



SAINT JOHN NEUMANN  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

# ANNUAL FUND REPORT 2022-2023



*“Let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth.”*

*– I John 3:18*

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Dear

We hope this letter finds you doing well.

We are thrilled to kick off another school year and we are grateful for the blessing of our wonderful students and the many families, donors, and friends who support our school. One of the most special characteristics that defines our SJN family – and for which we consider ourselves most fortunate – is how incredibly generous our families, donors, and friends are. Every aspect of every student’s experience at SJN has been made possible and improved by selfless gifts of time, donations, love, and prayers. Finally, we are excited to present this year’s Annual Fund Report.

**What exactly is the Annual Fund?**

Annual Fund gifts are unrestricted funds directed where the need is greatest, creating opportunities for learning and discovery, providing scholarships for students who need them, and giving the school flexibility to take advantage of emerging opportunities and respond to unanticipated needs and challenges. Your support of the Annual Fund enables us to provide every student the highest quality education and faith development experience. An overwhelming number of families and donors give to our Annual Fund, for which we are very thankful. We ask you to prayerfully consider joining these families and donors, or continue to give if you have already done so.

**Every student benefits from the Annual Fund in the following two ways:**

1. The quality of education we provide all students today is **made possible in part by Annual Fund gifts made in the past.**
2. **Tuition alone does not cover the actual cost of any SJN student’s education** (as is the case at most Catholic schools). Therefore, Annual Fund gifts make a significant difference in bridging the gap between tuition and the actual cost of education... for every student.

Additionally, thanks to the support of generous donors, approximately 30% of SJNCS families receive some form of financial assistance in a given year, enabling us to fulfill our calling to provide a Catholic school education to those who could otherwise not afford it.

Again, thanks to the generous support of SJN families, donors, and friends, our culture of giving continues to grow, and as a result, our students continue to thrive.

We invite you to read the enclosed Annual Fund Report, and we ask that you continue to lift our work through your prayers and by making a gift to the Annual Fund. Thank you for your support, and thank you for helping us achieve St. John Neumann Catholic School’s mission to Serve God with loving hearts, Joyfully embrace our Catholic faith, and Nurture individual and academic excellence.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Fr. Joe Reed'.

Fr. Joe Reed  
Pastor

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Mrs. Kelly Mechelke, PhD'.

Dr. Kelly Mechelke  
Principal

# The Claude Melli Leadership Suite

Claude Melli, born to a farming family in Constantine, Algeria in 1929, enjoyed a long and prosperous career as an agronomist, farmer, and business owner. His aptitude for success in business was rooted in a strong work ethic, enthusiastic attitude, and a commitment to improving himself through education. In addition to his zest for entrepreneurship, Claude was passionate about his family, friends, travel, and a variety of interests that fulfilled his desire for a vibrant, active lifestyle. Claude passed away in December 2021, but his legacy endures through an endowment gifted to St. John Neumann Catholic School by Lydia Melli, his wife of 45 years.

Lydia is passionate about the lasting impact education can make on one's life, as it did for her and Claude. Growing up in Morocco, she, too, came from a farming family, and her mother was a teacher. Lydia studied to be a teacher in college and taught young girls in Morocco for a short period early in her life.

Shortly after Claude passed away, Lydia thought that a gift to St. John Neumann Catholic School would be a fitting tribute to him and a symbol of his belief in the everlasting value of education. She decided to establish an endowment that would provide financial assistance to students as well as resources for teachers' salaries and professional development. In recognition of this endowment gift, the school leadership suite has been named in memory of Claude.

"Claude was a firm believer, as am I, that education is the key that can unlock countless doors," said Lydia. "Education, and particularly the wonderful teachers we were blessed with in our lives, made a lasting impact on us and our family. My intentions with this gift are to remove barriers for students wishing to receive a Catholic school education, and to provide resources that will help SJNCS continue to recruit, retain, and develop the best possible teachers for its students."

Fr. Joe Reed, Pastor of St. John Neumann Catholic Church and School, said of the Claude Melli endowment, "One thing I love about this gift is that it supports the full spectrum of the educational experience, providing opportunity for both students and teachers to learn, grow, and thrive. The faculty, staff, and students of St. John Neumann are grateful for Lydia's thoughtfulness and generosity, and we are honored that our school leadership suite is now adorned with Claude's name and magnified by his legacy."



*Photo of the Claude Melli Leadership Suite, which was dedicated in July during a gathering of Melli family members and SJN parish and school representatives.*



To learn how you can give to St. John Neumann Catholic Church or School, please contact Patrick Wade, Director of Development at [pwade@sjnknox.org](mailto:pwade@sjnknox.org) or (865)777-3410. To give online, please visit [sjnknox.org/give](https://sjnknox.org/give).

# FACTS & FIGURES

- Total Enrollment of 424 students PreK3-8th grade
- 23% People of Color (97)
- 16% Hispanic (66)
- 7 Languages spoken at homes
- 92% Catholic (391) / 8% Non-Catholic (33)
- 51% Female (218) / 49% Male (206)



## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. John Neumann Catholic School is to:

- S**erve God with loving hearts
- J**oyfully embrace our Catholic faith, and
- N**urture individual academic excellence



*"I'm both honored and proud to contribute to SJNCS. The administration, faculty, and staff are top notch. SJNCS is fulfilling its mission in educating children in mind, body, and spirit! They will be well equipped as they go forward to serve in this world!"*

*– Dr. Chris O'Rourke (SJNCS Donor)*

*"I love seeing the Sisters and giving them hugs."*

*– Eli Martinez (1st Grader)*



## A special thank you from SJNCS

Make a \$25 donation to the SJNCS Annual Fund and receive a commemorative SJN Christmas ornament (there is a limited supply).

This ornament was created by an artist in Haiti (Makenson, who is in this photo). The funds used to purchase the ornaments help support Makenson and his family.

The ornament is metallic and made from recycled materials; it is approximately 3 inches x 4 inches.



*Free gift with  
\$25 donation*

Donors will pick up their ornament(s) at the school office. *Deadline to participate is December 11th (or while supplies last)!*

## Helping keep our children safe



***Thank you to all  
our donors.***

Many donors made contributions last year to increase our funding for a daily, full-time officer from the Knoxville County Sheriff's Office.



# Welcome, Dr. Kelly Mechelke



My name is Kelly Mechelke. I'm honored to be the principal at St. John Neumann Catholic School (SJNCS). I come to you with 20 years' experience in education. I have been a teacher, curriculum coordinator, principal, president and more on my career journey that has prepared and led me to SJNCS. Our Catholic faith is a cherished gift I received from my parents and have loved making it not only a part of my life, but my career as well.



My belief and investment in Catholic education was also a part of my family life. Both of my sons attended Catholic School from preschool through high school. My husband and I enjoy the beauty that God has made by riding our motorcycles and hiking in almost all of our beautiful 50 United States. This riding is what has led us to fall in love with East TN.



As I look forward to this new school year, the staff and I are working to ensure an excellent education filled with rigor and joy continues at SJNCS. I believe in educating the whole child, mind, body, & spirit. We are blessed that we can incorporate faith in all the learning so our SJNCS students are prepared to be leaders during high school and beyond.



The families and staff here have impressed me with their dedication to our student body. It takes all of us to ensure that the students are ready to embrace the world and lead us to an excellent future. I appreciate the "team" work between home and school in this community. I look forward to getting to know all of you.

## Fundraising

**Thank you to all our “Off to the Races” Derby Auction and Mustang Mania donors!**

Our two premier annual fundraisers are the “Off to the Races” Derby Auction (for grown-ups) and Mustang Mania (for students). The funds raised from the two events in 2023 were combined to purchase Chromebooks for the elementary school and a brand new, integrated sound system for the gym.



**\$68,000**

Just over \$68,000 was raised at the 2023 “Off to the Races” Derby Auction. The funds raised are a result of ticket sales, sponsorships, donation of auction items, and the “Raise the Paddle” feature.



**\$42,000**

Students and donors contributed just over \$42,000 during the 2023 Mustang Mania event. Mustang Mania is a day full of fun activities and the culmination of a variety of fundraising contests in which students participate.

*“We’re so grateful for the SJN teachers who not only provide an excellent education for Annie and Owen, but also lead them on a path that will impact them for the rest of their lives.”*  
– Lucas and Jenny Moss (Jenny is an SJN school nurse)







*“My favorite thing about SJN is the community. You cannot walk into the building without seeing a warm smile and feeling welcomed.”  
– Reagan Marlowe (8th Grader)*



# Student Giving



Throughout the school year, SJN students give generously to a variety of charitable causes. Some examples of charities our students have supported include the SJN St. Vincent de Paul Society, LaFollette Food Life Services, Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Charities

of East TN, 2nd Harvest Food Bank, and Children with Hair Loss.

Students provide this support through fundraising initiatives such as out of uniform days, penny wars, canned food drives, and more.



*“As a student, St. John Neumann Catholic School was special to me because I always felt a part of a community where I was surrounded by love. Now as a teacher, SJN is special because I get to return that same love and share my faith alongside the most positive, supportive, and caring community!” – Ms. Mary Iverson (SJNCS Alumna and 1st Grade Teacher)*





*“We have found a true community in SJNCS. Our kids have grown not only academically but in faith as well. We love supporting our school and continuing to forge lasting friendships.”*  
*– Jennifer and Jonathan Dzermejko (Jennifer is the SJNCS PTMO President)*



*“We love having our 5th and 1st grader at SJN because we believe in the mission of the school and have seen what a loving and encouraging community it has provided for our whole family. We’re looking forward to all of the great experiences to come!”*  
*– Ben and Melissa Barnett (Melissa is the new school Athletic Director)*

# DONORS & SPONSORS



## *St. John Neumann Society (\$5,000 or more)*

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## Mustang Circle (\$100-\$499)

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Megan and Matt Besche – In Honor of Keira and Maia Besche	Gary and Christie Hubbard	Maria Senra
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This report honors the individuals who made contributions to the SJNCS Annual Fund between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023 (including donations to the SJNCS campus security initiative). This list only recognizes the Annual Fund donors; it does not include Mustang Mania donors, auction donors, or donors from any other initiatives. If your Annual Fund gift was omitted or inaccurately recognized, please accept our sincere apology. If you do notice such an oversight, please contact Patrick Wade at 865-777-3410 or [pwade@sjnknnox.org](mailto:pwade@sjnknnox.org) so we may correct our records.

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***See inside for details***

***Congratulations to the recent graduates of SJNCS!***



To learn about other ways to give to SJNCS, or for questions about the SJNCS Annual Fund, please contact Patrick Wade, Director of Development (and proud SJNCS Dad) 865-777-3410 or [pwade@sjnknox.org](mailto:pwade@sjnknox.org)

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***Thank you for your continued support!***