



SAINT JOHN NEUMANN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

SJN

ANNUAL
FUND
REPORT

2024-2025

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Dear

We hope the beginning of this school year has been positive and rewarding for you and your student(s). This is a particularly exciting time of the year for us and all our faculty and staff. It is also a time when we are especially filled with gratitude for the blessing of our wonderful students and for the many families, donors, and friends who support our school. One of the most special traits that defines our SJNCS family – 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 SJNCS 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 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, more than 35% 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 our mission to Serve God with loving hearts, Joyfully embrace our Catholic faith, and Nurture individual and academic excellence.

In Christ,

Fr. Mark Schuster
Pastor

Dr. Kelly Mechelke
Principal



Welcome to SJN



Welcome, Fr. Mark!

We were excited to welcome Fr. Mark Schuster to our school and parish as our pastor last April. Fr. Mark was ordained a priest on June 8, 2019, and he served as parochial vicar here at St. John Neumann from 2019-2021. Most recently, he served as pastor of St. Alphonsus Church in Crossville. We are grateful for the servant leadership Fr. Mark provides for our students, faculty, and staff.

"We have been blessed for our two sons to be a part of the St. John Neumann Catholic School community from the very beginning of their educational career. The environment at SJNCS was integral to develop both their minds and their hearts — shaping them into young men who are thoughtful, compassionate, and grounded in their faith."

— Chad and Tamara Benton (parents of SJNCS alumni)



St. John Neumann Catholic School

25-26 FACTS + FIGURES



ABOUT SJNCS

St. John Neumann Catholic School is a preschool through eighth grade parochial school within the Diocese of Knoxville, TN. The mission of SJNCS is to serve God with loving hearts, joyfully embrace our Catholic faith, and nurture individual and academic excellence.

STUDENTS

420

92% Catholic

PreK3 through 8th grade

Caucasian- 74%
Hispanic/Latino- 14%
Black/African American-2%
Asian/Pacific Islander-5%
Multi Racial- 4%
American Indian/Native American- >1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander->1%
Middle Eastern/North African->1%

20

Average class size K-8th

9:1 student/teacher ratio PreK

46

Approximately 13% percent of our K-8th students are receiving services due to a diagnosed learning difference.



Middle School students volunteer over **1,650** hours of service a year



Students consistently score higher than local public schools on standardized tests.

FACULTY / STAFF

60

Total number faculty and staff. 83% female, 88% Catholic.

67%

Certified Educators hold advanced degrees

All faculty hold a Bachelor's degree and 2 educators hold a PhD.

22

Afterschool coaching, club, and scouting volunteers are held by SJNCS faculty and staff



28 years of supporting academic, spiritual, and personal success



95% of our graduates attend Knoxville Catholic High School



15 SJNCS sponsored athletic teams plus Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) team opportunities



Our Catholic faith is the center of our school. Students have religion class daily, plus students in PreK3-3rd grade attend the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program once a week in our atrium. K-8th grade attend mass twice a week, and PreK students attend once a week. All students participate in monthly adoration and benediction. Prayer buddies meet quarterly.



39% of SJNCS families receive some form of financial assistance (including EFS and support from the Diocese and SJNCS)



Fine Arts remain an integral part of our curriculum. Every Middle School curriculum includes art plus one year long elective: Choir, Theater, 3D Art or STREAM. Band is offered as an after school elective. Elementary students have Art and Music class weekly.



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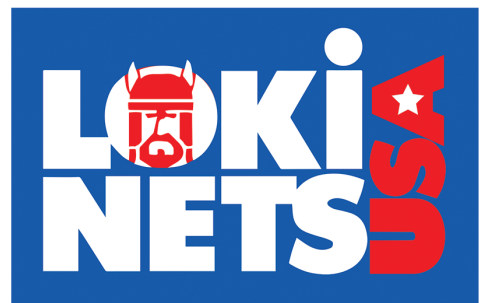
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Historic Groundbreaking



Left to right: Ms. Nygard, Fr. Mark Schuster, Cynthia Gallentine, Lydia Melli, Dr. Kelly Mechelke, Catherine R., and Bill Vinson

Construction has begun on the Lydia and Claude Melli building, a middle school expansion that will include state-of-the-art educational spaces and resources for current students and accommodate the school's growing student population. Additionally, the new expansion will provide space for parish youth and adult ministries to use. The building is made possible by a generous gift from Lydia Melli.

This 8,000 square-foot academic expansion will include a science lab, learning lab, collaborative study areas, a research STEM lab, and student gathering spaces. Construction is expected to be completed in fall of 2026. A special groundbreaking ceremony was held in July to commemorate the historic moment.

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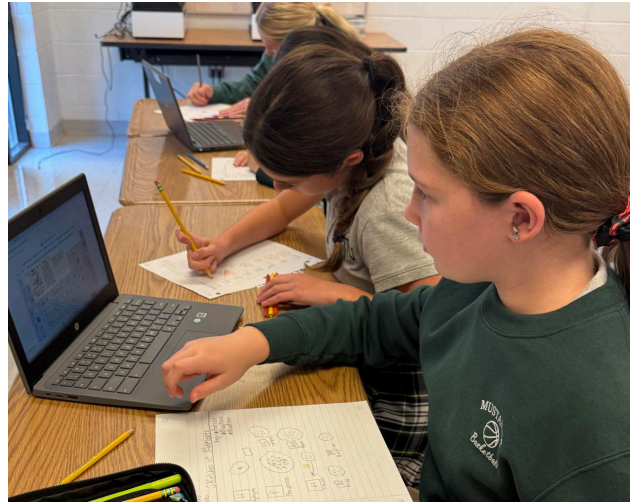


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"We love that SJNCS feels like family, where our children grow in their Catholic faith and are inspired to excel academically." - Patrick and Jessica Louthan (SJNCS parents)



"We couldn't be more grateful for the experience we have had at SJNCS! Our children are thriving academically, socially, athletically and most importantly, in their faith. As a former student (1997) it is special to see how the church and school have grown and to see former teachers and classmates have a hand in developing our children. We are so thankful for the SJNCS community!" – Tyler and Chloe Clark (SJNCS parents)



Gifts for Chromebooks



Thank you!



Last school year, Steve and Ali Dekanich, who are SJN parishioners and SJNCS grandparents, made a generous gift that enabled the school to purchase new Chromebooks. This year, the Dekaniches decided to do it again. Thanks to these two gifts, we were able to purchase a total of 114 new Chromebooks! This photo is of special gatherings we held last year and this year with the Dekaniches and a collection of students, when they opened the computer boxes and had a chance to say “thank you” in person.

“Whether it’s a greeting at the school entrance or various teachers and staff throughout the school knowing our daughter by name when we attend events, we love that St. John Neumann has a close sense of community. The teachers and staff are willing and eager to go the extra mile, and we are never in doubt that they care about our child’s well-being.”

- Will and Becca Brewer (SJNCS parents)



Special Events

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

The proceeds from these two events will help fund two projects related to the Lydia and Claude Melli building.

These projects include: 1) Enlarging the cul-de-sac outside the new building to accommodate pick-up and drop-off as well as additional recess space.

2) Adding a 1,400 square-foot covered patio with movable furniture to be used and enjoyed by students, teachers, and parish ministries.



\$96,000

Just over 96,000 was raised at the 2025 “Off to the Races” Derby Auction.



\$55,000

Students and donors contributed just over \$55,000 during the 2025 Mustang Mania event. Mustang Mania is a day full of fun activities, and it is the culmination of fundraising contests in which students participate.

“We are impressed by the support students are given by the teachers and staff. The students are gaining both an understanding of the material and a love for learning.” - Jeff and Lisa Atkinson (SJNCS parents)





"SJNCS has been a huge blessing to our family. Our kids have gained great role models and friends, who they then get to see worshipping at Mass on Sundays. And they bring home lessons about the faith that often teach us something new as well." – Cameron and Elizabeth Norris (SJNCS parents)



Student Giving



Throughout the year, students give generously to a variety of charitable causes (some of which are listed below), totaling several thousands of dollars in cash donations, food supplies, and other needs.

- **St. Vincent de Paul**
- **Samaritan Place**
- **Hurricane Relief for North Carolina**
- **Catholic Charities of East Tennessee**
- **LaFollette Food Life Services**
- **Catholic Charities Pregnancy Help Center**
- **Children with Hair Loss**

Students provide this support through fundraising initiatives such as out-of-uniform days, penny wars, canned food drives, and Mustang Give donations on Holy Days.

"David and I chose St. John Neumann Catholic school for our boys because we immediately felt welcomed into a place that matched our values and really looked at the well-being of every student. Only a few days at the school and most of the staff knew our boys by name!

We stayed because we truly feel the out-pouring of love from all the faculty and staff. Answering the call to teach science at SJN has been yet another blessing. The students here step up to the call for excellence and consistently demonstrate an amazing learning environment while maintaining a community that cares for each other." – Tara Cotten (SJNCS teacher and parent)





"My favorite thing about SJNCS is definitely the Friday pizza lunch days... oh and the teachers too, my friends, recess, and BAC, and well... just everything about it." – Asher H. (SJNCS elementary student)



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Make a \$25 gift to the Annual Fund and receive a commemorative SJN Christmas ornament!



The ornament, which is a rendering of our church, was created and painted by artists in Haiti. The funds used to purchase the ornaments help support the artists and their families. The ornament is metallic and made from recycled materials. "SJN 2025" will be painted on the back of it.

If you are interested in the ornament, please indicate it on the return envelope. You can receive one ornament for every \$25 you give, *up to a maximum of 3, while supplies last*. Please indicate on the envelope (or in the comments online) the quantity of ornaments you would like to receive.



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"We love being a part of St. John Neumann Catholic School. The teachers know each child by name and truly see them as individuals. They are wholeheartedly invested in our children's academic, social, and spiritual growth. It's a genuine community, and we feel incredibly blessed to be a part of it." - Hiram and Erica Morales (SJNCS parents)

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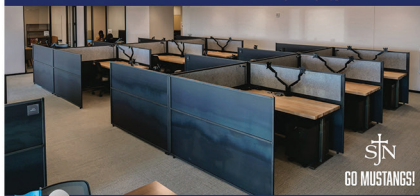
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"We love supporting SJNCS because it helps children grow in their faith and knowledge. The staff is so supportive and caring and they get to know each child by name. Being able to pray and attend Mass as part of the curriculum is so important in the lives of children." - Tony and Kristi Burkhardt (SJNCS supporters and parents of SJNCS alumni)



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*Make a \$25 gift to the Annual Fund and receive
a commemorative SJN Christmas ornament!*

Congratulations to the class of 2025!



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

Visit sjncs-knox.org/annualfund to give online.

Thank you for your support!