

NATIVITY JESUIT

A C A D E M Y

FALL 2021



NEW CHAPTER STARTS AT NATIVITY

PLUS:

Celebrating the Ignatian Year

A Message from Nativity's Class of 2021

EDUCATING YOUTH FOR A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Gratitude and Seeing All Things New in Christ

On July 1, I started my new role as Nativity Jesuit Academy's (NJA) President. It has been a wonderful start, and I am so thankful for having the opportunity to lead Nativity in this new way. Having served as a K4 teacher, elementary school director and principal, I have gained a deeper appreciation and love for our mission and all those who contribute to making our model a reality for our students: our parents, teachers, donors, and supporters who believe in the investment they are making in our children.

I am in awe of the generosity of Nativity's community of supporters who carry our school close to their hearts and are always there to support our students. I continue to draw inspiration as I continue to meet so many people who help us do this important work every day for our students.

This year, our Jesuit institutions celebrate the Ignatian Year, and I have been spending some time reflecting on how we encounter God in our school on a daily basis. I am reminded of the letter by Father General Arturo Sosa, S.J., in which he announced the beginning of the Ignatian Year. He asserted that we celebrate this year to remind us of the daily opportunity to experience a new conversion and to live a transforming experience. It is a call to allow the Lord to reveal to us new enthusiasm—interior and apostolic—as well as a new life, and new ways of following Christ: "To see all things new in Christ."

In my new role, I have the distinct privilege to see God in many moments at Nativity, and to share these moments with the larger Milwaukee community:

- In the face of the mother who drops off her child at our school, and makes the sign of the cross while entrusting us with her daughter.
- In the generosity of all our donors who supported us this past year when we needed resources for Chromebooks and other safety items for our children.
- In the intentional planning our school leaders and teachers have put in making this year as safe as possible for our students.
- In the smiles of our children as they walk through Nativity's halls.

There are, of course, so many more.

I feel energized when thinking and planning for what the future holds for Nativity because of all those who inspire us with their words of encouragement, generosity and support. Thank you for continuing to walk alongside us. Together, we will work toward "seeing all things new in Christ" through the students and families we serve.

With gratitude,



Vanessa Solis
President | Nativity Jesuit Academy



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Cover photo

New Nativity President Vanessa Solis on the playground with current students. To maintain COVID safety, students are pictured with their siblings.

Nativity Jesuit by the Numbers

STUDENTS

98%

Students receiving need-based financial aid through Choice vouchers

99%

Families self-identifying as Catholic

100%

Students self-identifying as Latino

257

Total enrollment in K4–8th Grade

OUR MODEL

1:1

Mentoring for Nativity graduates through high school

12

Months of instruction to prevent the summer slide

285

Miles to our Northwoods Campus for grades 6–8 summer learning

RESULTS

99%

Recent alumni accepted into college

24

Average score for recent graduates on the ACT, compared to national average of 21 for all students, and 19 for Latino students

39

39 Colleges and universities attended by Nativity graduates

Make Our Proven Results Possible!

A Nativity Jesuit education makes a difference in the lives of our 257 scholars, but our work would not be possible without community support from generous donors like you. With gratitude, we invite you to join in making our mission possible by giving a gift to support one of the following items from our current wish list:

- **\$31** funds a retreat through Casa Romero for one 4th–8th grade scholar
- **\$150** funds a *Scholastic News* current events magazine subscription for one grade level
- **\$390** funds one grade level's MAP assessment, a key progress-monitoring tool for measuring our students' math and literacy progress against grade level standards
- **\$435** funds religion books for one grade level
- **\$1,551** funds a year of music classes for one grade level

Please give today through the enclosed envelope or at nativityjesuit.org/support.

Thank you for making a Nativity Jesuit education possible! •



New Chapter Begins at Nativity

With a year-round model of education, the academic year never really ends at Nativity Jesuit Academy. Yet this year feels like the beginning of a new chapter in Nativity's history. With familiar faces in new leadership roles as our president and principal, the return to full in-person instruction, and the addition of Nativity's first girls' session at the Northwoods Campus, the 2021–22 school year is off to an exciting start.



Growth from Within

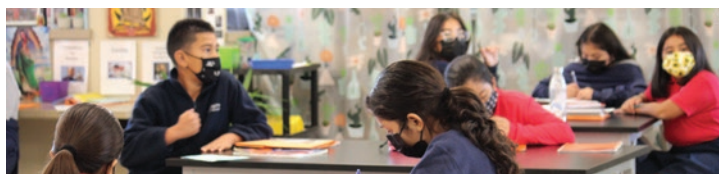
Those familiar with Nativity will notice there was some office shuffling over the summer. Vanessa Solis began her tenure as school president on July 1, 2021. In her eight years at Nativity, Vanessa has served as the school's first K4 teacher, director of elementary school education and principal before taking on this new role as president.

Succeeding Vanessa as principal is former director of operations Jon Nowak. "I know that Jon's intentionality and care, alongside the wealth of experiences he brings, will help us to build on Nativity's success into the future. I can't wait to see what we accomplish together for our students and their families," says Vanessa.

Back In the Classroom

The most striking difference between this fall and the last has been the return of our students to the building. While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present novel challenges, Nativity has returned to full in-person instruction five days per week, with no virtual or hybrid learning option.

"We have learned a lot in the past two years about how to keep our students safe in this pandemic through masking, social distancing and having sick students stay at home. We have found that the procedures piloted last spring are holding up in the face of the Delta variant," says school principal Jon Nowak. "Although things are not yet back to 'normal' in the pre-pandemic sense, the joy of simply being in the same building is palpable among our students and faculty."



grown from an all-boy middle school to a complete co-ed academy,” explains Vanessa Solis. “Attending camp at the Northwoods Campus was transformational for these young women as they began 6th grade, and a historic moment in the life of our school. This would not have been possible without the faith and investment of our donors. We are truly grateful for everyone who worked to provide this opportunity.”

Looking Ahead

There are few guarantees when educating in a pandemic. However, with your prayerful support and the experience of the past year, Nativity Jesuit Academy continues to rise to the challenge. Together, our Nativity family—our students, parents, faculty, staff, leadership, and benefactors—are holding true to our transformative model during these precarious times. •



Girls' Session at Camp Thunderhead

As part of Nativity's year-round learning model, middle school students in grades 6–8 spend a portion of their summer at our Northwoods Campus in Iron County, Wisconsin. Affectionately known as Camp Thunderhead, students participate in rigorous morning classes, followed by more traditional camp activities in the afternoon. This is the first time most of our students learn how to swim, ride a boat, try tubing—or even travel to experience northern Wisconsin.

While Camp Thunderhead is always exciting, this year was especially poignant not only because it marked the return of students after a season of virtual summer learning in 2020, but also because it was the first time female students attended camp. “These trailblazing young women were in my first K4 class at Nativity. As they have grown, our school has



Join Us in Celebrating

*Lord, teach me to be generous,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to look for any reward,
save that of knowing that I do your holy will.*

—St. Ignatius of Loyola

FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, the world of a young Spaniard was forever changed when he was struck by a cannonball while defending his village in battle. Inigo de Loyola, later best known as St. Ignatius of Loyola, experienced not only the shattering of his leg, but the shattering of his hopes and dreams of an esteemed military career. While healing, Ignatius picked up books about the life of Christ and the lives of the saints, which set off a conversion in his heart. Through prayer and a focus on discernment, Ignatius set aside his worldly ambitions and listened to God's will, which inspired not just a new path for his life, but for the rest of the world.

Ignatius went on to found the Society of Jesus, an order of the Catholic Church focused on education, ministry and outreach to those who are marginalized in our society. Ignatius inspires us to seek God in all things and to constantly orient ourselves in service of others, which in turn leads to service of God.

Fr. Arturo Sosa, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, has declared this anniversary the start of an Ignatian Year. At Nativity Jesuit Academy, we join in celebrating the Ignatian Year with the Society of Jesus and our worldwide Ignatian family. Beginning with the five hundredth anniversary of St. Ignatius' cannonball injury (May 20, 2021), this year also includes the four hundredth anniversary of the canonization of St. Ignatius (March 12, 2022) and concludes with the feast day of St. Ignatius (July 31, 2022).

The theme of Ignatian Year is "to see all things new in Christ." We are invited to examine and reflect on our own "cannonball moments" which have changed the course of our lives and have brought us closer to God. How might we recognize these moments of conversion and embrace the impact these moments can have on our lives? What greater call is waiting for you? •



Peter Paul Rubens, Public domain

the Ignatian Year

While the Ignatian Year spans the current school year, the Society of Jesus has identified four priorities—known as Universal Apostolic Preferences—to guide our work as a Ignatian community over the next decade:

- *To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment*
- *To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice*
- *To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future*
- *To collaborate in the care of our Common Home*



Missioning of Vanessa Solis

On August 24, 2021, V. Rev. Karl Kiser, S.J., USA Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus, led a gathering of current families, trustees, benefactors, alumni, educators and friends at Nativity Jesuit Academy to celebrate the missioning of our new school president, Vanessa Solis.

The missioning of a school president is a special moment in Jesuit education. Nativity Jesuit Academy is a dedicated ministry of the Society of Jesus serving the mission of the Catholic Church. As such, it is the duty of the provincial to mission a person to lead the Jesuit work as a ministry of the Church.

After being missioned, Vanessa and one of our 6th grade students led the congregation in a special blessing over our new school principal, Jon Nowak. •



Great Equalizer of Education

Fifteen years ago, **Jay Schwister** was looking for a way to re-engage in the Milwaukee community after relocating from Boston with his wife, Sara, and young family. His professional and philanthropic mentor, Mary Ellen Stanek, invited him to an event at Nativity Jesuit. As he got to know the students and staff at Nativity, it became clear that this was the mission Jay had been looking for. Soon he became a trustee, later going on to such leadership roles as Chair of the Transforming Lives Capital Campaign—which enabled Nativity’s expansion into a full K4–8, co-ed academy—and later as Board Chair.



Jay Schwister, Sara Schwister, Vanessa Solis, Mrs. H. and Angel H.

“The most important thing we can do in our society is to provide a high-quality education to every kid, regardless of their economic circumstances.”

Jay’s wife, Sara, is an educator, and the pair have always seen education as “the great equalizer.” As Jay puts it, “The most important thing we can do in our society is to provide a high-quality education to every kid, regardless of their economic circumstances.”

There are many ways to measure success, including test scores and college admissions rates. For Jay, however, the true impact of Jesuit education is most evident in meeting Nativity graduates. “I recently had the opportunity to meet Angel H., a young man from Nativity’s class of 2021, and his mother this summer at an event for several Nativity supporters. Angel greeted every guest. He spoke articulately to a crowd of more than 20 people about his thankfulness for the investment they had made in his future through Nativity’s graduate support program that makes it possible for him to attend MUHS. He also provided translation for his mother who wanted to thank supporters as well. “It is

moments like these that remind Jay of why he continues to support Nativity.” This school is a living laboratory for successful urban education. Nativity is a beacon of hope and a model for the entire Milwaukee community, and it is crucial that we continue to invest in that success to ensure Nativity remains sustainable for the long term.”

As Jay completes his tenure as a trustee in June 2022, he sees a bright future for Nativity, led by new school president, Vanessa Solis. “When you hear Vanessa’s journey, from growing up in circumstances not unlike Nativity’s students, to rising through school leadership from a teacher to becoming the president, you begin to understand her commitment to this mission. Vanessa’s authentic leadership is inspiring—to the team of educators at Nativity, to the broader community, and to the students who can see their future in Vanessa’s authentic leadership.” •



Did you know that Nativity Jesuit accepts gifts from Donor Advised Funds? Your philanthropic giving can be as easy as the click of a button! Donor Advised Funds typically include personal assets of cash, stock, company shares, real estate and more. Commonly known as DAFs, Donor Advised Funds can streamline your philanthropy by giving immediate tax benefits while you maintain the ability to recommend gifts from your fund over time.

Most Donor Advised Funds only need our nonprofit tax ID, or EIN, which is #39-1741141. For more information on making a contribution from your Donor Advised Fund, please contact Emily Keuter at keutere@nativityjesuit.org, or 414-645-1060 ext. 151. You can also visit nativityjesuit.org/support •

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Parting Words from the Class of 2021



As their time at Nativity Jesuit came to an end, the Class of 2021 took time to reflect on their experiences and the people who helped them along the way. These are just a few of the messages they had for our donors and community members who make this mission possible:

"I would like to thank all the donors and those who support our school. They not only allow us to learn so much, but they allow us to have the awesome experience of camp to help us grow our bonds."

—Alonzo S., Marquette University High School

"Thank you for all the support given during my time at Nativity. Thank you for helping me by giving me a chance to not only do, but to succeed and surpass."

—Miguel O., St. Thomas More High School

"I would love to tell you how much these donations mean to me and the whole school. Every time I see how much Nativity has grown and improved, I think of our donors and administration."

—Santiago L., Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

"Thank you for all the support. Because of your generosity, we are able to grow and be Lobos for others."

—Aaron C., Marquette University High School

"Thank you so much. From the bottom of my heart, words can't do enough to express my gratitude. The opportunity I have is incredible, and I'm sure others can say the same. Keep doing what you're doing, please, because you are raising fine young men."

—Angel H., Marquette University High School •

New Venture for Nativity Alumnus

Jesse Fonseca graduated from Nativity Jesuit in 1997. His path as a young man was not an easy one, but with the foundation of a Nativity education, and a penchant for business, he has followed his dreams to make a splash in the Milwaukee food scene.



Over the years, Jesse built a network of small retail businesses, gaining the experience and the financial security he needed to follow his passion as a restaurateur. In 2017, he opened Sabor Tropical Restaurant & Lounge in Bay View, followed by Blue Agave Restaurant and Nightclub in Madison. In spring 2021, Caliente Latin Restaurant and Rum Bar joined the Story Hill neighborhood just in time for Brewers' fans to return to the ballpark. His latest endeavor is the Fuego Food Truck.

Whether through his food or by giving back to the community that raised him, Jesse is always looking for ways to bring people together. He is deeply passionate about supporting Autism Speaks and raising awareness about autism in the Latino community. He hopes current Nativity students take the foundation they have been given to follow their passions, wherever their paths may lead. •

Alumni Notes

- **Cesar Belmontes '03, Brayan Beltran '06, and Abraham Vargas '09** have each been matched with a member of the high school freshman class in the mentoring program. They will provide guidance and advice throughout their mentees' four years in high school.
- **Mauricio Campero '12** accepted a full-time role as a Pre-College Advisor with Marquette University's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Campero graduated from Marquette in May after participating in EOP as a student.
- **Ruben Garcia '09, Abraham Vargas '09, Alexis Sanchez '10, Dylan Ocampo '14, and Adalberto Carrillo '14** returned to Camp Thunderhead to serve as counselors for the 2021 summer session.
- Students from the **Nativity Class of 2017** have started their college careers at the following schools:
 - Cardinal Stritch University
 - Marquette University
 - Milwaukee Area Technical College
 - UW-Madison
 - UW-Milwaukee
 - Wisconsin Lutheran College •



Mentors and freshmen meet for the first time.

Called to Help Others



For Nativity alumnus **Oscar Lopez '07**, Catholic education has been, and continues to be, a driving force. Through his time at Nativity Jesuit and Pius XI High School, Oscar was able to explore his faith more fully through religion classes, in-school Mass and prayer. These experiences helped to shape Oscar and, now that he is grown, he continues to pay that experience forward through coaching at Pius XI and volunteering at Nativity Jesuit Academy.

When he is not coaching or serving on the Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association steering committee, Oscar is a realtor at NextHome My Way. "I love what I do because I get to help members of my community purchase a home of their own," reflects Oscar. "I get to educate them about real estate, help them with the process of applying for a loan and guiding them to purchase a nice home. It's very important to place myself in someone else's shoes and to do whatever it takes to help them."

"...[D]uring my time at Nativity, I was able to meet a lot of amazing leaders who would take time out of their day to give back when they could. That made me want to grow up and be that type of example as well."

That call to service—and being a person for others—is something Oscar has carried with him. "Growing up during my time at Nativity, I was able to meet a lot of amazing leaders who would take time out of their day to give back when they could. That made me want to grow up and be that type of example as well." He sees that sphere of influence extends beyond the school's faculty and staff to the donors who make a Nativity education possible, saying, "With your support, the school is able to receive the tools they need to provide a great education, including the one I received when I was a young Lobo. Thank you!"

Oscar also has a message for his fellow alumni. "Remember when you were in middle school, in the original building on Pierce or the current campus on South 29th Street, wearing your uniform, eager for a game of four-square or going up to camp for an amazing summer experience. We want to make sure our youth at Nativity can continue to receive the same opportunities and memories we enjoyed. Our alumni group is not just helping give back to the school, but also supporting our fellow alumni today. So, let's bring our wolfpack together again." •



Meet a Lobo

Meet **Lizzie Siewert**, Nativity's first grader teacher. In 2013, Ms. Siewert started as a counselor at Camp Thunderhead, our academic residential summer program for middle school students. Her three summers as a counselor were so impactful, Siewert returned in 2016 to teach Nativity's inaugural class of first grade students.

For Ms. Siewert, the investment of the Nativity community makes all the difference in the lives of our scholars. "I believe so strongly that every child deserves an education that is going to best prepare him or her, and to get many opportunities to shape their future. Especially for our immigrant families, they deserve justice and access to high-quality education. It is because of the larger Nativity community that this is possible."

Lizzie Siewert has also been a part of camp leadership for the past four years. This past summer, camp came full circle for Ms. Siewert, as Nativity's girls from our trailblazing co-ed class attended camp for the first time. These same students, years before, were part of Nativity's inaugural first grade class that Ms. Siewert taught. "Kids learn so much at camp, and it provides so much more beyond just academics. The soft skills—confidence and independence—shape our students for success in the future." •



PLANNED GIVING

Planning in a pandemic world can be difficult. We live in a time that is full of uncertainties, but we also have hope that a better future is on the horizon. Despite the challenges, we still plan for weddings, vacations, retirement, our own futures and the futures of our children.

Did you know that a simple way to make a planned gift to Nativity Jesuit Academy is to designate our school as a beneficiary on a whole life insurance policy? For more information on making a planned gift, please contact Monika Sobierajski at sobierajskim@nativityjesuit.org or 414-645-1060 ext 254. You can also visit nativityjesuit.org/support •

The information above is not intended as legal, financial or tax advice. Please consult an attorney, financial advisor or tax advisor in your planning.

Annual Golf Outing Breaks Record

On Monday, August 2, 2021, Nativity Jesuit Academy friends and supporters gathered for a record-breaking event at Westmoor Country Club, the 20th Annual Golf Outing. Together, they raised more than \$180,000—exceeding the goal of \$116,000—to support our students and fill the gap between School Choice funding and the true cost of a Nativity education.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this event in person and online. Special thanks to our event sponsors and Golf Committee—without your dedication, none of this would be possible. •





Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association Cookout

On Sunday, September 19, 2021, the newly reinvigorated Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association hosted a cookout at Nativity for more than two dozen alumni. The gathering represented three decades of Nativity graduates as well as a handful of former Nativity educators.

Event chair Brayan Beltran '06, had this word of thanks. "To see so many alumni coming home to Nativity was a dream come true. We look forward to having more events like this, and growing the association to meet the needs of our alumni and support current students."

Special thanks to the Alumni Steering Committee for organizing this event, and to our generous in-kind sponsors, including El Rey Foods. •



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UPCOMING EVENTS



GOLF OUTING 2022

Monday, August 1, 2022 at Westmoor Country Club
nativitygolf.givesmart.com



ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

Thursday, May 12, 2022 at Greenhouse #7
NJADinner22.givesmart.com

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