

Mack Messenger

McDONELL AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS

No. 1 - 2026

Partnering With Families

INSIDE:

- The Smiskeys share why MACS feels like family
- Q&A with state championship football team
- Shining a light on mental health resources at MACS

Our Mission: Centered on Jesus Christ and His Church, we partner with families to nurture young people's spiritual, intellectual, physical, and moral formation through a PreK-12 Catholic liberal arts education and vibrant student life of discipleship, athletics, and the arts.



MCDONELL AREA
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Est. 1982



Education for Life

McDonell Area Catholic Schools is proudly accredited through the Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation (WRISA) and is a member of the Institute of Catholic Liberal Education.



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From the Front Cover

For more than 15 years, the Smiskey family has partnered with McDonell Area Catholic Schools in faith, learning and service. Together with MACS, they have nurtured their children's growth while building lasting relationships within a vibrant Catholic community.

The Mack Messenger is published twice a year by the McDonell Area Catholic Schools (MACS).

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McDonell Area Catholic Schools believe that all the information within this publication is true and accurate to the best of our knowledge. Please contact us for any inaccuracies.

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Rev. Tim Oudenhoven
Associate Pastor Rev. Alex Kren
Dcn. Dan Rider



The Church of Holy Ghost

Very Rev. Daniel Sedlacek, Pastor
Associate Pastor Rev. David Nowicki
Dcn. Sean Hanson

The Church of Notre Dame

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Associate Pastor Rev. David Nowicki
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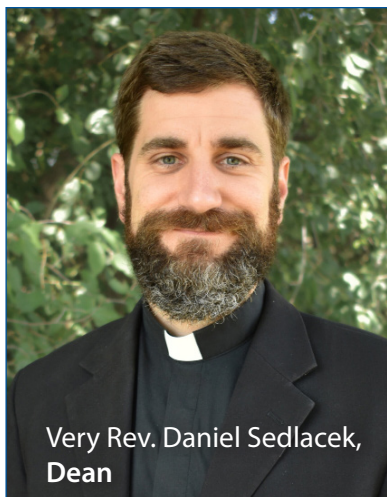
Rev. Tim Oudenhoven, Dcn. Dan Rider
Associate Pastor Rev. Alex Kren

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Thank you to the area priests and parishioners for your support of Catholic education.

FROM THE DEAN & PRESIDENT



Very Rev. Daniel Sedlacek,
Dean

Fr. Charles Francis Xavier Goldsmith, the founder of the first Catholic school in Chippewa Falls at Notre Dame in 1881, was reported to have said about the school children, "They are God's greatest, dearest gift, we must guard them well!" This care for the children that learn in our Catholic schools continues almost 150 years later. As the current pastoral leader of our Catholic schools in Chippewa Falls, I want to personally thank all of our families for entrusting to MACS the care and formation of our greatest, dearest gifts from God.

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Church, the family of God, reveres this sacred responsibility and also promises to help parents in raising their children in the practice of the Faith. Thus, Partnering with Families is one of five focuses of our current 2030 Strategic Plan. In one of his messages, Pope Leo XIV reminded us of the Church's teaching that "the family is the basis of society, a gift from God and a school for human enrichment. Through the sacrament of marriage, Christian spouses form a kind of domestic church, whose role is essential for teaching and transmitting the Faith." In this same message, Pope Leo recognized the fragility of the family in our current context: "Our era is marked by rapid changes which make it necessary, even more than ten years ago, to give particular pastoral attention to families, to whom the Lord entrusts the task of participating in the Church's mission of

proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel!"

As a Church and school family, let us all continue to focus on our families, and recommit ourselves to the safeguarding of this dearest gift through initiatives to build meaningful and supportive relationships, school policies that support family life, mental health resources, deepening our Catholic liberal arts education and more. With Pope Leo, I thank families who "despite difficulties and challenges, live the spirituality of family love, made up of thousands of small but real gestures," and am honored to be a spiritual father in our MACS family. - **Very Rev. Daniel Sedlacek, Dean**

Pope St. John Paul II said it well: "[T]hose in society who are in charge of schools must never forget that the parents have been appointed by God Himself as the first and principal educators of their children and that their right is completely inalienable. But corresponding to their right, parents have a serious duty to commit themselves totally to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and the school authorities." (*Familiaris Consortio*)

Parents and guardians who choose Catholic education do so in large part because they see the benefit of being part of a community with a shared commitment to a Christian vision of education and character formation. Likewise, we know that home life and parent/guardian relationships have a tremendous impact, for better or worse, on children's development and success in school.

Recognizing this importance, MACS has included Partnering with Families as a key component of our MACS' mission statement and 2030 Strategic Plan, with three overarching goals in this focus area: (1) Strengthen parent and family engagement in our school system by cultivating meaningful relationships, consistent communication, and purposeful volunteer opportunities; (2) Engage MACS families in Catholic liberal arts and the Catholic Faith through substantive communication and educational opportunities; and (3) As a community, build awareness and support for youth mental wellness.

Over the past two years, areas of strategic progress include the work of our parent committees, such as Parent Ambassadors (see article pg. 4), improved access to mental health resources and promotion of digital citizenship and healthy use of technology through school curriculum, policies and resources. Areas of opportunity include better welcoming and integrating new families into the community, continuing to enhance and streamline communication, and helping families understand and support our Catholic liberal arts educational philosophy.

Ideally, these partnerships between families and the school provide a web of support for our students' growth and development in faith, knowledge and character. The result is an extended MACS family, which surrounds our children and one another with love and support throughout the educational journey and beyond. - **Molly Meinen Bushman '98, President**



Molly Meinen Bushman '98,
President



By Mary Huffcutt

What Is Catholic Liberal Arts Education?

Our schools were first taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, whose love for students shaped generations of young people. They believed that education should form the whole person: mind, heart and soul. They also believed strong learning mattered. Students were taught to think clearly, read carefully, speak well and seek truth. This commitment to both faith and intellectual growth continues today in what we call Catholic liberal arts education.

At the center of this approach is the belief that God is present in all things. Because God is the source of truth, every subject can lead us closer to understanding His creation. Literature, science, mathematics, history and art work together to help students see the order, beauty and meaning.

In a Catholic liberal arts classroom, students learn in ways that go deeper than simply memorizing information. Teachers guide students to read carefully, ask thoughtful questions and discuss ideas together. Great works of literature and history are often used because they raise important questions about human life, virtue, suffering, courage and hope. For example, our high school juniors recently finished reading "Moby-Dick," a work that invites students to reflect on many of these themes.

Students are also encouraged to practice clear thinking and clear speaking. Classroom discussions allow students to explain their ideas, listen to others and search together for truth. Writing is another important part of learning, helping students organize their thoughts and think more deeply.

Subjects are often connected so students can see the unity of knowledge. For example, our students read "Beowulf" in literature while studying that same historical period in history class. Art and music can also help students better understand the culture of the time. These connections help students see learning as a fuller way of understanding the world.

Students are also introduced to the practical, or common, arts through exploratory classes and hands-on learning. These experiences allow students to discover skills and interests such as art, music, engineering, biomedical studies and other creative or practical fields. They help students develop practical skills and recognize how to use their gifts and talents to serve others.

Prayer and faith life are part of the daily rhythm of our schools. Students begin to see that faith is not separate from their studies or from everyday life, but something that shapes how we understand the world and how we live.

Catholic liberal arts education prepares students not only for college or careers, but for life itself. It helps students grow as strong thinkers while forming the virtues that guide how we live such as how we pray, love our neighbor, forgive, practice humility and carry our crosses with faith and hope.

The education at McDonnell Area Catholic Schools helps students grow in wisdom and develop habits of mind and heart that guide them throughout their lives.



A BEACON OF HOPE: PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

2030 Strategic Plan Publication Update



On October 8, 2025, Jamie Dodge and I met with a group of parents to begin a conversation about what it means to truly partner with families. Using their feedback, we drafted potential action steps connected to our existing goals and will continue to meet as a committee refine timelines and implementation.

Our first goal is to strengthen family engagement through meaningful relationships, consistent communication and purposeful volunteer opportunities. Parents shared that it can be difficult to build relationships with other families if their children are not involved in sports. In response, we are exploring ways to strengthen the Parent Ambassador program, encourage class-level events organized by ambassadors and develop a mentor family system for new families.

Our second goal focuses on engaging families more deeply in Catholic liberal arts education and the Catholic Faith. Parents expressed interest in learning more about our liberal arts practices and school approaches such as love and logic. Future communication and events will aim to help families better understand and participate in these elements of our mission.

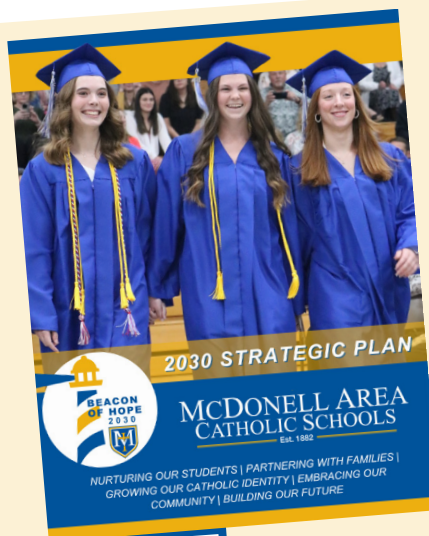
Finally, we seek to build awareness and support for youth mental wellness. Parents expressed a desire for more proactive communication and greater awareness of available resources. Potential steps include clearer communication from counselors, expanded conference conversations about the whole child and improved access to mental health resources on our website.

Strong partnerships with families are essential to our mission. In a Catholic school community, parents and educators work together to form the minds, hearts, and souls of our students.

- Gwen Doyle, Holy Ghost Principal

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Gwen Doyle, Jamie Dodge, Kate Bobholz, Michelle Slack, Melissa Grunwald, Chelsey Lindenberg



Scan the QR code to view the full plan!



“MACK CHAT” PODCAST CELEBRATES FIFTH SEASON

This school year marked season five for “Mack Chat.” The bi-weekly podcast is hosted by President Molly Bushman and features MACS students from all different grade levels, parents, staff and alumni. This season’s episodes, recorded with local media company, Eau Claire Hometown Media, have detailed the growth of McDonnell Area Catholic Schools and how our families are embracing our mission at home. One student who was on the podcast with her father even recited our mission statement by memory!

MACK
Chat
Involving YOU in our Mission



The podcast has been one tool in our toolbox to create a direct dialogue between parents and leadership. Plus, it’s always a treat to hear from the students about what they are learning in the classroom and what is resonating with them.



Scan QR code
to listen



Beth Leahy '11 talks about her family's multi-generational history at MACS while joined by her daughter, Cate, a 4K student at St. Charles Borromeo Primary School.



Adam Thorson and his daughter, Holy Ghost fifth grader, Addie talk about being new to the system and why they choose MACS for their family.



Tony Willkom '07 brought two of his children, Aubrey and Graham, and cover a lot of ground on their episode: Notre Dame, Holy Ghost, being an alumnus and being a current parent.

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES: THE ROLE OF A PARENT AMBASSADOR



A strong Catholic school community is built on partnership. One of the most powerful ways this partnership comes to life is through Parent Ambassadors.

Think back to when you first chose Catholic education for your child. For many families, that decision was influenced by the experience of another parent. That parent became a trusted guide, offering insight that no brochure or website could match. This is the heart of a Parent Ambassador.

A Parent Ambassador is a current parent who shares their experience to help other families discover the value of Catholic education. This role is especially important because word-of-mouth remains the most influential factor in a family's school choice. Catholic schools across the country have found that when parents actively share their positive experiences, enrollment remains strong and school communities grow.

Parent Ambassadors support the school's admissions and leadership teams by serving as welcoming guides to prospective families. They might connect one-on-one with a family considering enrollment, answer questions about school culture or share what a typical day looks like for their children.

The role does not end once a family enrolls. Parent Ambassadors also help new families feel connected and supported. A warm introduction, an invitation to a class event or help navigating school communications can make a new parent feel immediately at home.

Parent Ambassadors may also promote the school in everyday ways like sharing school news on social media, offering positive online reviews and celebrating students within the community.

Family Fun Night

Family Fun Night is always a joyful way to kick off the school year and bring our school community together. Families have the opportunity to meet staff and student leaders, connect with one another and start the year with shared excitement and purpose.



Parent Listening Sessions

Twice each year, MACS hosts parent listening sessions as a way to strengthen communication between families and school leadership. These sessions are designed to provide an open forum where parents can share feedback, ask questions, raise concerns and highlight what is going well.

Listening sessions give school leaders the opportunity to hear directly from families, clarify information, address misunderstandings and identify areas where we can grow. They also allow parents to better understand school priorities and initiatives.

In addition to feedback and discussion, these gatherings provide a chance for parents to meet one another and connect with school leaders. Building relationships strengthens trust, and trust strengthens partnership.

Our next parent listening session will be held on May 21. More information will be shared soon, and we encourage families to consider attending. We value your input and look forward to continuing the conversation.





Partnering in Faith, Family and Formation

The Smiskey Family's MACS Journey

For Seth and Tracey Smiskey, McDonell Area Catholic Schools has been a second home and spiritual foundation that has shaped their family's life for more than 15 years.

Seth and Tracey are proud parents of three children: Grant graduated last spring, Delaney will graduate this year and Collin is a seventh grader who will graduate in 2031. Though their children have been raised in Chippewa Falls, Seth grew up in Menomonie and Tracey in Naperville, IL. Having attended large public high schools themselves, they later came to value the distinctiveness of Catholic education for their own family.

A Decision Guided by Faith

The Smiskies' journey with MACS began in 2006, shortly after they moved from the Twin Cities to Chippewa Falls with their four-month-old son, Grant. As they searched for a parish home, they joined St. Charles Borromeo Parish and quickly found themselves embraced by a vibrant and welcoming faith community.

"At the time, Father William Felix '73 and Deacon Thomas Kinnick '80 were leading the parish, and both were strong advocates for the MACS system," Tracey recalls. "Our faith has always been our foundation, and we wanted our children to attend a Catholic school where they could grow in both faith and family and St. Charles truly felt like home. We fell in love with their teachers and knew this was the place for us."

Shaped by Teachers, Strengthened in Faith

As the years passed, the Smiskies witnessed MACS form their children academically while also shaping their character and faith.

"Our children have been blessed with priests and teachers who provided not only a strong education, but lifelong lessons of integrity and character," Tracey says. "We are deeply grateful for Catholic educators who dedicate their careers to nurturing students in a faith-filled environment. Their commitment has made a lasting impact on our entire family."

Faith formation extended beyond the classroom in a way the Smiskies never expected. When discipleship groups were introduced at McDonell High School, Grant and Delaney eagerly joined.

"They were both involved in groups that Chaplain Father Alex Kren started at McDonell," Tracey explains. "They motivated Seth and I to attend Emmaus Discipleship at Notre Dame, and now we are also in discipleship groups to grow in our faith."

Inspired by their MACS experience, the Smiskey children are now looking toward faith-centered higher education.

"Our kids have wanted to continue their education at Catholic colleges based on their experiences at MACS," Tracey notes.

"We are deeply grateful for Catholic educators who dedicate their careers to nurturing students in a faith-filled environment. Their commitment has made a lasting impact on our entire family."

Serving with Joy

To anyone familiar with MACS events, the Smiskeys are recognizable faces. Whether serving behind the scenes or stepping into leadership roles, their involvement is extensive, but to them it feels natural.

“We both come from families where volunteering for our church and school was simply an expectation, so getting involved was never a question for us,” Tracey said. “Our parents taught us the importance of giving our time, talent and treasure, and we’ve seen firsthand how communities improve when people work together toward a common goal.”

Today, their service takes many forms. From leading committees and coaching sports teams to cutting out laminated door decorations and chaperoning field trips, they have found many ways, big and small, to serve. What began as a practical way to connect gradually became something deeply meaningful.

“It started as a way to meet students, parents, and staff, but it has grown into something we genuinely look forward to,” Tracey shares. “It was also a way for us to spend more time with our kids and their classmates. The time goes by so quickly from when they are in preschool to graduating. We wanted to make sure to be as involved as we could be.”

A Community that Walks Together

When asked to describe MACS to someone unfamiliar with it, Tracey does not hesitate.

“The MACS community feels like a family. One that celebrates together and supports one another through challenges. Within our church and school community, our children have received their sacraments. They’ve learned life lessons in the classroom, on stage and on the field. We have found comfort during the loss of loved ones and built lasting relationships with teachers, parents

and students. Most importantly, through it all, we have grown together in our faith.”

Tracey believes MACS’ small, close-knit community gives students opportunities they might not experience in larger schools. “Their teachers know them by name and genuinely care about what is happening in their lives.”

Programs focused on leadership and service have been



especially formative. Through the Student Ambassador program, students engage with community organizations making a meaningful difference. The Kolbe Club emphasizes the connection between athletics and virtue.

“It encourages students to serve as positive role models for younger MACS students,” Tracey said. Their own children have embraced those opportunities wholeheartedly.

“Grant coordinated volunteer activities for both the football and baseball teams while serving as captain. Delaney helped organize the monthly Student Ambassador newsletter sent to local nursing homes, featuring articles written by MACS students, and she scheduled student volunteers for the Spaghetti Spectacular. Collin has volunteered as an altar server at our church since fourth grade and, having watched his older siblings serve, looks forward to continuing that tradition,” Tracey says.

Supported as Parents

The Smiskeys emphasize that MACS has supported them as parents navigating life’s many stages. Tracey points to the value of parents with older children who offer insight into what lies ahead. “Parenting is a roller coaster of ups and downs; the journey is a blessing but not always easy,” she says.

Support from MACS and their parish community has made that journey smoother.

“Whether it’s an expert speaker suggesting ways to safely navigate technology, guidance from our priests on growing in our faith as a family, or simply a fun family night to connect with your children and other families, these activities have been incredibly beneficial,” Tracey says.

After 15 years in the MACS community, Tracey offers simple advice to other families: “The experience at MACS is what you make of it. Get involved. Meet other families, teachers, and staff. Your experience will be far more rewarding if you do.”



PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES THROUGH CAMPUS MINISTRY

By Lily Rozeski, Coordinator of Campus Ministry



It is a great honor to be able to work alongside families when it comes to the spiritual development and evangelization of your children. It is not one person who leads another to Christ, but rather a community full of prayer, support and love. I have not encountered a community that works to be so prayerfully united as the MACS community does. We are blessed to have our prayer warriors who come to our school and pray for our students and staff every week. Almost every Mass that is celebrated in our chapel is offered for the staff and students of Notre Dame and McDonell. Every morning, we pray as a school. That is the kind of foundation upon which a rich Catholic community is built.

A community built on prayer is “like the wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock” (Matthew 7:24–25). Truly, it is prayer that encourages and invites the Holy Spirit into our lives so that more people may experience the love of Christ personally.

This year, we have worked to provide students with multiple opportunities to encounter Christ. When I asked them to recount something from this past year that impacted their faith, one student mentioned a moment at SEEK back in January. SEEK is a five-day Catholic conference held in Columbus, OH, and hosted by FOCUS. Students were able to attend talks given by some of the most prominent Catholic speakers, visit Catholic vendors and be part of some of the largest crowds for Mass and Adoration. There were over 16,000 people present, most of whom were college students.

This student recounted a moment during the Mass procession, which included around 500 priests and eight bishops: “I saw all the priests processing up, and I saw on the screen the server at the front holding the crucifix. I just saw everyone around me had their undivided attention on Jesus, and we were all singing, ‘O come let us adore Him.’ And in that moment, I thought, ‘Wow, this must be what Heaven feels like.’” It was wonderful to witness how Christ encounters each of us personally, even when we are in such a crowded room.

This kind of personal encounter is not limited to a big event such as SEEK. Another student explained how adoration in our own auditorium was impactful for him. This year, we implemented monthly adoration for all high school students, and the fruit of that time has been evident—not just in one student, but in the culture of the school. St. Carlo Acutis said, “When we face the sun, we get a tan, but when we stand before Jesus in the Eucharist, we become saints.”

“When Adoration began here, I felt the presence of God in the Eucharist,” the student said. “And that feeling led me further into my faith and has led me to becoming Catholic.” How special it is that God meets us where we are and encounters us in the space that we are given. It makes that personal encounter that much more meaningful.

While the big events are fun and impactful, it is ultimately within the every day that we truly come to know the person of Christ. This student explained that his encounter with Christ in Adoration has led him to find “further ways to serve and be involved, not just in school but outside of school.” This is where the community of our families and the culture of our school come into play. With a firm foundation in prayer, the Holy Spirit will continue to set hearts on fire until the whole world is ablaze.



NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTION

Celebrating 16 New Members

Sixteen McDonell students were inducted into the National Honor Society, joining 42 peers in one of the school's most prestigious academic and leadership organizations.



New members include: Maggie Bohl, Kyleigh Buckli, Marian Bullard, Wyatt Cochran, Elianna Eddy, Olivia Elstran, Hunter Hartjes, Olivia Herr, Colton Meyer, Dawson Moulton, Oliver Niese, Gabrielle Pieper, Jenna Proue, Xavier Stepp, Madelyn Wahl, and Brynn Wedemeyer.

“NHS shows us the positive impact we can have on the community and how we can be an example to those younger than us.” *Delaney Smiskey 2024 inductee*

“I believe NHS will help me not only in my academics but also in leadership and character.” *Elianna Eddy 2026 inductee*

FINE ARTS AT MACS

Middle and High School Students Move Crowds with Les Misérables: School Edition

For 40 years, an iconic musical has been moving audiences to tears across the world and in 2026, that happened right here at MACS.

The McDonell Central Catholic High School and Notre Dame Middle School Theatre Department took on the challenging story and music of *Les Misérables: School Edition* for this year's musical.

Continued on Next Page





The show's director, MACS counselor, Kelsey Jimenez, sat with the script wondering how to share the message with such a varied range of ages.

"How could a sixth grader understand the depth of Fantine's misery, the treachery of living in the streets of Paris in the 1830s, Gavroche's death or the profound act of the bishop handing over silver candles, turning Jean Valjean to Christ?" Jimenez said. But the students listened, they asked questions and when they watched the musical movie together, Jimenez said things changed.

"The students were deeply moved. It was palpable. They cried together, they laughed, they yelled out at the screen for justice," said Jimenez. "That moment is when they knew they could do it. They understood the foundation and the message: To love another person is to see the face of God. And that was it—we never looked back."

More than 50 students from both Notre Dame Middle School and McDonell Central Catholic High School were involved in bringing the barricade of the French Revolution to the stage in Chippewa Falls. For some students this was the first time they were ever involved in theater. For others, they ended their school theatre involvement on a life-changing note.

"The musical changed my perspective on life, as well as the amazing people who performed in it," said McDonell Senior Jaidyn Brady who played Fantine. "I built special friendships with many of the cast members and had an overall wonderful experience."

Audience members leaving the performances said they were in awe of the talent and moved by the entire production. Thank you to everyone for supporting the MACS Theatre Department. Be sure to follow along to see what next year will bring!

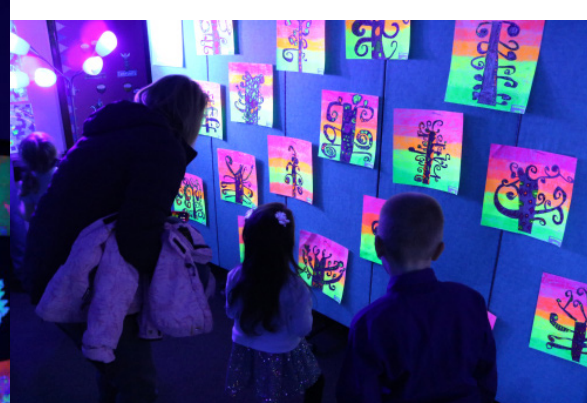
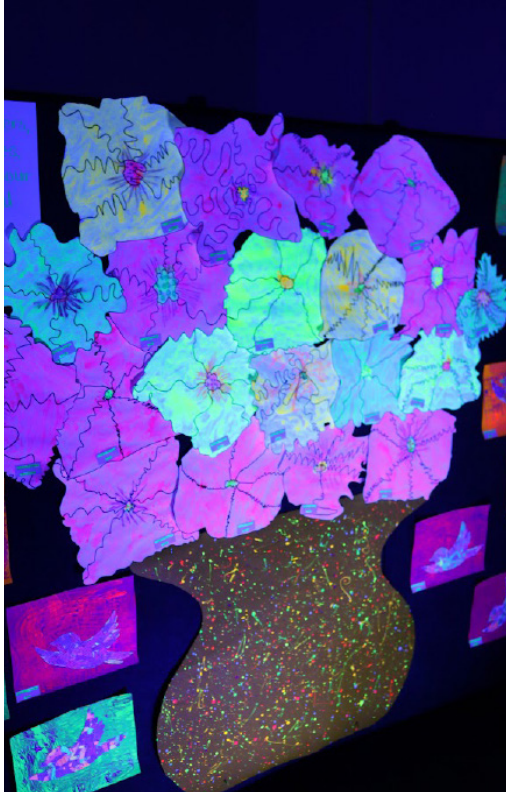


Art Show Shines Bright in Darkness

Students in 4K at St. Charles Borromeo Primary School had everyone in awe with their art show "God's Creations."

The show featured different pieces created by the students with different mediums that when the lights went out and the UV lights hit their creations—they illuminated with different and exciting colors.

This is just one way even our youngest of students are learning how to express themselves and tap into the creativity God has given each one of them.



*"For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands."
2 Timothy 1:6*

Middle Schoolers Create Rosaries

As Catholics, one of the most beautiful devotions in our faith is the Rosary. Art students at Notre Dame Middle School were tasked this winter to create their own rosary by art teacher Mr. Tom Burgraff.

They made each bead out of polymer clay and strung them together resulting in truly beautiful and unique works of art.

After the rosaries were finished, they went to the chapel to pray the rosary together led by MACS President Molly Bushman '98.

At MACS, our Catholic Faith is woven into every class helping our students find the truth and beauty in all things.



Fourth Graders Weave Colorful Patterns

Art classes at MACS go beyond just paper and paints. Our students at Holy Ghost Elementary School learned all about fiber arts.

Students were able to pick out different colored yarn and learned the different steps of weaving and the consistency needed.

Not only were they learning the technical terms of what this art entails, but they were also learning soft skills. Problem-solving, attention to detail and patience are all needed to complete a work like this.



Music Throughout MACS

When you walk through any MACS building, you are sure to hear music coming from one classroom or another. Whether it's an elementary choir class, a middle schooler practicing their new instrument or a high schooler belting out the final note of their solo—each grade and every student has an opportunity to fill their hearts with music.

For our students at St. Charles Borromeo Primary School and Holy Ghost Elementary School, tradition continued this winter with their annual Christmas programs. The performances included a Nativity, music by the choirs and the fifth grade band and readings. It brought a joy to all our families and community members seeing our littlest students tell the story of the birth of Christ and prepare us for His coming.

Creating a space to appreciate music beginning in those early grades has blossomed into a strong culture of musical arts at Notre Dame Middle School and McDonell Central Catholic High School.

This year, eight McDonell band students were selected to be a part of the Dorian Honor Band. These outstanding student musicians joined other students from across the Midwest in Decorah, Iowa where they spent one day practicing pieces of music and then performing them in a public concert.

Nearly 30 middle and high school student musicians also participated in the Wisconsin School Music Association's District Solo & Ensemble. Many of these talented students didn't just participate in one piece, but in multiple with different instruments, and some competing in both the instrumental and vocal categories. Seven of those students earned scores to continue on to the state level competition.

MACS students are truly embracing their God-given talents while also taking chances at trying something new. Their music and zest for the arts brings us all closer to the beauty of God and the wonders He has created.





MACKS ATHLETICS



There has been a lot to celebrate for Macks athletics in the 2025-26 school year. This fall, our boys and girls cross country teams had a strong season breaking multiple personal records. Owen Clark and McKenzie Simonson received all-conference awards and Owen made it to state for individual runners.



The girls volleyball team finished the season with an impressive 42-3 record. They became the West Cloverbelt Conference Champions, won the Conference Crossover against Columbus Catholic and won regionals advancing to the sectional semi-finals where their impressive season came to an end.

The Saints girls tennis team, our co-op with Regis Catholic School, wrapped up a successful season with a 10-6 record. Aleah Bowe and Liz Stombaugh won first place in sub-sectionals. The boys soccer team lost in the regional semi-finals and finished their season 5-6-3.



In winter sports, the Lady Macks finished the season with a 19-7 record and reached the WIAA Regional Final. The boys basketball team was crowned regional champions advancing to the sectional semifinal and finished their season with a 14-13 record.

On the ice, our boys and girls co-op hockey teams both ended their seasons in the regional tournaments. Macks Wrestling for both boys and girls had a successful season with three wrestlers making it to sectionals and one qualifying for state.

The Mack Way Continues on in the NCAA

This winter, three McDonell senior athletes signed letters of intent to play at the collegiate level. Mason Busse will be attending Augustana University in Sioux Falls, S. D. to play offensive line for the Augie football team. Track standout Elyse Bushman will continue to be a Bulldog but is trading the blue for maroon at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. And Karson Galvez will be heading down I-94 to Minneapolis to play basketball for North Central University. If you are near those areas, make sure you go cheer them on!



Mason Busse signs with Augustana for football.



Elyse Bushman signs with UMD for track.



Karson Galvez signs with North Central University for basketball.



Q&A WITH STATE CHAMPIONS: MASON BUSSE AND ELI STEPP



What was going through your head as you got on the bus to go to state? How were the nerves?

"I was repeatedly visualizing making individual plays, what the other team was going to do and holding the gold ball above our heads. I wasn't nervous at all, I knew that we did everything that we could in preparation for the game, and I had complete confidence in our team." - Eli

What play do you remember most from the game?

"I remember my fumble recovery the most from the state game and also looking up into the stands and seeing all my family and the community there supporting us." - Mason

"The last kneel down. It was all seniors out there on the field and after that kneel, we all huddled up and soaked in the moment." - Eli

What did it feel like when the clock hit zero?

"The feeling was very indescribable. It was a whole bunch of emotions but overall it was happiness. We completed the goal we set out to get from the start." - Mason

How does it feel ending your high school career with this major accomplishment?

"It felt great. In my class, we had a very successful high school career and that was the perfect cherry on top to win the State Championship. We were the best team in the state." - Mason

"It is a feeling where all of your hard work that you put in over the months and months with nobody watching, culminating with the highest achievement that you can get in the state. Also, the previous years of being so close, and having so many devastating losses makes this feeling even more special." - Eli

What is a memory from the season that you will remember forever?

"The haircuts that we all got before the state championship." - Eli

"A memory that I will remember forever is winning that gold ball as a team that had played together for so many years and when I recovered a fumble in the state game. I saw the ball on the ground, then I jumped on it and stood up with it. The crowd erupted in cheers" - Mason

What was it like on the bus ride back home?

"It was pretty awesome. Everyone was taking turns holding the trophy and taking pictures with it. At the same time though, I was so exhausted from putting everything I had into the game. It was also just overall a long day." - Mason

"It was a lot like all the other rides, just hanging out with my teammates, talking about the game and having fun." - Eli

What was it like coming home with the gold ball and showing it off?

"It was special for us because that gold ball hadn't been to McDonell in almost 40 years, so being the ones who finally could bring it home and sharing it with family and the community was amazing." - Eli

"It was an amazing feeling. We all worked so hard to get the gold ball and it is just a testament to our hard work and dedication in the weightroom, training and football. It was great to have school support and community support."

- Mason



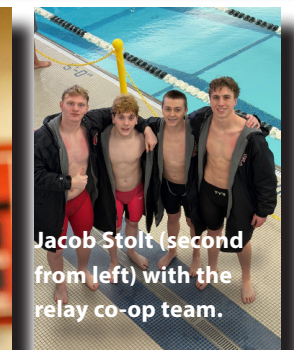
A look back:
The last
McDonell
Football State
champions
featured in the
Mack Messenger

Mack Athletes Compete in State Tournaments

The football team wasn't the only Macks team representing our schools on the state's highest stage.

Girls Wrestling keeps growing across Wisconsin and McDonell is right on the forefront. This year, senior McKenzie Simonson placed fifth in Individual Girls State Wrestling in the 100 weight class. Individual titles for girls began in 2022 and next year a standalone WIAA Girls Team State Tournament will be held for the first time.

Our co-op teams with Chippewa Falls continue to help our students shine and excel in athletics. MACS senior Paiton Grunwald made it to the Individual State Tournament in Gymnastics. MACS freshman Jacob Stolt made a splash his first year on the swimming co-op with Chippewa Falls. He competed in the 200 free relay and the 400 free relay at the state tournament.





FROM ADVANCEMENT: EXPANDING MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES THROUGH GRANT FUNDING

By: Amber Leibrandt, Advancement Director

At MACS, every student has a story and every family brings hopes, sacrifices, and dreams for their children's future. Our role is to walk alongside them, ensuring that a Catholic education remains accessible, supportive, and transformative for all who seek it.

That commitment requires more than tuition alone. It calls for creativity, stewardship and a deep reliance on partnership. One of the ways we are able to meet the evolving needs of our students and families is through grant funding.

In the past year, MACS secured more than \$235,000 in grant support, resources that directly impact classrooms, expand tuition assistance, strengthen campus ministry and increasingly respond to the growing mental health needs of our students.

Many of the families we serve fall within the ALICE threshold, working hard, contributing meaningfully to our community, yet often navigating financial strain without qualifying for traditional assistance. These are families who have made a deliberate choice to invest in a faith-based, Catholic education. Through grant funding, we are able to meet them in that commitment, bridging the gaps and ensuring their children have access not only to a MACS education, but to the full breadth of support that allows them to flourish.

One of the most meaningful expressions of this partnership is our Proactive Mental Health Initiative, developed by the MACS Mental Health Committee in response to the rising needs of young people today. In a post-COVID world, students are carrying more academically, socially, and emotionally. Thanks to grant-funded support, MACS is able to respond with intention: fostering resilience, promoting healthy habits, and creating an environment where students feel safe, supported and known.



As committee member Michael Van Hemert reflects, "Our corporal works of charity minister to the material and bodily needs of our community. It is equally important that we minister to the rising needs of our time for the healing of mental and emotional wounds within our community."

This work is made possible through generous partnerships with organizations like Mayo Clinic Health System and Chippewa Rotary Club and Foundation, alongside others who believe in the mission of McDonell Area Catholic Schools.

But more than funding programs, these partnerships reflect something deeper: a shared investment in the dignity, well-being and future of every child we serve.

UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS: DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS RESULTS

By: Alex Baierl, MACS School Counselor

This fall, students at McDonell Area Catholic Schools participated in the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP), a nationally recognized survey developed by The Search Institute. The survey helps schools understand the strengths, supports, and experiences that shape students' growth—both in and out of the classroom.

The DAP looks at two key areas: External Assets, which is the support students receive from family, school and community and the Internal Assets, which are students' own skills, values and sense of identity.

Research consistently shows that when students experience strong support, especially at home, they are more likely to succeed academically, build strong character and make positive life choices.

We surveyed 287 students in grades 6-12 and the results gave us a helpful snapshot of how our students are doing:

- Overall Score: 42.9 out of 60 ("Adequate" range)
- 51% of students are in the adequate or thriving range
- 49% of students are in the vulnerable or challenged range

This tells us that while many students are doing well, there is important work ahead to help all students thrive.

One of the most encouraging findings from our data is the strength of the family environment in our school community. The "Family" asset context scored 24.2 out of 30, making it the highest of all five contexts. This means, on average, our students feel supported and cared for at home, experience positive communication with parents and guardians and have clear expectations and guidance from family members.

This is a powerful foundation. Strong family support is one of the most important factors in a young person's development, influencing both academic success and emotional well-being. We are incredibly grateful to our families. Your impact is clearly visible in these results.

Other areas of strength we found in these results include having strong support systems and our students having high levels of empowerment and belonging. Areas for growth included positive identity and commitment to learning by finding motivation and engagement. These results affirm something we deeply believe: when schools and families work together, students thrive.

Together we will continue building an environment where every student is supported, confident and growing in faith, character, and learning.



FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



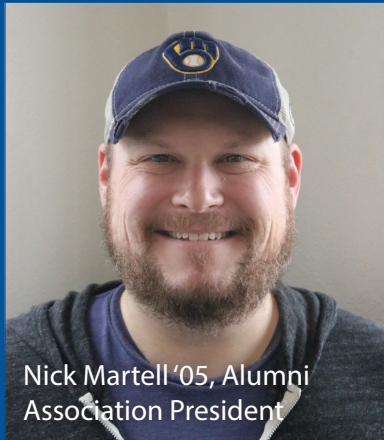
Greetings Alumni,

The 40th McDonell Alumni Weekend was a resounding success, bringing together generations of alumni, students, faculty and friends in a celebration of shared memories and enduring community spirit. From lively conversations to meaningful reconnections, the weekend reflected the strength and pride of the McDonell alumni family. Basketball and volleyball tournaments, along with the new family breakfast were well attended and filled with enthusiasm, reminding us all of the lasting impact our alma mater continues to have on our lives.

This 40th Alumni Weekend would not have been possible without the incredible dedication of our alumni volunteers. Their time, energy and commitment ensured that every detail, from planning to execution, created a welcoming and memorable experience for all who attended. We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed their efforts, whether behind the scenes or front and center.

The Spring Spectacular on April 11 was also a great evening of fun, connection and support for McDonell. Proceeds from the event directly benefit the school, helping to sustain programs, enhance opportunities and preserve the traditions we all value.

As we reflect on the success of Alumni Weekend and the Spring Spectacular, we are reminded of the vital role our alumni community plays year-round. Through volunteering, attending events and generous contributions, alumni continue to strengthen the foundation of McDonell for future generations. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication—we look forward to celebrating together again soon.



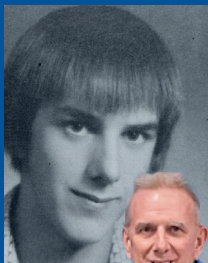
Nick Martell '05, Alumni Association President

Hey MACS alumni! Supporting the A.B. McDonell Vision Fund is a meaningful way to give back and ensure the same faith-filled formation and experiences are available to the next



Scan the QR Code to learn more





Featured Alumnus: Mark Maloney '78

For nearly five decades, Mark Maloney '78 has remained closely connected to McDonell, first as a student-athlete, then as a coach, mentor, parent and proud alumnus.

A Chippewa Falls native, Maloney graduated from McDonell Central Catholic High School in 1978, where he played wide receiver and defensive end under Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Famer Gerry Uchtyl. After graduation, he served four years in the Air Force before returning home and eventually beginning a 42-year career as a mechanical engineer, retiring from Hewlett Packard Enterprise at the end of 2025.

While his professional career was impressive, many in the MACS community know Maloney best from the football field. Over 31 years of coaching; 24 of those at McDonell, he shaped generations of student-athletes. His fourth season coaching eight-man football ended with the first football state championship for McDonell since 1990. The achievement earned him Green Bay Packers Coach of the Week honors following the 2025 title game.

To his players, however, Coach Maloney's impact went far beyond wins and losses. His guiding philosophy was simple: "Be a good person." He added, "There's too much bad in the world. If you can smile at somebody that's having a bad day, make someone else happy." He often reminded players, "Sometimes good things don't happen to you because you are the good happening to others."

All three of Maloney's children: Melissa '01, Glenn '05, and Alex '09 graduated from MACS. He and his wife, Estelita, are now proud grandparents of four. After hosting six foreign exchange students over the years, the couple is now looking forward to traveling in retirement.

"It's been a blast," Maloney said. "I've been a big part of McDonell since way back in the '70s and I'm going to be around."



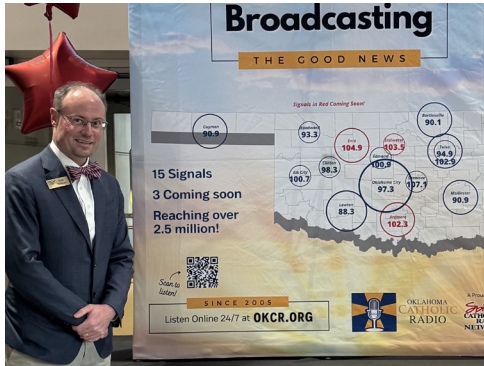
Madre Peregrina Unites MACS in All-System Mass



Class Notes

1990s

Matt Willkom '98 accepted a position as Operations Director for 15 radio stations at Spirit Catholic Radio. ▼



2000s

Adam Jacobson '06 picked up his 300th career win as head coach of the boys basketball program in Marathon. ▼



**MOVED? NEW JOB?
NEW ADDITION TO
THE FAMILY?
WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**



2010s

Jake Horan '15 was named the new general manager of the Eau Claire Express. Jake earned his Master's degree in sports administration from UW-Platteville and went onto work for the Waterloo Bucks and Cedar Rapids Kernels before coming back home to join the Express front office. ►



Josh Leibrandt '16 welcomed his first child, Jacob, in April 2025. After serving in the United States Marine Corps from 2016-2021, Josh relocated to Montana and has been working with Base Camp Country Real Estate, where he now specializes in the sale of farm, ranch, hunting, and timber properties, as well as luxury homes on acreage. ►



Megan (Baier) Baughman '18 was recently matched in Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Wisconsin, and just days later, she and her husband **Hayden Baughman '18** welcomed their first child.



2020s

Mark Buchmann '20 graduated from UW-River Falls in December with a Bachelor's degree in music education and accepted a position teaching K-12 music in Glenwood City. ►



Class Reunions

50th Class Reunion for the Class of 1976

The McDonell Class of 1976 will be celebrating its 50th reunion at The Ritz in Chippewa Falls on Saturday, August 22 from 2-6 p.m.

50th Class Reunion 8th Grade Class of 1976

The 8th Grade class from all Chippewa County Catholic Schools that graduated in 1976 is having a 50 year reunion on Saturday, May 30 at Notre Dame Parish at 8 a.m. for a mass followed by a social gathering at Goldsmith Cafe & Coffee Bar at 22 S. Prairie St.

55th Class Reunion for the Class of 1971

The McDonell Class of 1971 will be celebrating its 55th reunion at The Ritz in Chippewa Falls on Saturday, September 26 from 3-6 p.m.

35th Class Reunion for the Class of 1991

The Class of 1991 will be celebrating its 35th reunion on Saturday, August 1, 2026. They have a private room reserved at Rally Caps Sports Bar beginning at 6 p.m. ▼



61st Class Reunion for the Class of 1965

The Class of 1965 will be celebrating its 61st reunion on Saturday, August 1, 2026, 1 p.m., at Riverfront Park. ▼





WALL OF RECOGNITION

We need your help! We are working on creating a wall of recognition for all McDonell graduates who have moved on to vocations of priesthood or religious life. Below is a preliminary list based on our current alumni directory.

Please email us with any additional names, corrected spellings, or other biographical information or photos you may have. We want to have as much information on file as possible so we can share these stories, honoring the persons and inspiring current and future generations of McDonell students.

1900

Sister Mary (Eugene) Coleman

1910

Sister Marie Coleman

1911

Sister Mary Felice

Sister Felice Annette, SSND

1912

Sister Mary Matthew, SSND

1914

Sister Mary (Immanuel) Baulne

Sister Kathleen Ruth, SSND

Sister M. Kathleen

1915

Sister M. Virginia Marie

1917

Sister Mary Ellen,
Annie Laurie Cameron

1921

Sister Christine Gauthier

1922

Reverend Lloyd P. Rushman

1926

Sister Mary Agnes

Sister Mary Arthur Bresina

Sister Agnes Connell

1927

Sister Theodore Stoffel

Sister Margaret (De Sales) Sugar

1928

Rt. Reverend Stephen Anderl

Reverend Dayton Kirby

Sister M. Charitas Prince

1929

Sister Mary (Clement), Viola
Bresina

Sister Mary (Pierre) Hebert

Reverend John Rondeau

Sister Loretta Schmidmayr

1930

Reverend Ralph Geissler

Reverend Vianney Thibedeau

1931

Sister Miriam (Bresina),

Elizabeth Bresina

Sister M. (Remy), Esther Revor

Sister Lorraine Frenette

1932

Mother Mary (Gabriel),
Catherine Anderl

1934

Brother John Anderl
Reverend Lloyd Geissler

1937

Sister Mary (Madeleva), Postl

1938

Reverend Francis Rushman

1940

Sister Arliss Sheeley

1943

Sister Gregor Bergerson

1947

Sister M. (Petrine), Adrienne Amelse

Brother Charles Bibeau

1949

Sister Mary (Corda), Muriel Glodosky

Sister Mary (Roseria), Elizabeth Mayer

1953

Sister Dorothy Schneider

1954

Sister Margaret Gaier

Sister Sharee Hurtgen

1955

Sister Yvonne Hiess

1957

Brother Robert Seidling

1958

Reverend John A. Schultz

1968

August Cameron

1969

Brother Richard Calkins

1973

Reverend William Felix

1976

Reverend Daniel Farley

1980

Deacon Tom Kinnick

1988

Reverend John Potaczek

2006

Reverend Joseph Baker

MEMORIAM

Please join the MACS community in prayerful memory of deceased alumni, parents, and friends.

John P. Rolbiecki '82

January 28, 2026, Chetek, WI

Ronald L. Ruf '79

December 22, 2025, Chippewa Falls, WI

Matthew L. DeRusha '77

February 5, 2026, River Falls, WI

Daniel R. Haley '68 

February 4, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

Lucyann F. (Swoboda) LeClerc '50

February 7, 2026, Lake Hallie, WI

Mary Lou (Nowak) Postl '53

February 11, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

Mark J. Bischel '63

February 11, 2026, Bloomer, WI

Marguerite A. (Connell) Rank '50

February 12, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

Mary Ann (Ruf) Schimmel '51

March 6, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

Leonard N. Bowe '58 

March 6, 2026, Danville, CA

Joseph E. Samens '69

March 15, 2026, Tilden, WI

Dr. Richard J. Borman '70

March 6, 2026, Kenosha, WI

Lee H. Arntz '54

March 24, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

Norbert J. Tlachac '50

March 6, 2026, Milwaukee, WI

Nancy J. Sires '78

April 1, 2026, Chippewa Falls, WI

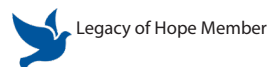
MEMORIAM FRIENDS


Deacon Robert J. Duncan

January 6, 2026, Channahon, IL

Sister Karen Streveler, OSB

Planned Giving Symbol



We are deeply grateful for the remarkable generosity of Susan (Ermatinger) Cycon '37, who passed away at the age of 105. Through her planned gift, Susan ensured that her support for Catholic education will continue to bless students and families for many years to come. 



The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) perpetual fund dedicated to supporting McDonell Area Catholic Schools, distributing approximately 4–5% of its investment earnings annually while preserving the principal. Donors may establish endowed gifts in perpetuity by naming "McDonell High School Foundation, Inc." as a beneficiary, with all funds managed under careful stewardship and oversight.

PARENTS: IF THIS ISSUE IS ADDRESSED TO YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER WHO NO LONGER LIVES AT HOME, PLEASE CALL THE ADVANCEMENT OFFICE WITH CORRECT ADDRESS: 715.723.0538 OR GO ONLINE: www.mcdonellareacatholicsschools.org/alumni/

If you have updated contact information or would prefer to receive the Mack Messenger in a different form (digital or physical) please contact the Advancement office at 715.723.0538 or advancement@macs.k12.wi.us



The A.B. McDonnell Vision Fund plays a vital role in sustaining the mission of McDonnell Area Catholic Schools. Because tuition alone does not cover the full cost of education, gifts to the Vision Fund help ensure every student can experience a faith-filled, high-quality Catholic education.



Scan the QR Code to learn more

SAVE THE DATE!
Spirit of the Macks
Saturday, October 3rd

Supporting all student-athletes at MACS. Live Auction. Silent Auction. Women's Table. Men's Table. Pick-A-Purse. Great Prizes. Fun Atmosphere. Food and Beverages.

Sponsored by the MACS Athletic Booster Club



SAVE THE DATE!
Craft Country Expo
Saturday, November 21

To benefit all the Fine Arts students at MACS — sponsored by the MACS Fine Arts Booster Club



2025-26 CORPORATE SPONSORS

THANK YOU TO OUR TEACHERS' HERO



THANK YOU TO OUR PATRON



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



THANK YOU TO OUR PROMOTERS



THANK YOU TO OUR BACKERS



THANK YOU TO OUR FRIENDS

