



# ANNUAL FUND REPORT 2025-2026





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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 each 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, Father Michael Raj Joseph!**

Father Michael Raj, who became our associate pastor last year, was ordained to the priesthood in the Philippines in 2024. Father Michael Raj is originally from Sri Lanka and is a member of the Institute of the Incarnate Word religious order. Following his ordination, his first assignment was in Papua, New Guinea. He most recently served as a priest in the Solomon Islands before joining us here at SJN.

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





# St. John Neumann Catholic School

## 26-27 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

424

92% Catholic

PreK3 through 8th grade

Caucasian- 75%

Hispanic/Latino- 11%

Black/African American-2%

Asian/Pacific Islander-4%

Multi Racial- 6%

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

33

Approximately 8% of our K-8th students are receiving services for a diagnosed learning difference.



Middle School students volunteer over **1,844** hours of service a year



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

### FACULTY / STAFF

61

Total number faculty and staff

83% female, 90% Catholic

61%

Faculty that hold advanced degrees

100% faculty hold a Bachelor's degree. Two educators hold a PhD.

21

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



**29** years of supporting academic, spiritual, and personal success



**93%** 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 PreK3-3<sup>rd</sup> 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.



**66%** of SJNCS families receive some form of financial assistance (including EFS and support from the Diocese and SJNCS)



Fine Arts are an integral part of our curriculum.

Our middle school curriculum includes STREAM and health, plus one year long elective: Choir, Theater, 3D Art or Fitness Foundations. Band is offered as an after school elective. Elementary students have Art and Music class weekly.

Interested in more information? Contact us at 865-777-3402 to schedule a tour.



## SJN Expansion

The Claude and Lydia Melli building is opening this fall! The Melli building is a middle school expansion that includes state-of-the-art educational spaces and resources for current students, and it accommodates the school's growing student population. Additionally, the new expansion provides space for parish youth and adult ministries to use. The building was made possible by a generous gift from Lydia Melli.

### CLAUDE AND LYDIA MELLI BUILDING

This new, 8,000 square-foot addition features specialized spaces for STREAM classes, a fully equipped science lab and a learning lab, all furnished with state-of-the-art equipment. Also included is an open, two-story gathering space with flexible, movable furniture and comfortable, soft seating to foster collaboration.

Additionally, three smaller rooms are included that are designed to support various needs, such as small group work, a conference room, and a flexible office.



With a new, additional school entrance, the addition can be used by before-and-after care, parish youth ministries, and for parish and school events throughout the year.

### COVERED PATIO

This new outdoor area provides the perfect covered space for students and faculty to enjoy during school and after-care program hours. It is conveniently located outside the gathering space, STREAM lab, and science lab.

The 1,400 square-foot patio features movable outdoor furniture that can be arranged for outdoor classes, individual work spaces, or simply as a place to sit and relax.

### CUL-DE-SAC

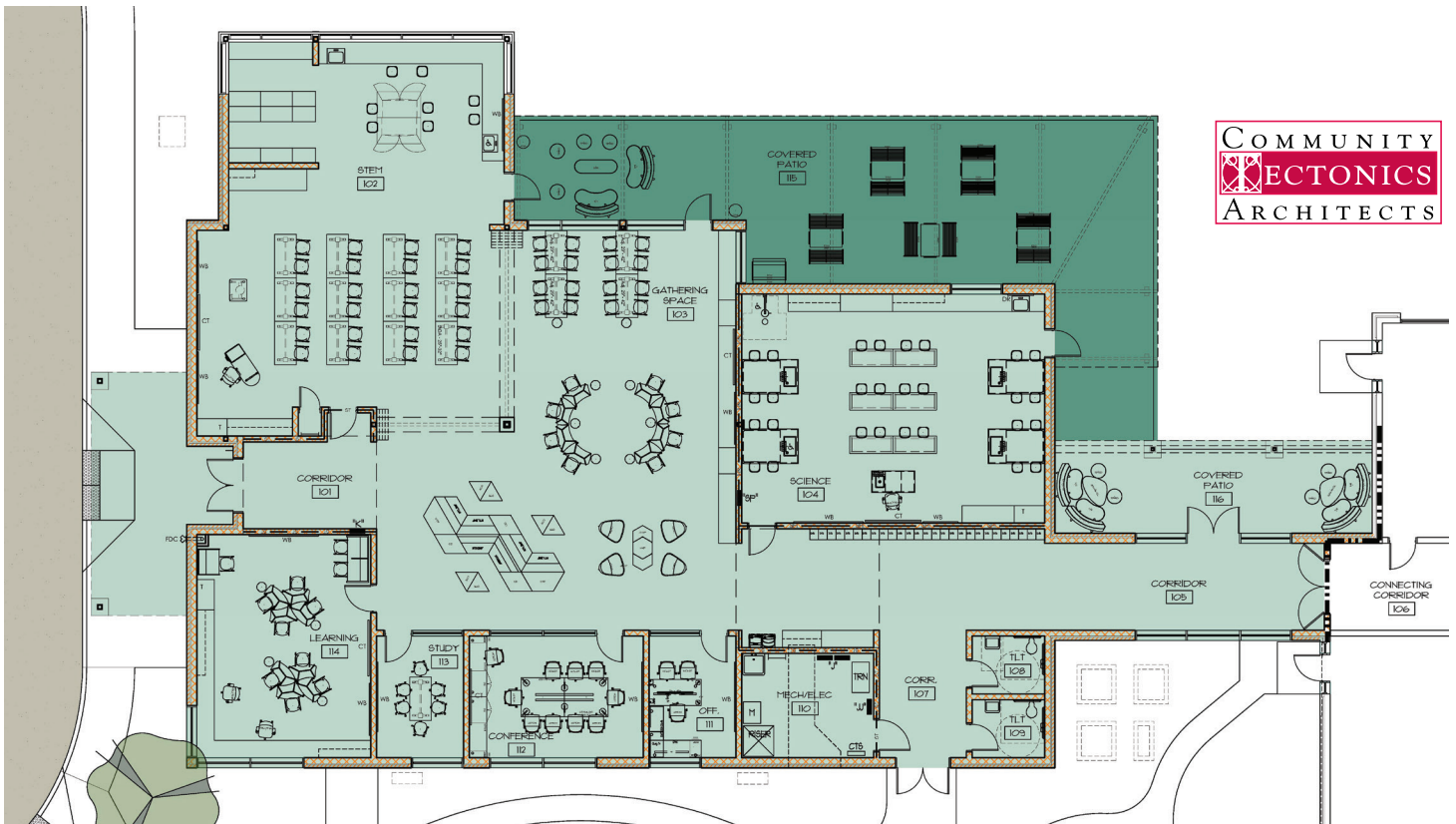
To make this new building as community-friendly as possible, it was designed with a separate entrance to ensure self-sufficiency and safety.



Photo of construction progress taken in August



Photo of construction progress taken in August

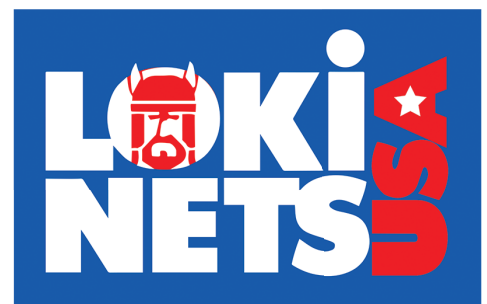




*"We chose St. John Neumann Catholic school for our boys because we immediately felt welcomed into a place that matched our values and really looked at the well-being of every student. Only a few days at the school and most of the staff knew our boys by name! We stayed because we truly feel the out-pouring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



*"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)*





## Gifts for Library & Art Room



Gifts from multiple donors enabled us to make a variety of outstanding updates to the library and art room. We used these gifts to purchase new tables for the art room and the library. For the library we also purchased multiple bookshelves, window seating, shelving, book racks, book bins, a book chest, and new books and other educational resources.



*"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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## Special Events

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

The proceeds from these two events from the last two years funded two projects related to the Lydia and Claude Melli building.

- 1) Enlarging the cul-de-sac outside the new building to accommodate pick-up and drop-off.
- 2) Adding a 1,400 square-foot covered patio with movable furniture to be used and enjoyed by students, teachers, and parish ministries.



**\$125,000**

Just over \$125,000 was raised at the 2026 “Off to the Races” Derby Auction.



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**\$64,000**

Students and donors contributed just over \$64,000 during the 2026 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 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)*







*"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)





## 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.

- **LaFollette Food Life Services**
- **St. Vincent de Paul**
- **Children with Hair Loss**
- **Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis, MN**
- **Second Harvest Food Bank**
- **Catholic Charities of East Tennessee**
- **Compassion Closet**

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



*"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 in 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)*





*"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 & Erica Morales (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)





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

If you are interested in the ornament, please indicate it on the return envelope. You can receive one ornament for every \$30 you give, *up to a maximum of 3, while supplies last*. Please indicate on the envelope (or in the memo field online) the quantity of ornaments you would like to receive.





*"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)



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of Kevin Walsh

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memory of Kevin Walsh

Mark and Dorothy Scrock –  
In honor of our grandchildren  
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Jodie and Crystal Swafford

David and Annette Sydes- In  
honor of our girl, Annabella

John and Lynne Szajkowski

Jacob and Sierra Tippens

Mary T. Titus

William and Karen Wanamaker

Robert and Michelle Willett

Romano and Hillary Vlastelica –  
In memory of Kevin Walsh



This report honors the individuals who made contributions to the SJNCS Annual Fund between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. 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@sjknnox.org](mailto:pwade@sjknnox.org) so we may correct our records.





*"SJNCS has blessed our lives by nurturing our faith, fostering lifelong friendships, and encouraging us to live with purpose. We are so grateful to be a part of the SJNCS community and family" - Beth and David Florek (SJNCS parents)*

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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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