant was All-State
Gladiator Volleyball made it to Regional Finals
Sabres Soccer lost in the District Finals to Elk Rapids
Triton Swim team placed 2nd at Conference Finals
Gladiator Football were State Championship runners-up

The sports schedule is available on mhsaa.com.

TRADITIONS

We preserved many special events during this unusual year, with a May crowning of Mary, TC Fire Department Toy Drive, and All Saints Day parade! We are thankful to have so many time-honored traditions at our schools.



The average of the
best ACT scores for the
Class of 2020 was an amazing

26.3

ALUMNI NEWS AND NOTES



Ordination of Father Maximilian Hofmann

Father Hofmann was ordained to the holy priesthood by the Archbishop of Berlin on June 13, 2020. Father Max

credits his experiences as a St. Francis High School exchange student – particularly the March for Life and Kairos retreats in 2008 – for opening his heart to a priestly vocation. He hopes to celebrate Mass in Traverse City in the summer of 2021.

After 26.5 years of being a Police Officer/Detective, **Michael Kalbleich '88** retired from the Kentwood Police Department after sustaining injuries on the job. He wishes his St. Francis family well.

In April 2020, **Kristin (Coil) Bauman '96**, a CRNA for Grand Traverse Anesthesia Group, and her husband Matt became part of a start-up company, Freshwater Innovations, inspired to help save healthcare providers and patients as well as help stop the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. They have launched a brand new personal protection device that will protect healthcare providers and patients, becoming available January 2021.

Maggie Maasberg '99 was recently promoted to lieutenant colonel in the US Army Corps of Engineers. Maggie is stationed as a protocol officer at Camp Smith, Hawaii. Prior to her transfer, Maggie was executive officer for the 3-364th Brigade Engineer Battalion for two years at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.

As an elementary school counselor, **Katy (Jenkins) Steinbach '10** saw a need for making social-emotional learning more fun and accessible for children and their families and therefore created the Pip and Charley book series. "Pip and Charley", written and illustrated by Katy, is a two-part book series that follows a shy bee, Charley, and an outgoing Iguana, Pip, as they navigate friendship and problem solving.

Madalena B. Piedmonte '19 was recently elected President of the Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi at Michigan State University. The Chapter was the first woman's society at Michigan State and today continues the

tradition of empowering women on campus. Madalena has been admitted to the Eli Broad College of Business and plans to major in Finance.

Jenna (Coil) McRae '04 is a CRNA, working in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Jamison Coil '00 sold his company, Garage Pals, and is now in a partnership turning an apartment complex into condos.

Lizzy (Carney) Many '06, accepted a position at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Middle School, which she absolutely loves.

Julia (Dryden) Burciaga '04 is an account executive with RXBAR which was recently acquired by Kellogg Co. She and her husband, Robert, recently moved to Chicago, where they will welcome baby #2 in June 2021.

Mariel Dryden '06 will be completing her sixth year teaching in Shanghai, China this upcoming January. Mariel works for Soong Ching Ling International School and will receive her Masters in Education in June 2021.

Helene Dryden '09 has been living in Seattle since 2014, where she is a project manager for EVO, a leading online retailer of outdoor gear and fashion apparel.

Bailey Ray '12 graduated with honors from Wayne State School of Medicine in 2020. Dr. Ray is currently interning at Froedlert Hospital in Milwaukee.

An article about **James Wegener '66** appeared in Gather Veterans magazine (Jan/Feb 20) regarding his extraordinary commitment to veterans.

BIRTHS

James Swisher, February 20, 2019 – a son born to **Betsy (Brick '04)** and Tommy Corbett

Ava Claire, August 4, 2019 – a daughter born to **Julia (Dryden '04)** and Robert Burciaga

Theodore James, August 12, 2019 – a son born to **Morgan (McCardel '09)** and Sanjay Ahluwalia

Audrey Paige, October 19, 2019 - a daughter born to **Kate (Potthoff '03)** and **Vince ('03) Prusick**

Sean Patrick, December 17, 2019 – a son born to Rachael and **Brett ('04) Milliman**

Bennett Oliver, January 26, 2020 – a son born to Shelby and **Dan ('11) Barnes**

Fritz Keanu, March 2, 2020 – a son born to Victoria (Tori) and **Patrick "PJ" ('03) Heintz**

Louis Robert, February 5, 2020 – a son born

to **Betsy (Brick '04)** and Tommy Corbett
John W. Bailey V, March 25, 2020 – a son born to Ashley and **John W. Bailey IV ('04)**

Kollins Carol, March 21, 2020 – a daughter born to **Nicole (Droste '04)** and Kellan Walsh

Simon Fisher, May 2, 2020 – a son born to **Meghan (Fisher '03)** and Michael Kinney

Willow Olivia, June 10, 2020 – a daughter born to **Leah (Mawby '09)** and Tom Walbridge

Charlie Ann-Marie, July 7, 2020 – a daughter born to Melody and **Nick ('01) Kiella**

Simon Patrick, August 13, 2020 – a son born to **Lauren (Kiella '07)** and Erik Scanlon

Florence Rose, October 12, 2020 – a daughter born to **Ayriel (Mawby '07)** and Nick Parmer

Liza Sullivan, October 16, 2020 – a daughter born to **Layne (Kiella '04)** and Zach Wood

Boden Alexander, November 2, 2020 - a son born to Natalie and **Chad ('05) Britten**

Dylan Anthony, November 4, 2020 – a son born to Kadra and **Troy ('05) Kierczynski**

Luca Joseph, November 25, 2020 – a son born to **Julia (Banducci '07)** and Jonathan Ottarson

Jonah Devi, December 5, 2020 – a son born to Amanda and **Marc ('10) Kanitz**

Maria Catherine and Lucy Eileen, December 21, 2020 – twin daughters born to **Mary Emma (Knape '05)** and John LaCross



Ordination of Father Ben Martin

The priestly ordination of Ben Martin took place at St. Francis Church on February 20 with many high school students present. Fr. Ben is currently serving as associate pastor at Immaculate Conception.

MARRIAGES

Jenna (Coil '04) and Michael McRae, September 1, 2019

Stephanie and **Bryan ('07) Currie**, June 30, 2020

Hannah and **Brian ('07) Hunt**, August 15, 2020

Erin (Carney '04) and **Clark ('08) Gingras**, September 5, 2020

Isabelle (Reamer '16) and Joseph ('14) Summers, June 20, 2020

Kirsten and **Brady ('09) Mikula**, September 19, 2020

Danielle (Thornton '04) and Sam Pasinski, December 4, 2020

ALUMNI DEATHS

Patricia Lou Wolf '46
Martin J. Ghastin '48
Clara Belle McManus '48
Patricia R. Gignilliat '49
William J. Cassier '50
Marita Ann Bellow '51
Philip D. Weatherholt '53
James Olson, '53
Ann L. Schaub '55
Donald Edward Ludka '59
Carolyn Carroll '59
Cecilia Weber '60
Gary Osga '61
Richard Francis Tafelsky '64
Janet M. Blake '65
James Wegener '66
Patrick Blaine Kildee '66
Larry J. Smith '66
Frank Ludka II '67
Linda Pltcher '68
Leonard F. O'Brien '71
Gregory J. Carlisle '71
Paul Clous '79
Gregory Whitten '80
Timothy Keenan '81
Dennis T. Gavin '81
Jeremy A. Thomas '92
Jordan Blodgett '10

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Katherine (Mary Katherine Murphy), a long-time pastoral minister and a Sister of Mercy for 74 years, died peacefully on October 4, 2020. Sister Katherine began her vocation to religious life when she was only 15 years old. She spent 34 years in service to St. Francis parish, and was a loyal fan of the Gladiators. Sister Katherine was laid to rest at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Southfield.

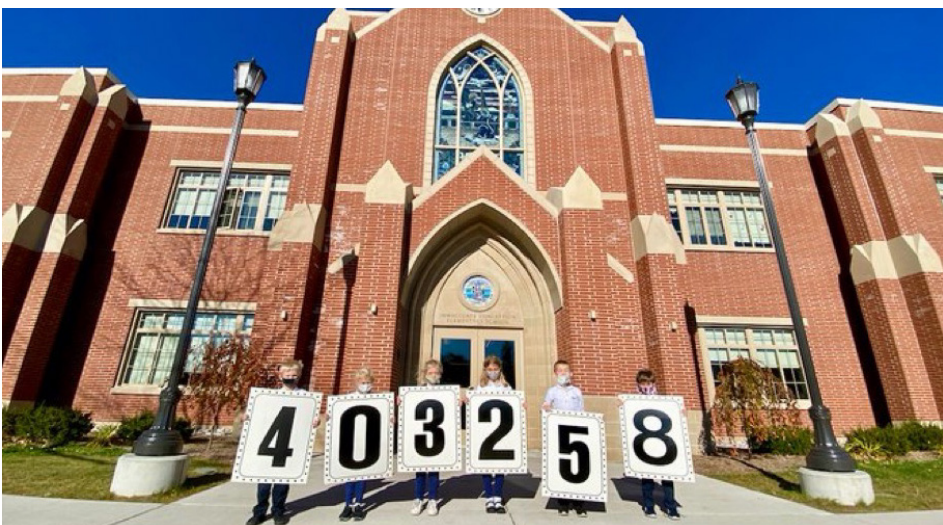
PLEASE SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Alumni news should be directed to
Linda Schell at lschell@gtacs.org.
Is your GLAD GRAD grown and flown?
Please send us their new contact information.

GLADHANDER 2020

SUPPORT CONTINUES DESPITE CHALLENGES

Organizers of this year's Gladhander developed contingency event plans for both in-person and virtual fundraisers. In the end, the in-person event (the "Hoe-down") was canceled, but fortunately, there were plans in place for an at-home version (the "Hootenanny") which included a barbecue-themed meal and party props. Meanwhile, a new online auction provided a convenient way for at-home supporters to bid on items, and the dedicated raffle sales team racked up a near-record number of ticket sales. The final result was a solid \$403,258 raised!



\$500 winners

Julie Erhardt, Barb Grewe, Jacob Schaub, Jacklyn Clever, Tom Read, Tim Brick, and Amanda Hemgesberg

\$1,000 winners

Mike and Mary Surgalski, Dan Stoudt, Sr., Susan Pennell, and Steven Oklat.

Grand prize winner

Joan Ferrari of Elk Rapids



Class of 2020 commencement exercises took place at Turtle Creek Pit Spitters Stadium.





GRAND TRAVERSE AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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SAVE THE DATES

3/12-14, 3/19-21
High School Musical

5/20
Faith in our Future
Fundraising Breakfast

5/20
Festival of the Arts

5/21
All School Mass
Grandparents Day

5/26
Baccalaureate Mass

5/30
Graduation

6/04
Golf Classic

LEARN MORE

To learn more about our schools, please call (231) 946-8100 or visit our website, www.gtacs.org for a staff directory.



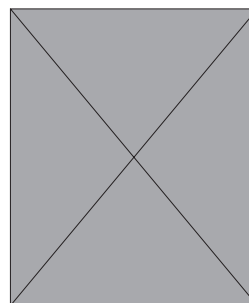
INDIVIDUALIZED

Catholic schools provide a personalized learning experience that fosters success



CHRIST-CENTERED

Catholic schools educate the whole child for a life of encounter with Jesus Christ.



WELCOMING

At Catholic schools, students feel safe, honored, and celebrated.



JOYFUL

Our school environment is filled with Christ's beauty, goodness, and truth.

