

NATIVITY JESUIT

A C A D E M Y

FALL 2022

STEPPING STONES AND STRIDES: The Evolution of Nativity's **CAMP THUNDERHEAD**



PLUS:

Nativity's Ignatian Review

Nativity Alumni
Giving Back

EDUCATING YOUTH FOR A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

At Nativity Jesuit Academy, the start of a school year ushers in a new theme to ground our shared work for the upcoming twelve months. For the 2022–23 school year, our theme is “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam” (AMDG), which means “for the greater glory of God.”

This unofficial motto of the Society of Jesus (who are also known as the Jesuits) pushes each of us to align our thoughts and actions to best serve God’s will here on Earth. Serving as our grounding for the year, reflections around this theme trickle through students, families, faculty and staff, alumni and our larger Nativity community.



Students deepen their faith with weekly Mass.

As we welcomed faculty and staff back for professional development, we read a poem by Rebecca Ruiz that we hold close to our hearts:

“To live Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam is a way of being that permeates every thought, every deed, every action and inaction—all is contemplated and weighed, all for the greater glory of God.

To live Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam is to lay claim to a legacy of ‘other-ness’ that sets us apart... It is a heritage of service—however, whenever and wherever needed.”

You can find the full version of this poem at: ignatianspirituality.com/living-ad-majorem-dei-gloriam/

We invite you to join us in contemplating “Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam” this year:

- What am I meant to do to serve God the most?
- How do my actions bring me closer to God? How do they bring others closer to God?
- Is my orientation toward God’s will compartmentalized, or does it “permeate every thought, every deed, every action and inaction” of my life?
- How do I contribute toward a “legacy of other-ness,” focused on the needs of those around me?

Thank you for being part of our Nativity community,
Vanessa Solis
President, Nativity Jesuit Academy

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Cover photo
Nativity seventh grade students Edith, Alexandra and America enjoy their time at Camp Thunderhead, Nativity’s academic residential summer program.

Nativity Jesuit by the Numbers

OUR STUDENTS

97%
Students qualifying for a Choice voucher

99%
Families self-identifying as Catholic

100%
Students self-identifying as Latino

258
Total enrollment in K4–8th grade

OUR MODEL

100%
Parent participation in school conferences

4

Weeks of summer instruction for students in 1st–5th grade

79

Middle school students attending Camp Thunderhead, our academic residential summer program in Iron County, WI

99

high school-aged alumni served through our Graduate Support Program

OUR RESULTS

#1

K–8 Choice school in Southeast Wisconsin

#1

School in the state of Wisconsin serving a student population that is 75%+ Latino

99%

College acceptance rate

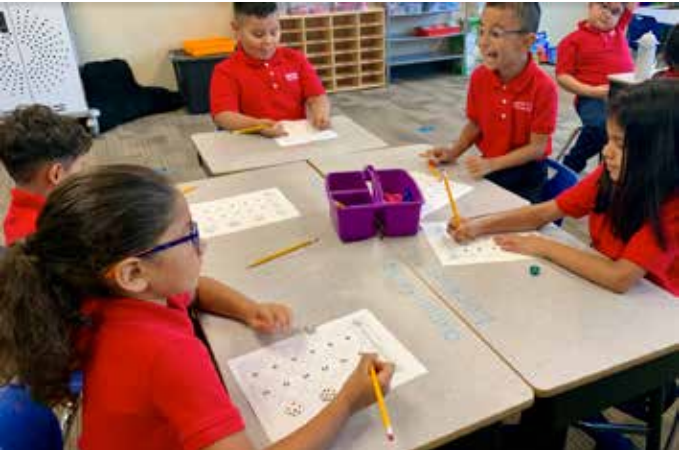
24

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

Make a Nativity Education Possible!

Our unique model of education is made possible by community support from generous donors like you. With gratitude, we invite you to support our 258 students by funding one of the following items from our current wish list:

- **\$65** covers one month’s worth of first aid supplies.
- **\$110** covers replacement vacuums to clean the classrooms daily.
- **\$210** covers academic planners for one grade level in order to help students stay organized and on top of their assignments.
- **\$400** covers one month of chaplain services for all Nativity students to grow in their faith.
- **\$850** covers a year’s worth of materials for our school counselor to support students’ mental health.
- **\$1,535** covers a year of music classes from the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music for one grade level.



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

Thank you for making a Nativity education possible!

STEPPING STONES AND STRIDES: The Evolution of CAMP THUNDERHEAD

Since the school's founding in 1993, an extended school year has been a core component of a Nativity model of education. All 1st–8th grade students are required to participate in summer programming, with 1st–5th graders attending summer school at our Milwaukee Campus, and all middle schoolers attending Camp Thunderhead, Nativity's academic residential summer program.

Located five hours north in Iron County, Wisconsin, Camp Thunderhead has been described as the "moral center" of the Nativity experience and is frequently remembered by alumni as the most impactful part of their time at Nativity. Time at camp is still time at school, boasting six days of learning per week of reading, math and science instruction. Additional academic time beyond the typical 180-day school year helps to close the gap known as the "summer slide," where students' mastery of concepts and skills regress during summer break.

When students are not learning these academic subjects, they are developing both leadership and life skills through intentional activities led by our camp staff. Students get to experience traditional summer camp activities, including swimming, fishing, boating, stargazing, biking and hiking. They benefit immensely from an escape from the city and modern reliance on technology. While immersed in nature, many Nativity students remark on the peace they feel while at camp.



Right: Nativity students live with one another as a community in mixed-grade level cabins while at camp.



Abraham showing off the fish he caught at Camp Thunderhead.

It Takes a Village

Camp Thunderhead would not be the same without the dedicated counselors and staff who play a key role in delivering its high-impact programming. They include many Nativity alumni and family members who make the Camp Thunderhead experience possible:

- Adalberto Carrillo '14
- Ruben Garcia '09
- Dylan Ocampo '14
- Alexis Sanchez '10
- Melissa Anguiano
- Diana Aponte
- Bryanda Hernandez
- Rosario and Francisco Limon

Do you know someone who might be interested in working at Camp Thunderhead? Visit nativityjesuit.org/about-us/employment-opportunities/ for more details!

Adapting and Expanding the Camp Thunderhead Experience

The pandemic impacted all facets of life, and the Camp Thunderhead experience was no exception. In 2020, just three months after local lockdowns, there was not sufficient guidance to safely facilitate camp attendance, which led to the translation of core camp components being delivered virtually to students. Since then, the Nativity team, guided by the leadership of Josh Kraemer, the Director of Camp Thunderhead, has worked to not only return to the pre-pandemic experience but also usher in a new era in camp history.

In 2021, safely returning to an in-person camp experience became a high priority. With a robust mitigation protocol in place, Nativity provided separate one-week sessions for each grade-level cohort. The summer of 2021 not only included this important step back to pre-pandemic “normalcy,” but also an exciting expansion of the program with the first group of middle school girls attending camp in Nativity’s history.

Building upon this success, Nativity facilitated three two-week sessions this past summer, including a dedicated session for 8th graders (our last all-boy graduating class), a session for 6th–7th grade boys and a session for 6th–7th grade girls. Continued intentionality and mitigation strategies led to a second summer at camp without COVID disruptions. The mixed-grade level experience proves to be vital for students’ social-emotional

development, leading to mentoring between the older and younger students and friendships that continue after the camp session.

Important cross-campus connections are fostered for students to integrate their formative time in the Northwoods into their daily life in Milwaukee. This includes continued leadership development for 8th graders through the Camp Thunderhead Leadership Village, as well as each class creating a toolbox that returns with them to their classrooms in Milwaukee that represents students’ individual identities bonded together in this shared experience.

Looking forward to summer 2023, Nativity will continue to deliver the mission-centered experience of Camp Thunderhead. With a year-round task force making plans for next year, students will be completely intermixed between the middle school grade levels during two extended and separate sessions for girls and boys. In addition to the students’ experience, plans have begun to bring back our traditional Parents’ Weekend, which builds community and gives parents insight into their children’s growth while at camp.

“Not only are we inching closer to our ‘new normal,’ we are steadily crossing stepping stones as we build the full expansion of the Camp Thunderhead program with the dual extended sessions and parent programming planned for 2023. Just two years ago, Nativity only had middle school boys coming up to camp,” reflects Kraemer. “Now, with the addition of middle school girls, the program and the facilities have grown in incredible ways over recent years—not only persisting through the challenges of the pandemic, but expanding to do even more. There are so many people who make this experience possible for our kids, including our camp staff, planning task force and donors. Thank you! You are providing Nativity students with a foundational experience that will continue to shape the rest of their lives.”



Leilani & Nirel learning how to fish at Camp Thunderhead.

Highlights of Camp Thunderhead 2022

Aligned to our Jesuit emphasis of “cura personalis,” which means “the care of the whole person,” the Camp Thunderhead experience centers around meeting students’ individual needs, including their academic, social-emotional and spiritual development.

- Small class sizes and continued emphasis on small group instruction provided students with deeper attention and feedback related to their mastery of content and skills. With two fully engaged teachers in each class period, students received remediation and enrichment opportunities due to this individualized approach.
- Mental health support included our school counselor, Elizabeth Janners, traveling up to camp to meet with students, as well as teletherapy sessions with our Sixteenth Street Community Health Center partners. Throughout the pandemic, all children have missed out on building typical social skills, leading to our efforts to recover and build these skills. Key student takeaways from camp include emotional awareness of themselves and others, as well as how to live and function in a community.
- Camp staff revamped the biking program to deepen instruction of bike safety and skills based on programming from the Wisconsin Bike Federation. Very few Nativity students have biking experience when they get to camp, making this an area of important instructional emphasis during their time in the Northwoods.
- Camp features a handful of traditional competitions in which students must work collaboratively with one another to succeed. These include Camp Olympics, a riddle-based scavenger hunt and the Thundercup soccer tournament.



Students enjoying their time outdoors at Camp Thunderhead.



While at Camp Thunderhead, Nativity students have six days of classes per week.

A TYPICAL DAY AT CAMP THUNDERHEAD



7:30 am	Wake Up	12:45 pm	Quiet Time
8:00 am	Breakfast	2:00 pm	Afternoon Activities Begin
8:30 am	Cabin Cleanup and Prepare for Class	5:30 pm	Cabin Time and Showers
9:00 am	Math Class	6:15 pm	Dinner
10:00 am	ELA (English Language Arts) Class	7:40 pm	All-Camp Evening Activity
11:00 am	Science Class	8:45 pm	Brush Teeth
	with Work Period/Study Hall	9:00 pm	Cabin Meeting, Pray the Examen
12:00 pm	Lunch	10:00 pm	Lights Out

Ignatian Review

During the 2021–22 school year, Nativity Jesuit Academy underwent the Ignatian Review process, which traditionally occurs every six years as a way to affirm our Ignatian identity and provide feedback for the future. As an educational ministry of the Society of Jesus, this provides our sponsorship as a Jesuit institution, which is in addition to the traditional Catholic school accreditation process through the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Nativity’s last Ignatian Review occurred during the 2014–15 school year, when Nativity began a period of remarkable growth as we opened our doors to our first co-ed K4 class. Since then, we have become a full K4–8th grade school, are almost entirely co-ed (with the exception of our last all-boy class who will graduate in June 2023) and an impressive capital renovation to modernize both our 29th Street and Northwoods campuses.



Important Catholic faith traditions, including the May Crowning of Mary, are celebrated at Nativity.



The Ignatian Review process includes a self-study year complete with stakeholder surveys, analyses and a formal write-up to submit to the Midwest Province of the Society of Jesus. Based on a foundational Jesuit educational document entitled, “Our Way of Proceeding: Standards and Benchmarks for Jesuit Schools in the 21st Century,” the review is focused on five main domains: Jesuit and Catholic Mission and Identity, Governance and Leadership, Spiritual Formation, Educational Excellence and Faith That Does Justice.

Schools undergoing the Ignatian Review host a visiting team for two days of in-person interviews. This team is composed of a representative from our province, as well as teachers and leaders from other Jesuit schools, including other Nativity-model schools. Shortly after the visit, we are provided a formal report which ideally includes a recommendation to the Provincial for the continuation of our sponsorship as a Jesuit school.

Nativity Jesuit Academy received its recommendation for continued sponsorship as a Jesuit school, which will be formalized on November 16, 2022. The final report serves a guide for the next six years, with commendations on accomplishments as well as recommendations for Nativity’s future.

The final report offered the following commendations on Nativity’s efforts since our last Ignatian Review:

- The mission is alive and felt in all that Nativity does.
- There is a unified appreciation of excellence in the service of students. High standards are held collectively by the Nativity community.
- There is a healthy organizational culture for all stakeholders with a cohesive and positive sense of community.
- Throughout the pandemic, the needs of students and families were kept at the center of decision making.
- Nativity has implemented greater professional social-emotional resources to bolster support for students.
- As Nativity has grown to be a full K4–8th grade school, a cohesive academic and social-emotional program has been achieved.
- There has been increased cultivation of Latino leadership, and alumni are highly engaged.
- Faculty, staff and the Board of Trustees are provided ongoing formation in our Catholic, Jesuit faith.
- Board and finance leadership support the mission with resources instead of relying on a scarcity model. The board wants to support growth and excellence for the long haul.
- Camp Thunderhead remains the “moral center” of the Nativity experience.
- Nativity “gets the right people on the bus,” and thinks creatively about how people can best serve the mission.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion work is rooted in a faith-filled context of our Catholic mission and identity.



Nativity alumni celebrated our 2nd Annual Alumni Mass in 2022.

The final report offered the following five recommendations that Nativity is tasked to work on for the next six years. These recommendations are woven into Nativity’s current strategic plan.

- Implement a full faculty and staff Ignatian faith formation plan to further enhance the Catholic, Jesuit character of Nativity.
- Continue to build a practice and culture to retain high-caliber employees, considering supports to move with employees through their life cycle (i.e., marriage, children, elder care, etc.).
- Continue to grow social-emotional student resources strategically, informed by a rigorous needs assessment.
- Review the extended school day model and assess the best use of this time for students’ highest benefit.
- Continue to recruit teachers and staff of Latino heritage and proficient Spanish speakers.

DONOR PROFILE

Andrés Gonzalez



For the first time in school history, the president and board chair of Nativity Jesuit Academy are both Latino/a, a powerful representation of the student body we serve. For Andrés Gonzalez, Nativity's board chair, our mission to educate for lives of Christian leadership and service is a direct match to his approach to life. Andrés currently serves as the Vice President, Community Engagement and Chief Diversity Officer for Froedtert Health. As a prominent Latino leader in the Milwaukee community, Andrés feels that his contribution to Nativity harks back to his own upbringing. "When I hear stories of Nativity students and alumni, it reminds me of an earlier version of myself," reflects Andrés. "I always wanted to excel, and having access to a quality education prepared me for leadership. Now, I am able to pay it forward to students from the south side of Milwaukee."

Authentic alignment is critical to Andrés, and his involvement at Nativity provided another avenue to live out his values. "My faith is the core to who I am, and serves as my moral compass when making decisions," shares Andrés. "Nativity does not just have an impact on the individual student's life. It is important to consider what it means collectively for our community—we are raising the next generation of servant leaders who are formed to imitate the life of Christ."

This does not happen by chance; instead, there is a depth of intention to bring the mission to life. "Nativity lives up to the mission—what we promise, what our expectations are and what we deliver are all aligned. It is really powerful and the reason behind our success." As Andrés has witnessed firsthand, this culture of excellence permeates the day-to-day decisions and actions at Nativity and, in turn, is a core contributing factor in students' success.

For Andrés, a committed community is central to Nativity's continued accomplishments. "At the end of the day, it is about providing equitable education. The results are there. Come experience the magic of being part of a high-performing school," invites Andrés. "There are many ways to get involved—from being a mentor to serving on a committee to being a financial supporter. We all have the opportunity to be 'laborers' in creating the Kingdom of God here on Earth, and what better way to do this than being part of the great work already happening at Nativity."



Andrés Gonzalez with Nativity President Vanessa Solis, at our annual Golf Outing.

Giving Back to Nativity Alumni

For many students, the college search process can be very overwhelming. As a pre-college counselor for Marquette's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Mauricio Campero, Nativity Class of 2012, helps high school students navigate the college search and application process. He educates prospective students on the importance and intricacies of financial aid, as well as their different college options. Most importantly, he serves as a resource for the students he advises throughout their time in high school.

Like many of the EOP students he supports, Mauricio grew up as a first-generation college student whose family had limited economic means. Mauricio reflects that Nativity was the catalyst for his success. Through our unique educational program, he gained the confidence that he did not have prior to starting at Nativity in fourth grade. He attributes this confidence to being surrounded by teachers, students and staff who really believed in him. The high expectations at Nativity really helped him evaluate his priorities, to start thinking about the future and to consider ways he could give back to others.

“
I am trying to give my students
what my Nativity mentor gave to me.”

However, Mauricio never really thought post-secondary education was in the cards for him. "I would drive by Marquette all the time, but I never saw myself going there," says Mauricio. While at Nativity, he learned about pre-college programs and Marquette University. The personal habits he created at Nativity through camp and the extended school day helped him find success at St. Thomas More High School and Marquette University. "I didn't know it at the time, but in high school, I was doing my homework right after school—just like I was taught to prioritize while at Nativity," reflects Mauricio.

Throughout this past year, Mauricio supported Nativity Jesuit Academy alumni through the Upward Bound program at Marquette University. This approach to serving others is inspired by the opportunities Mauricio was given at Nativity. "I am trying to give my students what my Nativity mentor gave to me," shares Mauricio.



Mauricio celebrating his graduation from Marquette University.



Mauricio with his mother at Camp Thunderhead.

Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association

The Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association (NJAA) furthers the mission of “educating youth for a life of Christian leadership and service” for all Nativity alumni after high school. NJAA fosters meaningful relationships by working to provide members with opportunities to engage in educational, professional, social and spiritual experiences. Through service and leadership events, the association gives back to the Nativity community.



Nativity Jesuit alumni with beloved former faculty, staff and volunteers.

Calling All Lobos!

The Nativity Jesuit Alumni Association (NJAA) steering committee is in search of an ambassador from each graduating class. The following class years are represented on the steering committee: 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010.

Interested in learning more and being part of NJAA’s leadership?
Please email alumni@nativityjesuit.org

NJAA 2023 Schedule

ALUMNI ARE INVITED TO THE FOLLOWING
2023 SIGNATURE NJAA EVENTS:

Wellness Seminar
January 19, 2023

Nativity Jesuit Scholarship Dinner
April 20, 2023

Lobos Connect: Home Buying Seminar
May 24, 2023

3rd Annual Alumni Mass
June 11, 2023

Nativity Jesuit Golf Outing
July 31, 2023

3rd Annual Alumni Cookout
September 17, 2023

Turkey Tip-Off
November 21, 2023

Additional events will also be announced throughout the year.

MKE Scholars

David Morales-Chavez

With each transition faced during his education, David Morales-Chavez, Class of 2017, has realized the importance of carrying over skills and habits he had previously developed. Now a sophomore at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), David recognizes his connection to Nativity as a throughline that has helped him find success today.

“The one thing that I vividly remember about Nativity is the brotherhood with my classmates,” said David, noting that he still maintains close ties with a group of classmates. According to him, those bonds elevated his confidence, allowing him to meet new friends at Marquette University High School.

David also credited Nativity’s academic preparation and his experience with Nativity’s Graduate Support Program, for helping him adjust to Marquette’s challenging academic curriculum. “Especially if I was falling behind in my classes, I would meet with Mr. Foley, Nativity’s Director of Graduate Support.

We would create a plan that I would follow in order to improve those grades,” David explained. When it came time to apply to colleges, David learned to appreciate the collaboration he experienced with Nativity’s Graduate Support Program and his college counselors at Marquette High to help him stay on track.

“
The one thing that I vividly remember about Nativity is the brotherhood with my classmates.”

One of the most important skills David has learned has been the importance of using the resources available to him. As a Nativity alumnus, David was connected to the MKE Scholars Program, which provides individualized academic coaching and financial aid counseling to UWM students. Through his meetings with his MKE Scholars advisor, David has developed

the confidence to reach out to his professors and ask for help, especially in his larger, more intimidating classes. In a workshop put on by the program, David created his first resume, which landed him a job working as an assistant to X-ray technicians, a primary field of interest for him after graduation.

David has the following advice for current Nativity students: “Take advantage of any resources that are available to you. Whether it is study hall, or tutors, or being a part of any sports or clubs—just getting that experience and using those resources is really helpful with building your skills for future success.”



David Morales-Chavez back at Nativity.

MEET A LOBO

Martha Perez

Meet Ms. Perez, Nativity’s K5 teacher. Going into her fifth year at Nativity, Ms. Perez has worn multiple hats, including as the K4 teacher for the past four years before moving up to K5, as well as Nativity parent to her first grade son, Leonardo.

Thanks to seeing Nativity from both the teacher and parent perspective, Ms. Perez deeply cherishes the partnership between parents and teachers that centers around how to best support each individual student. “I find the amount of support from parents to be an incredible part of Nativity. Parents want to be involved in their child’s education, and do what they can to support both their child and my efforts as a teacher. Not only do I feel welcomed and appreciated, I feel like the parents care for me as a person,” reflects Ms. Perez.



Ms. Perez with her K5 students.



Above and left: Ms. Perez collaborating with students during independent reading time.

For Ms. Perez, the impact of Nativity’s mission is strongly felt in the core values that we teach: being religious, loving, open to growth, committed to justice and seeking intellectual excellence. “Grounded in our core values, Nativity shapes people to go out and serve others. It is not just about academics, but considering the whole person, including their emotional, physical and spiritual needs,” says Ms. Perez. “These core values are the starting point for students to discuss the larger concerns of our world, including questions of social justice, freedom and human dignity.”

Ms. Perez greatly admires St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus and in whose Jesuit tradition Nativity is based. “I want my students to serve like St. Ignatius did—to not remain on the sidelines, but to go out into our world and take the love of Christ to friends, families, and communities. When we serve, our city grows, and everyone experiences the love of God.”

Investing in Nativity Students

In 2022, Nativity’s annual Scholarship Dinner and Golf Outing collectively raised more than \$384,000 to support Nativity students and fill the gap between School Choice funding and the true cost of a Nativity education. Because of an invested community who deeply cares about student support and success, Nativity students get to experience a unique model of education that includes an extended school day, extended school year, graduate support services and formation to be “men and women for others.” See you at our events in 2023!

Bob and Chrissie Monday celebrating his St. Ignatius Leadership Award at Nativity’s 2022 Scholarship Dinner.



Mary and Brian Henke, members of the Gordon Henke Family Foundation, celebrating their Companions Award at Nativity’s 2022 Scholarship Dinner.



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UPCOMING EVENTS



ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP DINNER

Thursday, April 20, 2023 at Greenhouse #7 (attached to the Mitchell Park Domes)
njadinner23.givesmart.com

GOLF OUTING 2023

Monday, July 31, 2023 at Westmoor Country Club
nativitygolf23.givesmart.com

Stay connected with Nativity Jesuit Academy
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