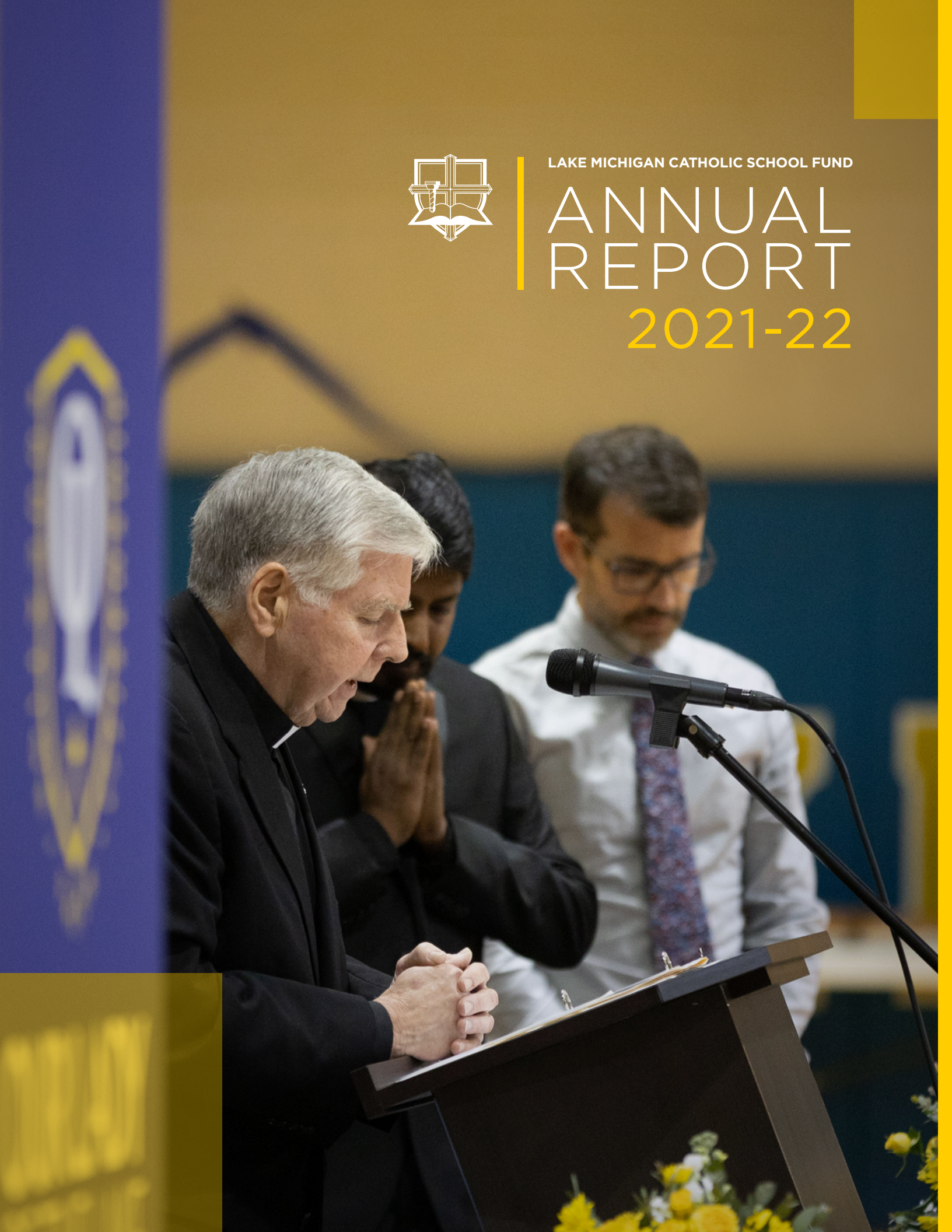
LAKE MICHIGAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL FUND

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



ABOUT US

Formed in 1971, the nonprofit Lake Michigan Catholic School Fund has generated direct financial support for Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School and its predecessors, complementing parish subsidies and school fundraising activities.

Independent from the diocese, parishes and schools, the Fund is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

PURPOSE

We exist for the sole purpose of aiding in the support of Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School.

Believing that the greatest wealth of our nation consists of our youth through whom we pass on our social and cultural heritage, and believing in the importance of private schools as adjuncts to the public school system and in particular, schools with a religious orientation and atmosphere in which religion will be taught, it is the purpose of this corporation to aid in the support of Catholic schools in the Twin City area.

To date, the Fund has contributed over

$7.2 million

toward the advancement of Catholic education in Southwest Michigan.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present the 2021-22 annual report for the Lake Michigan Catholic School Fund!

Since 1971, the Fund has existed to ensure that a quality, affordable Catholic education remains available to Southwest Michigan families for generations to come. This report provides a first-hand look at your contributions in action as we recognize and celebrate those who have played an integral role in our school's success and development.

The 2021-22 school year was extraordinary as Lake Michigan Catholic Schools became Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School. The new name reflects a renewed focus on education, faith and citizenship, led by Canonical Pastor Fr. John D. Fleckenstein. Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School's strength and continued success echo the ongoing commitment, generosity and faith of our supporters.

Currently, the Fund manages 22 endowment funds, each earmarked with its own special purpose. An endowment is a type of investment that generates income for nonprofit organizations. When a donor makes a gift to an established fund, it is invested to grow the fund. Each year, we use proceeds from the endowments to award grants that advance Catholic school education right here in our community.

It is with deep gratitude that we thank you – our faithful community, alumni, parents, grandparents and other friends who continue to support our mission. We appreciate every contribution and employ every dollar to make high-quality Catholic education even more accessible.

On behalf of the Fund, our administration, teachers, staff, and the families we serve, thank you – you are changing lives.

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President

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WHY WE GIVE

GENERATIONS OF SUPPORT: THE SZYMANSKI FAMILY

The Szymanski family has been part of the Laker community for decades. “When we moved here in 1983, we knew we wanted a Catholic education for our kids – and it needed to meet a certain quality,” shares Noreen Szymanski, a retired public-school teacher and mother of three. While her husband, Dr. Dennis Szymanski, was investigating a new career opportunity in town, it was her job to seek out the right school for their three young children.

“I wanted their education to be whole, complete. For our family, a holistic education includes religion, morality, and fostering a faith in God, and I wanted that for my children,” Noreen explains. All of the Szymanski children graduated with a solid foundation that laid the groundwork to pursue advanced degrees and rewarding careers.

The Szymanskis’ youngest, Kathleen, was in 1st grade when her family moved to Michigan. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Michigan, Master of Science in nursing education from Bethel College and Doctorate of Nursing Practice from Case Western Reserve University. She’s enjoyed a successful 22-year nursing career, including 15 years as an ER nurse for Spectrum Health and 11 years as Lake Michigan College faculty and Nursing Program Director. “My Catholic education helped to develop who I am today, and how I’ve chosen to serve my community and family,” she shares.

The Szymanskis remain devoted to Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School and the Lake Michigan Catholic School Fund. Noreen sees her commitment to the school as a natural place to be, even though she’s now retired and her children are grown. “I have a background in education and a practical faith in God. Whatever I can do to help foster quality Catholic education, that’s where I am called to be.” Noreen has been serving on the LMCSF advisory board for over 18 years.

For Kathleen, family has a lot to do with her ongoing support of the school. “The teachers and parents here are my childhood friends, and now their children go to school here. I consider the people here to be my family.” In addition to serving as a trustee and remaining active in her faith, Kathleen regularly participates in school fundraisers and events, and volunteers whenever she can. “I appreciate the opportunity to give back. I’ve lived all over the country, and Southwest Michigan was worth coming back to.”

“The teachers here have that individual knowledge of every student, who they are, what their capabilities are. The school served my children very well. The investment we made in their education has paid off for them.”

- Noreen Szymanski

Kathleen and Noreen Szymanski.

WE’VE NEVER LOOKED BACK: THE REECE FAMILY

When Adam Reece and his wife Eleanor moved to Southwest Michigan three years ago, they seized the opportunity to research area schools and make an informed decision about which option would be best for their family. “Visiting Lake Michigan Catholic was an all-around great experience,” Mr. Reece recalls.

“We are a Catholic family, but honestly an excellent education was our main priority,” he shares, adding that Our Lady of the Lake’s incredible teachers and staff solidified their decision about where to enroll their three young children. “They’re so impressive. The level of care the kids receive, everyone knows who my children are by name, by face and by family.” says Reece, “We’ve never looked back.”

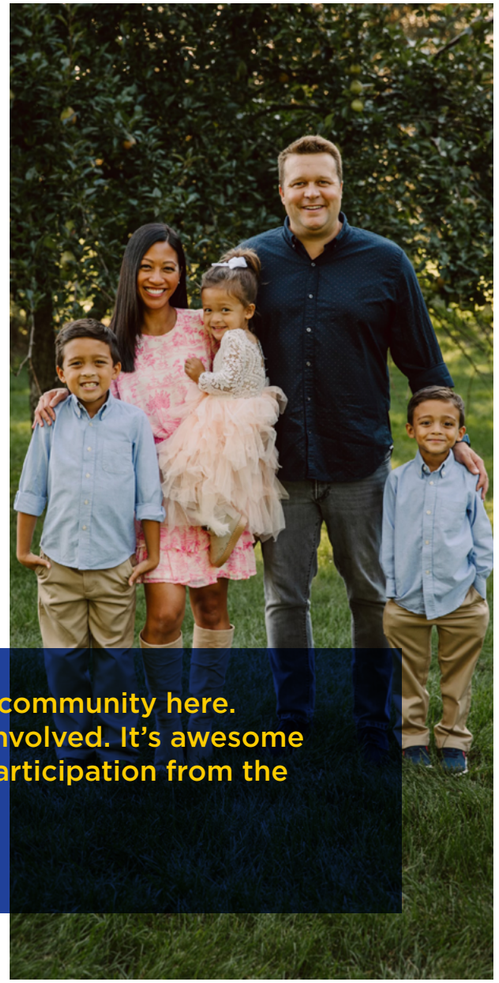
Like many Laker families, the Reeces are involved and active in their children’s education. “We never wonder what the kids are doing in school because everyone is so connected; we’re always in the loop,” he says, which makes getting involved at the school an easy next step.

“We love the active, small-school community here. There are plenty of ways to get involved. It’s awesome to see the level of support and participation from the surrounding community as well.”

- Adam Reece

Mr. Reece served on the planning board for the 30th Annual Dr. John Proos Laker Athletic Golf Classic, which raised $52,000 for Laker athletics.

Daily exposure to the Catholic faith is another reason the Reece family is thriving at Our Lady of the Lake. “One of the things the school does best is teaching our children Christ-centered values. The school’s Good Shepherd Program, weekly mass with their peers, they’re living their faith, not just Mass on Sundays,” says Mr. Reece.



Adam and Eleanor Reece with their children Isaiah (3rd grade), Gigi (preschool) and Jack (1st grade).

“Catholic culture and values, like being kind to others, are reinforced by teachers, giving kids a good foundation for character and principles we share as a family.”

“We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School community.”

2021-22 HIGHLIGHTS

The 2021-22 school year was remarkable in many ways as Lake Michigan Catholic Schools became Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School.

As a private school, Our Lady of the Lake enjoys certain curricular freedoms that allow us to educate students within the framework of our Catholic culture. By making decisions locally, we can provide students with what they truly need to succeed.

Our Lady of the Lake is fully accredited by the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools (MANS) and in compliance with all state rules and regulations.

EDUCATION

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School provides a traditional Catholic education in a culture of academic excellence. Our teachers are among the finest in the area, skilled at bringing out the best in their students and modeling Catholic culture in their classrooms. And, because of your generosity, we are able to offer robust programming, opportunities and experiences that you just can't find elsewhere.

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Our Lady of the Lake provides state-of-the-art technology and instruction, which has long been a core element of the Laker experience. For more than 20 years, the Fund has maintained a Technology Endowment to support classroom technology needs. This year, the Technology Endowment contributed over $20,000 to Laker technology.

In 2020, we unveiled the **Monte Global Trading & Finance Lab** at the middle/high school campus. This platform allows students to enter the exciting world of global trading and finance with real-world scenarios and simulations using StockTrak software. The lab was made possible thanks to a generous donation from Laker alumnus Sam Monte and his wife, Connie, and was supported last year by a $13,000 grant from the Financial Lab Support Fund.

The Monte Global Trading & Finance lab is home to business classes like Financial Literacy, Introduction to Business, Global Trading, Marketing, Accounting, Finance, Economics, and Stocks and Bonds Trading.

Using state-of-the-art technology like ZSpace, students can explore mixed-reality 3D models that bring learning to life.

Introduced at the middle/high school campus in 2021, ZSpace mixed-reality combines augmented and virtual realities to produce interactive 3D models. Our Lady of the Lake is the only school in Southwest Michigan implementing this advanced technology that allows students to virtually "hold" holographic 3D images up off the screen and maneuver them in every direction. ZSpace was a donor-supported effort, and ongoing funding is provided by the ZSpace Endowment Fund with $15,000 in grant funds awarded in 2021.

In addition, the Fund was pleased to award a grant to purchase 100 new Chromebooks, made possible by the LMCSF and the Caryl DaDan Technology Fund. The Chromebooks replaced aging devices in 3rd-5th grade classrooms. The purchase complements existing technologies like SMART Boards and projectors, document cameras, audio-visual equipment and more.

The Chromebooks are used to teach even the youngest Lakers, as students learn how to conduct reliable research and use a variety of essential applications. By 4th grade, students are coding and printing 3D objects, and in 5th grade they're collaborating with area business owners to present solutions to real-world business problems.

THEY KNOW HOW MUCH WE CARE

Optimal learning happens at Our Lady of the Lake when students feel safe and supported, and they recognize that our school community genuinely cares about them. Thanks to small class sizes, teachers ensure every child receives the personalized attention and support they need to reach their unique potential.

One way we support student success is through team collaboration enhanced by Professional Learning Communities (PLC). At both campuses, the PLC provided K-12 teachers a forum to connect, analyze data and strategize as a team. Weighing considerations such as teacher observations and formative and summative assessments, the teams use data as their compass as they collaboratively navigate classroom and individual learning.

When students and teachers at the elementary school need help for academic, social or emotional concerns, they look to the school's new Care Team. Expanded support services are organized to provide more rapid, responsive intervention with daily on-call assistance. The team, which includes the elementary principal, reading specialist and counselor, meets monthly to strategize and plan.

At the middle and high school, the Academic Affairs department dives deep into analyzing student assessment data and shares their findings at PLC meetings for discussion and to guide instruction. In addition, a full-time psychologist and psychology intern team up to provide social and emotional support to students.

The LMCSF understands the value of ensuring teachers have the support, resources and training they need to grow as educators and lead successful classrooms. The Fund was pleased to award grants for professional development that exceeded $23,000.

"No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

- Theodore Roosevelt

OUR TEACHERS

Elementary School:

Student-to-teacher ratio: **9:1**
Certified teachers: **100%**
Teachers with a bachelor's degree: **100%**
Teachers with a master's degree: **35%**

Middle/High School:

Student-to-teacher ratio: **10:1**
Certified teachers: **100%**
Teachers with a bachelor's degree: **100%**
Teachers with a master's degree: **40%**

PREPARING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

At the high school, a full complement of nine college-level AP courses covered every content area, and 67% percent of all students at the high school took at least one AP course last year.

We are proud of our Laker Class of 2022!

$1.2 million in merit scholarships
100% are college bound
4.5 average college credits earned through dual-enrollment and AP options

Because of your generosity, we were able to award $15,000 in college scholarships to our Laker Class of 2022.

FAITH

Elementary students gather for Stations of the Cross on the first Friday of Lent while 5th graders read reflections written to show how understanding the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus is a source of hope and comfort.

> **"It is through education that man can transcend himself."**
>
> - Pope Francis

For Our Lady of the Lake students, catechesis and faith formation are important parts of the education journey.

Our community of learners practice daily faith formation – from morning prayer and intentions to daily Gospel readings, prayers and devotions. Students attend weekly Mass and prepare alongside their peers to participate in their first Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation. They learn the importance of the Stations of the Cross and Adoration. In October and May, we pray the Rosary as a community. During Lent, we walk together and pray the Stations of the Cross.

Through professional development, teachers explore ways to thoughtfully (and quite creatively) infuse Catholic perspective into their lesson plans. Through cross-curricular instruction, students are making important connections between their faith and academics.

Our younger students nurture their relationship with God through Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori-based theology program. During this time, children learn to contemplate stories from scripture while developing reverence and participating in the Liturgy.

Students in grades 6-12 take full-year theology courses and at the high school, Lakers' academic careers culminate with their Senior Retreat and Capstone Project. A graduation requirement since 2015, the Capstone Project was initiated to better prepare students to defend their faith. Students select, conduct research and write a paper on their chosen topic, then present their findings to a panel of judges.

Our Class of 2022 Capstone finalist was Holly Starr, who explored the topic of in vitro fertilization for her paper titled *Through the Looking Glass*.

Students demonstrate their Spanish-speaking skills during a round of Lenten Trivia.

CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is an integral part of the school day, instilling values, character and faith within the framework of our Catholic culture.

Committed to providing an educational environment built on the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, Our Lady of the Lake's teachers go beyond core academics to prepare students to participate in an ever-changing world as faithful citizens.

Every Laker maintains an impressive service portfolio that grows throughout their academic career. Students collect and display artifacts from their service journey, including journal entries and assignments, art, photos, articles and more. "Intentional service impacts kids for their lifetime," shares high school principal James White. "Service becomes part of their mindset. It's not something 'extra.'"

Last year's all-school service activities included the 17th Annual Walk for Catholic Education, and individual classrooms formed partnerships with local community organizations like the Rotary Interact Club, Birthright, the Benton Harbor Readiness Center and others.

Whether participating in the annual Torch Run for Special Olympics, writing letters to our nation's veterans, or stuffing a truck with food for those in need, Lakers demonstrate their commitment to faithful citizenship throughout the school year.

After school, a vast array of extracurricular activities, athletics and service projects provide extra opportunities to practice good citizenship. While living, working and playing in a diverse and changing world, Laker leaders, musicians, athletes, scientists, artists, performers, coders and more are developing character while following their passions and earning impressive accolades along the way.

In Laker athletics, opportunities abound for elementary, middle and high school students to be active and enjoy the benefits of team participation. We are proud to report that our high school athletes earned Academic All-State Team honors for boys and girls cross country, soccer and basketball; boys baseball and golf; and girls volleyball and tennis. Many students earned individual recognition as well, including state, conference and division honors

Both cross-country teams were BCS White Division Champions, with the girls' team and individuals from the boys' team qualifying for the state meet.

The girls' soccer team captured the 2022 District Championship title. Go Lakers!

2021 FINANCIAL SUMMARY
(DISTRIBUTED IN QUARTERS)

Total 2021 Grant Awards & Contributions

$459,142

Total 2021 Grant Awards

$339,606

Additional 2021 Contributions

$119,536

(in addition to grant awards)

17% **$57,985**
Tuition Assistance

15% **$51,597**
Tuition Scholarship

15% **$51,405**
Unrestricted Formula

12% **$40,571**
Teacher Development Fund

11% **$36,636**
Maintenance

9% **$29,785**
Unrestricted Donations

7% **$23,611**
Professional Development

6% **$20,012**
Technology Fund

4% **$15,000**
ZSpace

4% **$13,000**
Financial Lab Support

$60,736
School messaging, marketing and communications services

$26,000
Purchase of 100 new Chromebooks for the elementary school - from the LMCSF and Caryl DaDan Technology Fund

$15,000
College Scholarships for the Class of 2022 - funded by LMCSF families annually

$12,000
Emergency replacement of the water heater/boiler

$5,000
Supporting transportation of the Robotarians robotics team to their quarterfinal competition

$500
Dr. John Proos Golf Classic

$300
Walk for Catholic Education t-shirts

MAKING QUALITY CATHOLIC EDUCATION ACHIEVABLE

The LMCSF was proud to help make an Our Lady of the Lake Catholic education achievable for **20** families in 2021-22 by awarding **$109,582** in tuition scholarships and assistance made possible by the investment proceeds of the following endowments:

- **Dr. John Proos Tuition Scholarship**
- **Jack and Rita Kinney Grant toward Tuition Assistance**
- **Kasmer-DeFay LMC Tuition Scholarship**
- **MC DaDan McEvoy Tuition Scholarship**
- **Monsignor Sears Tuition Assistance Fund**

"It is with deep gratitude that we thank you – our faithful community, alumni, parents, grandparents and other friends who continue to support Catholic education. We appreciate every contribution and employ every dollar to make high-quality Catholic education even more accessible."

- John Proos
President

HOW THE ENDOWMENT FUND WORKS

GIFT
A donor makes a gift to establish the fund principal.

INVEST
The principal is protected and invested so the fund can grow.

GRANT
Grants are distributed each year from the earnings.

The process repeats and the impact lasts forever.

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