

COMMUNIQUÉ

THE MAGAZINE OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL

Spring 2022



SJ Cadets View Student Artwork at Fine Arts Night in December 2021



The Class of 2022 Show Their School Spirit at the Fall Pep Rally



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Greetings from our busy and bustling St. Joes campus. This spring season of renewal and hope holds special meaning as the important work of college preparation is in full bloom (and mask optional!). Our students, resilient and determined, continue to excel in all areas of academic achievement; creativity and the arts; athletic competition; service and faith formation.

These months have been invigoratingly busy – celebrating the college acceptances of our Class of 2022, continuing our legacy of teamwork and athletic success, rehearsing for the spring performance of *Sponge Bob Square Pants: the Broadway Musical*, and beginning the onboarding process for the incoming Class of 2026. Though, the most important experiences yet this season were directly related to our strong Catholic Identity. More specifically, the reverence with which each of our 775 students celebrated their first all-school Masses (Ash Wednesday and Feast Day) in over two years was inspiring and a source of great community pride. The shared values and faith connecting our students; the respect they have for one another and their school; and the camaraderie they establish in these important and unique moments are the foundation upon which success is accomplished. Faith builds community, and our community builds incredible young people.

As we continue the forward progress outlined in our strategic priorities, we ground ourselves in our school mission; not only focusing on what students need to know to be successful, but what kind of people they need to become to make a meaningful mark on the world. The momentum of improvement is ever strong within our campus community because we do not do this work alone, but through faith, friendships, and family. Detailed within this Spring edition of the Communiqué is the story of a school community made stronger by the collaborative participation of all stakeholders.

In Faith & Fellowship,

David J. Klein
President



St. Joseph High School is an independent Catholic college preparatory community that educates and motivates young women and men to live purposeful lives as ethical leaders committed to the common good of all.

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St. Joseph High School is a self-governing institution within the Diocese of Bridgeport.

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FORGING A BOND LIKE NO OTHER

Maddigan Leifer '22, Senior Class President, Unites her Class' School Spirit Despite the Most Unique of High School Experiences.

In third grade, I was elected Class President. I earnestly served my classroom of peers in the best way an eight-year-old can: helping teachers organize their classrooms after school, sharing ideas for field day activities, and walking students with skinned knees to the nurse during recess. What I did not know then, but what I've certainly learned by now, is that being a leader in Student Council is much more than the willingness to assist with tasks when needed, it is the responsibility of bringing your classmates together.

The elation I felt after hearing my name announced as St. Joseph High School's Senior Class President was quickly accompanied by a feeling of profound obligation to my peers. I would have the rare opportunity to be of service to them during our most important and final year as Cadets. Yet, staring at the school calendar in August was daunting. I wondered how many of our school traditions would remain distanced or disrupted by pandemic safety protocols. Would we have a Homecoming Game, Color Wars, or a Senior Outing? Would Prom be held under a tent? The answers at the beginning of the year were simply unknown.

The more I thought about the unknown, the more I realized that as much as we love our SJ traditions, they are only secondary to the memories we would make and the friendships we would forge. The Class of 2022 would become stronger every day just by spending our time together at SJ – whether enjoying a latte at the Cup of Joe Café, cramming for mid-terms in the Media Center, or celebrating as we received our college acceptance letters, these were the memories that would stay with us forever.

From a young age, my grandfather has always told me, "Do not wish your life away." This simple expression has had a tremendous impact on my life; I don't want to look back and regret the time I wasted being distracted from the unknowns, instead I will engage in the present. Prior to the start of our senior year, my focus shifted to bringing our class together, advocating for our diverse interests, and ensuring a return to the school spirit felt before March 2020.

Fortunately for our class, the unknowns have become more clear. Today, when I walked into school my smile was no longer hidden behind a mask, and we now know that there are many traditional senior experiences to look forward to this spring. However, it is the everyday memories here at St. Joes; it is the close bond we share as the extraordinary Class of 2022 that will last much longer than our Color Wars face paint. And while we all look forward to the dances, trips, and retreats, we will always remember that they would not mean anything if we had not built the friendships, community, and school pride as a class beforehand.



Strength in our Peers

The peer groups on campus reflect the impressive diversity of student talents and endless energy to be of support to one another. Student Ambassadors, the National Honor Society, Writing Center and Student Academic Center tutors, and Peer Ministry mentors are just some of the venues through which students elect to be of service to peers. No matter where or when a Cadet is in need of assistance, peer support is never far away. Two current seniors, Ryan Carroll and Mary Lundregan detail the importance of that SJ peer support to guide them throughout their high school years.



Ryan Carroll '22

The community support we receive at St. Joes is second to none.

Experiencing the pandemic has been especially hard for me, as I had an aunt pass away in March 2020. While it was a difficult time in my life, my strong SJ friendships provided a light in a dark place. My friends not only called me every day, but they came all the way to my house just to say hi from a distance. At SJ, I have made so many friendships that will last a lifetime; I know that they will support me at the worst of times and celebrate with me during the extraordinary times.

The programs at St. Joes create the structure to build these support systems and friendships. One of our greatest opportunities for peer support is Pizza & Prayer. It is an opportunity to connect with others and it is a healthy outlet to help work through tough times and strengthen your faith. Participating in events such as these are what helped guide me to be the best version of myself as a Peer Minister.

Last year, I attended the Kairos Retreat for the first time. I was shy and withdrawn and, truth be told, I didn't even want to be there. But as the evening went on, I listened to my peers give speeches about their struggles and how they managed to



overcome those challenges. I thought to myself, wow, I could never do that. Where did such confidence and bravery come from?

After being inspired by student speeches, we joined small group discussions. The leader of my group was Sophia Paoletta '21. I was amazed by how well she was able to lead the group and I realized that this was a way I could truly make a difference. As the retreat went on, I found myself opening up like I never had before and it was like no other feeling I had ever experienced.

Now, as a senior, I have learned to be confident in myself and how to pass that confidence on to others in my community. I am currently in SJ's Peer Ministry class and I love how it teaches us to be effective leaders. The class helps us to build the confidence we need to take on any challenge while also learning about ourselves. Every single day, I encourage rising seniors to become leaders of this community - to serve others.

'Strength in community' is exactly how I would define Peer Ministry at St. Joes. Whether you take the actual class or participate in other mentoring opportunities, St. Joes gives you the chance to become your best self for others. There are a lot more people struggling than one may think, and to be able to provide them with friendship, support, and love is a blessing.

We are a strong united community here at St. Joes but that does not magically happen. It takes work and dedication to form a strong community and that is what peer ministry is all about.

Mary Lundregan '22

As a freshmen at St. Joes, you have peer support everywhere you turn. I remember when I first started, I had mentors that were Student Ambassadors who helped me navigate my first few weeks on campus, learn how to open my locker, and find opportunities to make new friends. National Honor Society (NHS) members gave me tips on writing my papers and how to best communicate with my teachers. That support made me feel cared for and confident.

It's important for SJ students to feel connected and open to helping one another. As much as going to your teachers is helpful, your fellow students are the ones who have been through what you're going through. Especially us, the seniors - we've taken all the classes, we've been in the same situations, we can best relate to those younger students who are stressed out about an assignment or a big game. We can give our peers advice to help them succeed.

I'm currently the President of the Writing Center as well as a member of NHS, and I do a lot of tutoring. I love being able to help those who are just as focused on the academics as I am. As I prepare to graduate, I know that the next class will step into our role and continue the legacy of peer support - that's just how SJ is built.



ATHLETIC HIGHLIGHTS

Freestyling to First

In November 2021, Girls Swim member, Daniela Tanaka Sales '23, earned a 1st place finish in the 50 Freestyle with a time of 24.52. This is SJ's first state title in swim since 2012! Dani also finished 3rd in the 100 Breast at 1:07:00, which is a new school record in the event.

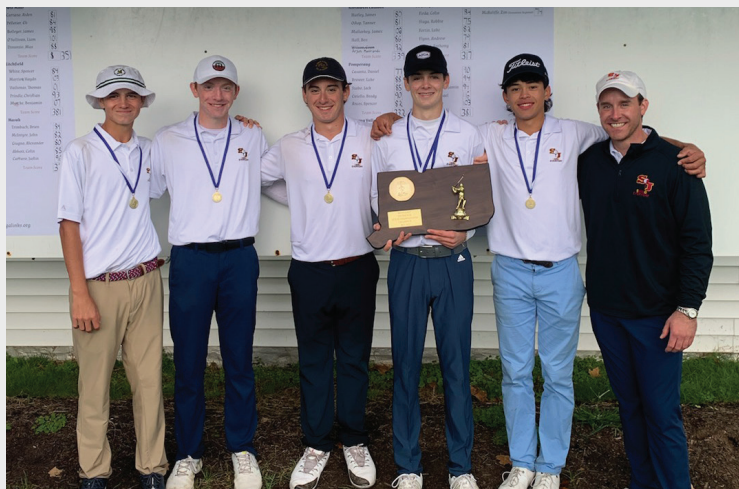


Girls Soccer Champions

In November 2021, Varsity Girls Soccer defeated Simsbury to win the Class L CIAC Championship. Caroline Sheehan '22 was named Most Valuable Player.

Boys Golf is Unstoppable

In October 2021, Boys Golf became the first team to win a championship in two different seasons in the same year (fall and spring)!





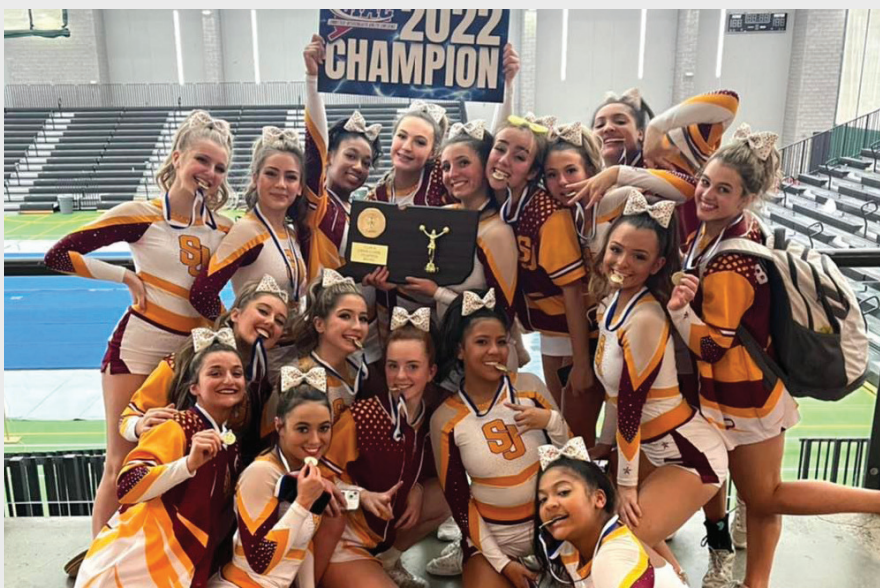
Gymnastic Stars

Gymnastics placed 2nd in the FCIAC Championships and the Class S State Championship. Lindsay Capobianco '22 and Julianna Rizzitelli '24 also came in 2nd and 3rd place, respectively.



Grappling for Gold

In January 2022, SJ held its first-ever wrestling match at home. Congratulations to Joey Sansone '24 and Zach Brzoska '25 who won 1st and 3rd in their respective FCIAC Championship weight class!



NCAA Bound

In January 2022, we were proud to honor 16 student athletes on their NCAA Signing Day / Commitment Ceremony. The full list of students, divisions, and the colleges they will be attending can be found online at sjcadets.org/news.

Cheerleading Has the Spirit

Congratulations to SJ Cheer as they took home the Class M State Championship in March 2022!

FRUMBULL

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22, Girls Varsity Basketball took home the FCIAC Title for the first time since 2012. SJ Cadet, Kirsten was named Tournament MVP and Coach Lindwall was ment Coach of the Year!



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Jada Harris '16 Shares how she Relies on and Strengthens her Community.

There's no denying that while at St. Joseph High School, Jada Harris '16 was a true powerhouse. Over the course of her four years, Jada was a star on the track and field team – oftentimes breaking the school's and her own personal records – winning multiple FCIAC Championships. As if that weren't enough, Jada was also President of the Student Ambassadors, Vice President of the Students Against Destructive Decisions Club (S.A.D.D.), as well as a member of the Human Rights Club. But while Jada was exceptional both on and off the field, she freely admits that, looking back, she didn't earn those accolades alone.

“At that time in your journey, you feel as though those hardships and challenges were all on your own. But looking back, I realized I couldn't have gone through those situations without the strength of the people around me. One of the reasons I actually chose St. Joes was because I knew they wouldn't just focus on my athletic abilities. They would support me and develop me as a person, not just as an athlete, and I definitely wanted to spread my wings.”

Jada currently works as the Press Secretary and Social Media Manager for the Connecticut Secretary of State – a position she found herself in after life threw her a few alternative paths along the way. At the University of Massachusetts, Jada double majored in Social Thought & Political Economy and Communications. Her initial plan was to become a social justice



attorney, but as a rising senior at UMass, she entered into the SBS in D.C. Program (Social & Behavior Science School). As a part of the program, she was given the opportunity to live in D.C. and intern for Congresswoman Catherine Clark.

“That was the summer I decided that I would pursue a Masters in Public Policy as opposed to a law degree. I have a strong passion for public interest work, social justice, and racial equity, so what better way to gain that experience but in an office that deals with voting rights and elections, among other things?”

Imagine now, if you will, Jada Harris’ jam-packed schedule: she trains 20+ hours per week as an NCAA Athlete (still breaking records, by the way), attends day-long track meets, takes a summer professional development course, and in May 2020, decides to enroll in an accelerated Masters in Public Policy Program, all during the midst of a pandemic. Where did she find her fortitude -- in herself and in her community.

Beginning with St. Joes, Jada has always had a community that supports her each and every day. She recalls fondly the way her athletic wins would be announced on the loudspeaker at school or how her peers would cheer her on at track meets. She knew her faculty members and fellow cadets were there to challenge and support her. As she’s recently completed her Masters, Jada continues to rely on that community.

“I think strength in community means strengthening your community as well.”

“It takes a village. And it even took me a while to learn that. I was trying to handle challenges alone or navigate experiences by myself and it wasn’t working. I needed to allow those individuals around me to lift me up – whether that be my mom, my partner, my coaches, or teammates - just allowing them to be there for me.”

Jada now takes her experiences relying on others to give back to the communities she’s a part of. She serves as a peer mentor to UMass athletes, and is Vice-President and contributor to an international magazine called *The Open*, which connects people across the world through mutual understanding and collaborative work.

“I think strength in community means *strengthening* your community as well. St. Joes gave me the tools necessary to navigate the collegiate experience, but I want to go even farther and give other women the advice I felt like I needed at similar positions in my life. My goal is just to continue to pull them up and bring them perspective.”



For Jada, perspective also comes with mindfulness and wellness. It’s about knowing who you are, where your passions lie, and communicating your needs to others. She believes strongly that taking care of your mental health and being present in the moment will lead to sustained success and an elevated mindset that will allow you to accomplish anything.

“If I could give one piece of advice to SJ seniors on the verge of graduation, I would say to take risks. Because on the other side of those risks are opportunities. You have to go through it to grow through it. And remembering that putting yourself in those positions of risk is going to make you uncomfortable. That’s when you keep your community close. When you’ve allowed yourself to get turned inside out, they will be there to help you put all the pieces back together.”

In 2020, Jada Harris qualified and competed in the NCAA Track & Field Championships in the high jump after earning the top mark at the Atlantic 10 Championships.

Harris was named 2019-20 Most Outstanding Field Performer at the 2020 A-10 Indoor Track & Field Championship after winning three medals for the Minutewomen and was named UMass’ Female Student Athlete of the Year.

In addition, she was named to the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association All-Academic Team, earned Dean’s List honors, and earned a spot in the 4.0 Athletic Director’s Club. Harris was also a social justice peer educator on campus, founded Minority Student Athletes United (MSAU), and helped the UMass Athletic Department obtain a Women for UMass Amherst Fund award.

In 2020, she was nominated for the prestigious NCAA Woman of the Year Award.

MUSIC SPARKED A MASCOT

*This Charming Story, Featuring the Debut of our Beloved Cadets was Written by Marilyn G. Salerno '66.**

Every sports season, Fairfield County newspapers are filled with the athletic achievements of the St. Joseph High School sports teams. Bold headlines listing their awards and trophies make everyone who attends or attended the school proud of their alma mater. That includes me, a member of the Class of 1966.

But when I was a freshman almost sixty years ago, the sports program began only with a freshman boys basketball team. Let me take you back to September 1962, when a group of boys and girls entered St. Stephen's Elementary School in Monroe to begin the first freshman class of St. Joseph High School. The actual high school was still under construction and the freshman class was housed for one year at St. Stephen's. Excited to be part of a new high school, students coming from the surrounding communities greeted each other, forming new friendships, and meeting new teachers. One of the first events of the school year was the formation of the basketball team by teacher, Vito Montelli. The team would create school spirit for the new student body and bring them together to attend games. The team practiced in a new gym with soft light filtering in from the high windows. Sneakers squeaked on the highly polished floor as players did layups and jump shots in preparation for their first season. All the team needed was a mascot, a name for their maroon and gold uniforms.

The school administration announced a student contest to name the basketball team. It created quite a buzz as small circles of students tossed around possible names. For me, it triggered moments of thought. I pondered for days trying to decide on a name. Being a new school, I thought St. Joes should have a name to help us stand out among the other schools who had a long history behind them. Common mascot names included animals, birds, or colors. Warriors like the Vikings, Knights, or Gladiators might work. Nothing interesting came to mind. In the end, a name presented itself in the most unusual of places. It was a case of serendipity.

During a homework break, I sat at the piano to practice my lesson for the week. One of the more difficult pieces was John Philip Sousa's march, "High School Cadets." When my fingers reached the last notes of the march, I stopped playing. The name caught my attention. The peppy tune sparked a vision of a student in a crisp uniform with gold braided trim, marching proudly across an athletic field. I paused. A cadet is a student projecting an image of integrity, honor, and strength, right? One who exhibits the high ideals of their school. It seemed an original and different name for an athletic team, maybe just right for St. Joes. I mulled the name over in my mind for a few days, and then submitted it.

The school administration held an assembly in the gym to announce the winner of the contest. When the name, "Cadets", was announced, I gasped. The Principal called my name and invited me up to the stage to receive a trophy. Stunned, I couldn't get out of my chair. Friends pulled me up and pushed me to the stage to accept a shiny, tall trophy with a marching Cadet at the top. The basketball team played their first season with shouts of, "Go Cadets", shaking the rafters of the gym and building school pride with every basket.

Fifty-nine years later, the St. Joseph Cadets have made a lasting mark in sports. I'm still in awe seeing the name in print. When I moved out of state, I brought the Cadets trophy back to the high school. It was placed in a display case along with many other trophies and plaques around the school, physical evidence of the athletic success of the Cadets. Maybe you have spied the trophy with the marching cadet at the top.

Whenever I read about the Cadets in the sports pages of the newspaper, I think back to that afternoon when I practiced the Sousa march. Music has been a surprising source of creative inspiration for me, in my writing for children, as well as other aspects of life. John Philips Sousa's "High School Cadets" has a special place in the school's history and for me. Go Cadets!



** This story was edited slightly for content placement.*

THE LEGEND OF THE HOG

*While we may be the Cadets, our Ever-Triumphant Football Team is Referred to as the Hogs. Want to Know why?**

In our gymnasium, on our fields, stitched onto uniforms - the SJ Cadets are emblazoned in our history and tradition. But...for the past 31 seasons, St. Joseph High School's football team has been known by another moniker: the Hogs.

How did they become the Hogs? It all started on a frigid, fall morning, October 25, 1980, to be exact. St. Joes (ranked #4 in the State Football polls at the time) was hosting a strong Stratford High School team and looking at a showdown with #3 Fairfield Prep the following week.

Heavy winds and rain were in the forecast. The field would be a muddy mess, nearly unplayable - it had very little grass to begin with. Coach Ed McCarthy came into the locker room to discuss the possibility of postponing the game, as well as the effects a short week of practice sandwiched between games with two of our biggest and toughest rivals would have on the team. As he started to talk, he was abruptly interrupted with a loud protest from the back of the locker room, "We are Hogs, and we love to play in the mud!"

The contagious energy from the team was enough to move forward with the game that morning, in practically a monsoon, no less. St. Joes won 20-0! Following the game, a new battle cry was heard for the remainder of the season, "We are the Hogs, and the Hogs are great!"

With their incredible running game, complimented by creative passing attacks and a tenacious defense, this 1980 team went on to win the school's first Football State Championship ever! Genuine St. Joes football fans knew that a good luck charm had officially been created - and ever since then, our Hogs continue to 'Win Every Day'.

"To be a student-athlete you need to be disciplined and dedicated to working hard every day. Coach McCarthy taught us that. My message to the team: 'Don't ever give up'. Anyone can get beat on any given day. The experience of being part of a Championship team takes work; working together as one. This has definitely helped me personally throughout my business career. Go Hogs!"

~ Tony Gloria '81

"It was an honor and a privilege to play football at SJ and to be part of the first state championship football team. I am thankful for the great coaches, my fellow teammates, lots of hard work, and dedication which brought us to victory in my junior and senior years. My advice to the students: enjoy every minute on and off the field. WE ARE THE HOGS ... AND THE HOGS ARE GREAT!"

~ David DeDonato '82

** This story has been edited for content placement. The full story can be read at www.stjoeshogsfotball.com*



*Sketches: Provided by the SJ Advancement Office.
Below: 1983 Yearbook Photo*



IN SERVICE TO OTHERS

Michael Rosati '17 Shares how SJ Life Continues to Impact His Career.





Michael Rosati '17 laughs as he sits in a well-adorned, historical room at the Sterling House Community Center in Stratford. He's just been asked whether the position he currently works in was his plan after graduation.

"Not at all," he responds. "I'm a planner. I knew exactly what I was going to do after graduating from Salve Regina University; I was going to become a teacher. That was my goal. But you know, sometimes God has a different plan for us and this is where I was meant to be."

Michael is the Director of Youth Development at the Sterling House – a community center whose mission since 1932 has been to welcome and serve generations of children and adults through a variety of programs and services. While a Shelton native himself, Michael first heard about Sterling House from friends and family in Stratford. Michael began working at Sterling House in 2018 in their summer camp program. In 2020, he was promoted to Assistant Camp Director.

"I loved it," he says, "I was able to work with youth and make an impact in the community."

Michael was good at it, too. He was offered a new position before he even graduated – Director of Youth Development. This meant he would manage the after-school programs, summer camps, and all educational initiatives for children.

"It's one of my biggest accomplishments," he remarks. "I come to work every day and I leave feeling fulfilled and full of gratitude. I get to make a difference in the lives of all the children who walk through our doors, and in our entire community."

Community is something Michael found every day while at St. Joes. "It sounds cliché because we always say it, but St. Joes was truly a family. I learned to rely on the people around me. We were better together." At St. Joes, Michael participated in Drama Club, Track & Field, and Student Ambassadors. He also recalls

doing hours of service with Campus Ministry, his most impactful memory being of bringing clothing and food to the homeless in NYC during one of SJ's midnight runs.

"I believe that the importance of service was certainly instilled in me by my parents, but it was amplified by St. Joes. I used to sign up for every service opportunity available and I went above and beyond the required hours."

It's no wonder, then, that Michael ended up at Sterling House. The Community Center is a staple in Stratford, and one that meets the needs of hundreds of families each day. "If we see a need, we meet the need," he says. One great example is when students were made to learn virtually during the pandemic. In order to provide a space for learning, and an opportunity for parents to continue working, Sterling House created the "Kids on Campus" program, offering a space for those affected students to learn and provide peace of mind to the parents who knew their children would be safe.

Michael's career and promotion at Sterling House are a testament to his hard-work, ethics, and dedication – something he credits St. Joes for providing. "St. Joes allowed me to open my eyes to the world," he says, "As I grew up, I learned to be a leader. I truly felt prepared for college and I believe that my professional skills were instilled by the work ethic and rigor I learned during high school. It's so much more than academics at SJ."

In the future, Michael hopes to leave a lasting legacy at Sterling House and to expand on the incredible work they're already providing. He knows that he will always find a position in the educational field and will continue to make an impact with youth.

His message to current and future cadets: "Enjoy every moment. Enjoy *this* moment. Take the advice and the wisdom imparted to you by SJ and don't limit yourself. As a Cadet, there is nothing you cannot accomplish."



SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

Jason Lambert '23 Organized his 3rd Annual Neighborhood Food Drive Last Thanksgiving and Supported Dozens of Families in the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport.

In November 2021, junior Cadet, Jason Lambert, Jr., coordinated his 3rd annual neighborhood food drive benefitting the Thomas Merton Center in Bridgeport. During the food drive, Jason delivered more than 100 flyers throughout his town, and collected both food and cash donations. He then used the cash donations to shop for the items that the Thomas Merton Center needed most. Over the Thanksgiving Break, Jason delivered over 1400 items!

Q) This is your 3rd annual food drive -- tell us about your first one? What sparked the idea?

A) I first learned about the Thomas Merton Center and their needs through Bishop Caggiano's annual appeal video at my parish, St. Theresa in Trumbull. So when I had the opportunity to lead a service project for National Junior Honor Society at my middle school, I decided to help the Thomas Merton Center and their cause.

Q) What do you feel were your biggest challenges and triumphs in coordinating this year's food drive?

A) My biggest challenge this year with doing the food drive occurred because of COVID-19. Instead of knocking on doors to discuss the needs of the Thomas Merton Center, I had to take a different approach by delivering flyers and using social media.

My biggest triumph this year was despite the challenges, I was able to expand the area I worked, and I collected more goods than any other year. I am very proud of the generosity of my neighbors.

Q) Why do you feel it's so important for service to be taught and performed by SJ students?

A) I feel that it is important for service to be taught at St. Joes because it helps to make us aware of the needs of others and our calling by God to help those in need.



A RETURN TO IN-PERSON THEATRE

SJ's Drama Club Delights Audiences as They Return to In-Person Performances and Stage a Production of Over the River & Through the Woods in November 2021.

Debuting their first production in nearly two years, St. Joseph High School's Drama Club (the largest club on campus) showed off their talents and dedication in a production of *Over the River & Through the Woods* by Joe DiPietro. In the show, Nikki Cristano (played by Allison Ziegler '23) may be living the life of a young professional in New York City, but her loving grandparents never let her forget where she belongs: New Jersey. Faithfully, Nikki goes "over the river" to Grandma's house every week for Sunday dinner. When she is offered an important promotion in Seattle, her grandparents Frank (Michael Mancini '23), Aida (Angelina Gonzalez '22), Emma (Amy Ogle '22), and Nunzio (Cameron Distinti '23) are heartbroken at the prospect of Nikki moving so far. In order to keep her safe at home, these characters cook up a matchmaking scheme, inviting Cameron O'Hare (Will Joergensen '22) over for Sunday dinner. Will the prospect of true love keep Nikki from moving across the country? *Over the River and Through the Woods* is a warm-hearted, boisterously funny, and touching story about intergenerational relationships, deep familial love, and the inevitable little heartbreaks that occur as time passes and children grow. We are so proud of our Cadets for their incredible performance.



SAVE THE DATES: MAY 5-7, 2022

We are so excited to announce that this year's spring musical will be *Spongebob Squarepants: the Broadway Musical*!

When this musical first appeared on Broadway, it opened to critical acclaim and earned 12 Tony Award nominations. The story focuses on SpongeBob and all of Bikini Bottom as they face the total annihilation of their undersea world. And just when all hope seems lost, a most unexpected hero rises up and takes center stage. We hope you'll join us from May 5-7 for this fabulous production!





CREATIVE THINKING

Brian Reilly '13 Shares his Newfound Passion for Filmmaking and Discusses his Latest Series.

In some ways, Brian Reilly '13 is a walking contradiction. He doesn't like to run, but was on St. Joseph High School's cross country and track teams – eventually becoming captain of both. He went to school as an accounting major, but midway through, made the switch to Marketing. He doesn't like the screenwriting process, and still found himself as the co-writer for his debut feature film, *Dilettantes*. But what isn't a contradiction? Brian's love for filmmaking, his ability to take risks, and his determination to succeed.

Brian graduated from St. Joes in 2013 and attended Bryant University in Rhode Island. Initially thinking he would become an accountant, Brian quickly realized that his heart was in the creative process, noting that he should have known this all along as Creative Writing was his favorite class at St. Joes.

"It wasn't that I was bad at accounting, by any

means," he says, "but I wanted to do something more exciting. I always liked the idea of making advertisements or doing social media related content."

His childhood friend, Dillon, tapped into that creative side of Brian one day when he pitched him the idea of the pair writing a screenplay. Brian immediately came up with new ideas and the two began to divide up the writing of the scenes. Between his sophomore and junior year of college, the two completed the screenplay, but don't believe it will ever really see the light of day.

"It's pretty bad," he admits, with a smile. "But it led us to realize that we were great at working together. Last year, we formally began our production company, Karen Twins Productions. We have one feature film, *Dilettantes*, under our belt and a new series on the way."

Filming *Dilettantes* was no easy feat - Brian held a 9-5 marketing job and Dillon, along with most of the cast and crew, were finishing up their final semester at Boston University. They couldn't wait until the summer to film it all, but were adamant on getting it done. Thanks to the strength of Brian and Dillon's partnership, *Dilettantes* now has a distribution deal, has played at film festivals, and has even won a couple of awards.

"It still blows my mind whenever I watch it. It still surprises me that two guys fresh out of college were able to take the time to throw this together."

Their determination and ambition only continues to fuel their success - even in the midst of a pandemic - a time when everyone had to be kept apart. In 2020, they began to work on their new series, *Play It By Ear*, and have utilized technology to keep their team together - even as Brian lives on the East Coast, Dillon in Amsterdam, and their co-creators, Simon and Emily, in Los Angeles.

"Just because you have to be physically isolated, doesn't mean you need to be socially isolated. We were in three different time zones making this work using Zoom, Google Meets, and anything else we could find. I think that there are ways to stay connected with your community - keep them a part of your life - even when you're not together." The group has already filmed half of *Play It By Ear* last October in Amsterdam and will film the rest in L.A. this March.

Brian's words of wisdom for the SJ community? Be passionate about your passions. "You don't necessarily need to know what those are yet, but be open to taking the risk when it finds you. Your passion might fall in your lap, it might find you in a classroom, or it might come from a friend, but once you know what it is, don't be afraid to follow it through."



Brian credits St. Joes with giving him the opportunity and the freedom to take such risks - like running cross country or joining the SJ Film Club. "Even if you're not that good at it, you figure it out along the way. Find those passions and take those leaps. St. Joes gave me a good sense of community and a strong sense of support that I still have in my friendships to this day."

Brian's risks have certainly paid off. Now that he is an "official business owner", he hopes to slowly make the transition from marketing to full-time filmmaking. You can follow his company, Karen Twins Productions, on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to stay tuned to all of the exciting projects he'll come up with next. And be sure to stay on the lookout for his new series *Play It By Ear*, which is set to release at the end of 2022.



Dilettantes is the story of four bright-eyed, ambitious students about to start college. Each one of them has a dream, a direction; but will they ever follow through? Over four pivotal years, the lines will blur between friendship and romance, as these characters mature into young adults. You can stream *Dilettantes* now on Amazon Prime Video, Tubi TV, or IndieBox on Roku.

WELCOMING THE CLASS OF 2026



On February 9, St. Joes Hosted Students and Parents of the Class of 2026 at Accepted Student Night. There was Much to Celebrate!

Father Silva ended his opening prayer, as he does every day, with “St. Joseph our Patron...” and a few crowd members replied, “Pray for us.” Whether reverently at Mass or roaring from the stands at a game, this prayer has become a rallying cry at St. Joes and Father Silva was accustomed to a more robust response. Our guests just didn’t know the words yet.

So before handing the mic over to the next welcome speaker at Accepted Student Night, Father Silva taught the Class of 2026 how to proudly (and prayerfully) respond to the call of our Patron Saint. This seemingly small detail was symbolic in a big way. Our future Cadets now knew the cheer; they were part of the community.

“By 8:00pm, students rushed the halls with SJ swag in hand, laughing with new classmates as if they’d known each other all along.”

Though their middle school years had been marked with unprecedented disruption, the accepted students of the Class of 2026 have found a way to grow and thrive amidst the challenge. Their impressive admission credentials detail the accomplishments of leaders, scholars, inventors, artists, volunteers, and mentors.

These talented 8th graders and their parents had already done their high school research. They were familiar with the long list of student opportunities offered at St. Joes: the course catalogue of AP offerings; 40+ student clubs; service projects; faith formation events; athletic teams and their impressive records. Our guests were present to investigate the intangible – the story of who our Cadets are, and who they become as a result of the four-year St. Joseph High School experience.

Mr. Paul Leifer P ’21, ’22, ’24 was the first to share his story and he began with a bold declaration: as a family with no legacy connections to campus, he was unsure if his three children would be comfortable in our close-knit community. That statement resonated with our future freshman, after all, their applications came from 92 different middle schools across the state. Mr. Leifer continued to share more about the choices his family faced with offers from many different high schools for each of their three talented children. His fears were assuaged by the kindness of students, support of faculty, and true care for his childrens’ success and happiness.

It did not take long for Sydney ’21, Maddigan ’22 and Austin Leifer ’24 to feel comfortable in our halls – they were each elected to Student Council, have won State Championships, serve as Student Ambassadors, balance Honors and AP courses, all while donating the little time they have left to volunteer hours far surpassing the requirement. The takeaway from the Leifer’s story isn’t the accolades, but the opportunity for all students to try new things and be supported along their journey of self-discovery.



With Mr. Leifer's story lifting the crowd's confidence, the student ambassadors filed into the back of the gym, bouncing with excitement. Mrs. Jessica Costa, Director of Enrollment & Marketing, gently asked the Class of 2026 to harness their bravery, leave the familiar faces of current friends and family, and join Ambassadors in small groups to meet faculty and future classmates. This is what our Ambassadors had been planning all month for! Our Cadets greeted future freshmen with warm smiles and off they went for introductions, teambuilding, and a few fun competitions in the academic wing.

Parents remained seated while Betsy Sorrentino '76 (one of the first faculty members that students meet freshman year for English Class) took to the stage next with a rare prop in hand.



Sliding on her husband's '76 football letterman jacket, Betsy shared her experience as a student, a Cadet Parent, and faculty member. Her story was punctuated by the importance of her husband's letterman jacket; which represented family, school spirit, personal growth, and faith in action. Betsy's passion for teaching, love of the SJ community, and expertise in easing the transition to high school for our newest Cadets was felt throughout.

The next stop for our future Cadet Parents was a mini open house in the media center. Our community was represented in full force: parent association in the lobby, maroon and gold pride in the bookstore; and conversations happening throughout our hallways with one common theme - the care and support of our students on their four-year high school journey.



By 8:00pm, students rushed the halls with SJ swag in hand, laughing with new classmates as if they'd known each other all along. Mrs. Costa was hesitant to interrupt the excitement and conversation as families took their seats once again in the gym, but the closing remarks were not to be missed! Patrick Donegan '83 P '11, '11, '14, '17, '24 took to the podium with a pop of school spirit wearing his maroon and gold sneakers. The Donegan's impact on our community is invaluable as students themselves and then the proud parents of five Cadets. Mr. Donegan's message was steeped in Hog history and SJ culture.

Mr. Donegan jokingly shared that by the time his daughter Keira graduates, he will have made the decision to write a tuition check to St. Joes 20 times. Though each time the pen hit the check pad, he is reminded of the value of the education they receive within the SJ halls. The academic rigor prepares students for success at the college of their choosing, but the character education is truly invaluable.



We have a saying at SJ: "Where you go to high school matters." We know that St. Joes will provide students the opportunities to learn, grow, be of service, and make life-long friends among peers and adults who are similarly motivated and focused. The large cast of community members who volunteered to share their personal experiences with future SJ families on February 9 is a further testament to this statement. Our school community is ever blessed to be grounded in shared values and shared responsibility: to love, care for, and support students to become their best selves.

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

This Fall, the Office of Advancement Kicked off the 2021-22 School Year With Spirit - Offering a Variety of Events to Engage our SJ Families, Alumni, and Friends. Read a few of our Highlights!

1 Vines and Steins

SJ's annual kick-off event of the new school year! The evening of wine & beer tasting, led by the Parent Association, was hosted on September 18 inside the gymnasium. More than 200 guests were in attendance to mix, mingle, and meet our newest parents.

2 Walkathon

The 42nd annual Walkathon (the longest-running student-led fundraiser at St. Joes) returned to an in-person format this year! The dedication and generosity of our community was overwhelming as we surpassed our fundraising goal, raising more than \$59K to benefit the St. Joseph Fund (SJ's Annual Fund).

3 Our Freshman and Sophomore Parent Social

Held on November 3 in the Commons, this social was an informal meet and greet with SJ's underclassmen parents. They learned more about our advancement team, our school events, and ways to become involved.

4 Homecoming/Reunions/Athletic Hall of Fame

After a year hiatus, Homecoming weekend (October 15-17) returned to St. Joes! The Athletic Hall of Fame dinner kicked off the weekend with more than 150 in attendance. On Saturday, we hosted our illustrious alumni at the homecoming game, including a reception in the alumni tent. That same evening, the reunion classes ending in 0s, 1s, 5s, and 6s met up at BAD SONS in Derby - with the Class of 1980 celebrating their 40th. The Classes of 1970 & 71 had their 50th reunion in person at Tashua Knolls, with a Mass and tours at SJ the following morning. The Classes of 1970 & 1971 also actively fundraised for a class gift to go towards tuition assistance, raising more than \$5K from 40 donors. A special thanks to the 1970 & 1971 committee members who spent over a year dedicating their time and energy to their classmates reuniting.

5 Maroon & Gold Gala

Our largest event of the year, the Maroon & Gold Gala was held on November 20 at the Patterson Club in Fairfield, to a sellout crowd. Stacey '89 and Chris Wymbs P '18, '22 served as honorary chairs of this successful annual event that benefits both our Scholarship and Tuition Relief funds. The evening's program featured the presentation of this year's Sister Catherine Fanning Award recipients: the Trefz Family (for Community) and retired faculty member, Maureen Anderson (for Dedication). Guests enjoyed a lively evening of dinner and dancing, as well as a spirited live auction and Fund-a-Future paddle raise for tuition relief - featuring auctioneer Mr. Eric Hummel. Mr. Hummel is not only an experienced auctioneer, he also has ties to both the Trefz family as a cousin, and to Sister Catherine, who he knew personally after marrying her niece. Just over \$148K was raised at this great event, and a wonderful time was had by all. Thank you to all of the generous donors who supported the evening, and to our Gala Committee, who made it such a successful event.

6 Benefactor Mass

Hosted on December 5, St. Joes invited our scholarship benefactors and leadership level donors, as well as student scholarship recipients and their parents, to attend a special Mass in the Alumni Chapel. A small reception followed, as well as an invitation to the SJ Christmas Tree Lighting that directly followed.



1



4



2



4



4



5



5



A Desire to Learn, Grow, and Serve

Isabella Iazzetta '18 Discovered her Love of Service at St. Joes and Continues to Share in That Passion Throughout her College Years at Fordham University.

Isabella “Bella” Iazzetta '18 is one of those rare people whose 40-minute trek to campus on early winter mornings didn't dull her effervescent positivity. In fact, by her senior year, she might as well have just brought a sleeping bag as she was easily spending more time on campus than at home. Most days she would open the Cup of Joe Café around 7:00am, attend a schedule of honors and AP courses, rotate between involvement meetings for Campus Ministry, Student Council, and host future Cadets for tours as a Student Ambassador. She didn't know then that this exercise in time management was preparing her for her next adventure.

Bella's unwavering energy stemmed from something deep, intrinsic, and infallible – her desire to learn, grow, and most of all, serve. It is as if her magnetic attraction to servant leadership built the path and her feet (and heart) just followed. During her years at St. Joes, that path led her to volunteer opportunities within the greater Bridgeport area all the way to Nicaragua on an SJ immersion trip. Upon graduation, Bella enrolled at Fordham University where that same path led her to a major in Humanitarian Studies and Theology.

“My experiences at St. Joes beyond the classroom provided me a strong foundation to continue to explore my faith through service,” Bella shares. “The academic program [at St. Joes] prepared me for college work, but it was the experiences I had in campus ministry, student council, and

service that helped me define my passion and purpose.”

At Fordham University, Bella maintains a similarly packed schedule, spending much of her time volunteering between classes and, this semester, writing her thesis. “In college, I wanted to continue to embrace my faith in an academic setting, just as I had at St. Joes. The intellectual exploration of faith will always be interesting to me, but it is through my Theology courses that I have been able to build a community of service and find new opportunities to put that faith into action.”

Wasting no time, Bella joined the Catholic Life Board, Marriage Ministry, Campus Ministry, and started working as a social media intern at Busted Halo. While working with Busted Halo, Bella created visual content and social media posts to enhance the understanding of Catholic faith, put that faith into practice, and share faith with others. Her authentic tone made this content all the more accessible - she was creating from experience.

In 2020 Bella chose to take part in the GO! Mexico Project at Fordham and spent one week in Puebla, Mexico meeting local community educators. “This experience, just like our SJ trip to Nicaragua, is meant to connect people across borders and boundaries in faith to influence positive change. That trip to Nicaragua prepared me to truly embrace a cross-cultural experience understanding that I am the beneficiary

of the gift to be influenced by the strength and faith of others. Yes, we did service projects, but the take away is greater – I was the one who was changed.”

Moved by her experience, particularly at a migrant shelter, Bella began volunteering as a Media Coordination Intern for The Mexican Coalition for the Empowerment of Youth and Families. The organization supports the Latinx community in New York to develop the individual, organizational, and community capacities that will enable Latinx persons, often Mexican Americans, to realize their full civic, cultural, and political role in American society. As the Media Coordination Intern, Bella was able to connect families with essential health-related information during the pandemic.

Last semester, Bella served as a volunteer at Part of the Solution (POTS). POTS is a non-profit organization that offers a wide variety of services to create a pathway forward for all who seek help on their journey to stability. This organization is the biggest she’s served yet and Bella continues to draw her inspiration from the tireless volunteers changing lives in the community. This June, Bella will lead one last GO! Project, focusing on Jesuit Education in Colombia. As she prepares to graduate, she aspires to serve in a role that allows her to put her faith into humanitarian action every day while surrounding herself with community leaders motivated to do the same.

“There are few people who have had the opportunity to build strong friendships founded in faith during high school, even fewer who get to build their faith *in* their high school. I am happy to have had the opportunity to learn by the example of those in our SJ community of how to put faith into action through service. I hope to make this my life’s work.”



Bella will graduate from Fordham in May of 2022 with an honors concentration in American Catholic Studies and a minor in Peace and Justice Studies.

In addition to her work with Coalición Mexicana, Busted Halo, and Part of the Solution, Bella has also embraced a role as a research assistant with the Bronx African American History Project since her sophomore year, while also serving as an Orientation Leader and Tour Guide for new and potential Fordham students.



1970s



Steven Kuzma '73 wrote in to share that he is the Founder & Co-Owner of Carolina Funeral Service & Cremation in Charlotte, NC. He and his wife, Chun, currently reside in Charlotte.



The **Classes of 1970 and 1971** gathered at Tashua Knolls on October 15, 2021 to celebrate their 50th reunion year. There was even a special guest appearance by Mr. Norm DeTullio.



In November 2021, **Joe Lucy '78** (right), assisted by his son **Joe Lucy '16** (left) coached our SJ Basketball team to the Fall Basketball League Championship title at the Cardinal Shehan Center!

1980s



Members of the **Class of 1980** celebrated their 40th reunion at the Homecoming After Party at BAD SONS Beer, Co. in Derby, CT in October 2021.



Educational Consultant, **Patty Luczaj Zito '89**, founded Blujay Learning. Patty specializes in personalized SAT/ACT Prep, Individual College Planning/Advising, and private tutoring for grades pre-K through adult.

Share Your News! Be sure to email Danielle Ferranti in the Advancement Office with updates to share with your fellow alumni!
dferranti@sjcadets.org

1990s



In early 2021, **Father John Connaughton '94** (L) and **Father Joseph Marcello '94** (R) paid a visit to one of their teachers from St. Joes, Brother David Anthony Migliorino, O.S.F. (C). Father Connaughton now serves as Pastor of St. Cecilia – St. Gabriel Parish in Stamford, and Father Marcello, who was Spiritual Director of SJHS from 2005-2009, now serves as Pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Trumbull.



In October 2021, **Dave Finch '90** completed his 50th Marathon the day after his 50th birthday, by running the Hartford Marathon. Dave has completed over a dozen Ultra-Marathons and many other road and trail races. Dave is pictured here with **Ted Finch '85**, **Lisa Marcello Finch '85**, **Mary Finch Savoie '91**, **Abby Savoie '24**, **Travis Finch '25**, and **Tommy Finch '26**.



Former SJ basketball teammates, **Rob Benedetto '99** and **Peter Baird '00** reunite to coach the St. Mark J JV girls basketball team. Rob's daughter Harper and Peter's daughter Lexi are on the team!

2000s



TV/Movie Writer, **Ed Voccola '04** dropped by St. Joes to meet with students from SJTV (SJ's student-run morning news program). Ed talked with the students about his career in writing and gave them some pointers for their own show. Ed has written for shows such as *Last Man on Earth*, *Rick & Morty*, as well as the *Lego Movies*.



John Finan '06 and **Megan Gorman '10** were married on November 20, 2021 at St. Mark Church in Stratford, CT, followed by a reception at Whitney Farms in Monroe, CT. Many SJ alumni were in attendance, including grads from the 1980s to the 2010s.

2010s



Brianna Farens '10 received the habit of St. Clare and her new name, Sister Maria Antonia of the Holy Wounds of Jesus, on October 18 at the Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell, New Mexico.

Sister Maria Antonia is an alumna of St. Lawrence School, St. Joes, and Providence College. She is pictured here (C) with her parents, Dr. John and Donna Farens.



Carly Russell '10 married Ryan Curran on February 11 in Tulum, Mexico. Also in the photo are SJ Alumni **Lisa Russell '82**, **Samuel Russell '12**, and **Jacob Russell '16**. St. Joseph High School family and alumni in attendance were her grandparents, **Barbara and Norman DeTullio**, aunt, **Andrea DeTullio Smith '89**, friend, **Kristen Fletcher Ducatelli '82**, and bridesmaids, **Phoebe Russell '16** and **Rachel DeSantis Pagli '10**.



Danielle Kosturko '11 was married on October 2, 2021. The wedding party included several SJ alumni including maid of honor, **Lindsay Matera '11**, bridesmen **Timothy Cottell '11** and **Ryan Feminella '11**, and groomsmen, **Ryan Kosturko '14**.



Carly Ciambriello Beeman '11 married Jimmy Beeman on January 1, 2022 at St. Catherine of Siena in Trumbull. Following the ceremony, they had a reception at The Inn at Longshore in Westport. Many SJ alumni were in their bridal party and in attendance at the wedding.



Rebecca Adler Lentchner '12 married her husband, Cameron, in September 2021 in North Carolina.



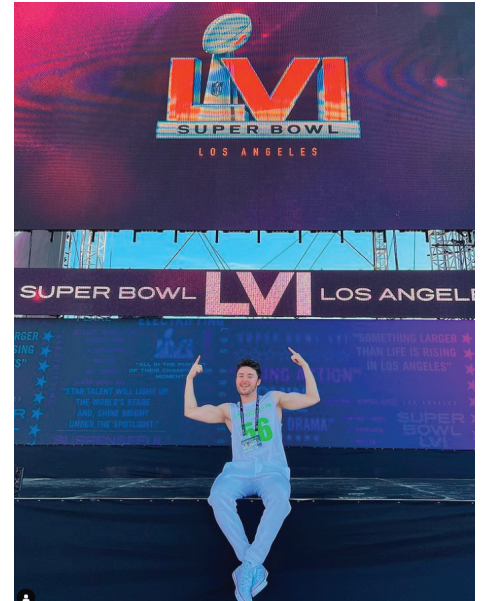
Chris Lucy '13 was featured in Allure magazine's "Thank You Notes" series, where the author offered gratitude to "Nurse Chris" for his unwavering advocacy for his fellow COVID-19 Frontline Workers. *Photo Credit: Allure Magazine.*



In January, **Shane Miller '14** participated in Walt Disney World's Marathon Weekend 2022. Over the course of 4 days, Shane ran in 4 races – totaling 48.6 miles! Shane was cheered on by his mom, **Dorothy Gregory Miller '84**, and sister, **Casey Miller '10**; along with other family and friends.



Former SJ Soccer standout, **Jenna Bike '16**, has been inducted into the Connecticut Girls' Soccer Coach's Association Hall of Fame.



Evan DeBenedetto '16 is living his dream as a member of Katy Perry's dance ensemble for her Las Vegas residency show, Play. As part of the group, Evan also had the opportunity to perform during the NFL's Super Bowl LVI Pre-Show.

2020s



Lauren McKeon '20 is currently a sophomore at the University of South Carolina as a Public Relations major and Sport and Entertainment Management minor. She is a part of the Event Leadership Team for Relay for Life and was recently elected as the Chapter President for her sorority, Alpha Chi Omega.

Thank You!

to everyone who made I Love SJ
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2022 Upcoming Events

April 29

Cadet for a Day Visits

May 1

Ladies Luncheon

May 3

Spring Musical Dress
Rehearsal for our
Partner Schools

May 5 - May 7

Spring Musical
*Spongebob Squarepants:
The Musical*

May 13

Cadet for a Day Visits

May 17

National Honor Society
Inductions

May 18

2026 New Student
Orientation

May 19

Fine Arts Night

May 22

Legacy Mass

May 25

Admissions Information
Session

May 27

Cadet for a Day Visits

June 1

Class Day &
Baccalaureate Mass

June 4

Commencement for the
Class of 2022

July 25

SJAA Golf Tournament

