



GACC School Launches \$9 Million Capital Campaign

Ashley Gaughan

Guardian Angels Central Catholic Schools this week launched a capital campaign to raise \$9 million in the next five years to invest in educators and school facilities.

The campaign was launched with an informational meeting held at the GACC cafeteria Saturday morning. About 50 people from the GACC community attended.

Presenting the information during the meeting were Capital Campaign Committee chair Lisa Eisenmenger, vice chair Justin Steffensmeier, Father James Weeder, and school board member Mark Wooldrik.

The school's new interim lay president, John Naatz, introduced

the campaign and the presenters. Naatz has helped facilitate capital campaigns at Creighton Preparatory School in Omaha.

Eisenmenger said the incentive for the capital campaign is due to several factors which were outlined in the presentation. She said the goal is to invest in the people and the campus of GACC. To achieve this, three key priorities have been identified: educators, environment, and facilities.

Enrollment this year in the GACC system stands at 415 students in preschool through 12th grade. Broken down, there are 53 pre-K students, 214 in grades K-6, 43 in grades 7-8, and 105 in grades 9-12.

The per-student cost to educate those students is \$8,049 for the grade school and \$11,855 for grades 7-12. However, because of the financial support from individuals and groups, the students' portion of that cost is currently \$2,443 for the grade school, \$2,567 for grades 7-8, and \$3,215 for grades 9-12.

Eisenmenger said that because GACC teachers have comparatively been at the lower end of the pay scale, it is hard to recruit and retain them. Right at 85% of the school's budget goes for employee salaries and benefits. The campaign will help fund teacher salaries to receive more applicants



For more than 135 years, Guardian Angels Central Catholic School has been helping West Point area children prepare for life’s journey. Through jumps and dips in population, Guardian Angels Central Catholic has expanded, taken in students from nearby Catholic schools that have closed, become the first coeducational Catholic school in Nebraska, incorporated technology in the classroom, and persisted in preparing students to reach their fullest potential by learning and leading through Christ.

...Let’s keep that tradition going!

CATHOLIC EDUCATION REQUIRES

faith-filled environment | excellent educators | welcoming campus

Compared to both public and peer rural Catholic schools, Guardian Angels Central Catholic remains one of the best values in education.

- ▶ Our cost to educate each pupil and our tuition rates have historically remained among the lowest in the region.
- ▶ We have traditionally kept these costs low due to the combination of outstanding financial support from our parishes and endowments *and* the selfless generosity of our teachers, parents, alumni, community, and volunteers.

While remaining careful stewards of our financial resources, we have continued our reputation for excellence in:

- ▶ Integration of faith
- ▶ Academics
- ▶ High-quality educators and staff
- ▶ Extracurricular sports and activities
- ▶ Community service and outreach
- ▶ Producing leaders in diverse careers
- ▶ Multi-generational legacy
- ▶ Alumni support
- ▶ Showcasing God’s diverse gifts and talents
- ▶ **Learning and leading through Christ**

While we have much to be proud of, it’s time we reinvest in our Bluejay Nest. Your financial support will continue our legacy and keep the tradition alive and thriving.

And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.

..... 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

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for jobs.

The school is also facing space constraints, and funds from the campaign will be used for an education addition to provide more classroom space.

Phase one of the campaign focuses on addressing immediate needs. The first phase, to raise \$6 million, is already in progress. In addition to increasing teacher salaries, those funds would help improve the HVAC systems in all buildings, renovations to restrooms and locker rooms, replace and reseal windows, insulation, tuck-point masonry, and roof repairs for the old gym.

Once the initial \$6 million goal is achieved, phase two of the campaign will begin. This phase is to build the new addition to the GACC campus. Eisenmenger noted this will be the first significant investment in infrastructure on the campus within a generation with an estimated cost of \$2.5-\$3 million to cover materials, labor, professional fees, and construction costs. The plans of what the new addition will look like is still in the works and the school board will vote to make a final decision.

Funds for the capital campaign will be sought through donations, grants, and fundraisers. The plan entails reaching out to all parishioners and GACC alumni. Eisenmenger said one of the features of the campaign is that all aspects will be managed locally. Members of the committee noted they are not accepting online donations in order to prevent scams. The end of the meeting was reserved for questions from those in attendance which the committee took time to answer for about half an hour.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Attention: Alumni Banquet will be held June 8, 2024

Honor classes: 1924, 1929, 1934, 1939, 1944, 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1984, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2014, 2024

Note: JayFest will be held June 7, 2024



Naatz named interim president of GACC

Guardian Angels Central Catholic has announced the hiring of John Naatz as interim president. He began his duties at Guardian Angels Central Catholic on February 12.

“Mr. Naatz’s vast teaching, administrative and leadership experience will be invaluable as we search for a full-time president,” said Leanne Ritter, Guardian Angels Central Catholic School Board chair.

The role of lay president was recently created when the Guardian Angels Central Catholic School Board transitioned to a Board of Limited Jurisdiction. Prior to this transition, the pastor of St. Mary’s was president of Guardian Angels Central Catholic.

The shift to a lay president will alleviate some of the administrative responsibilities of the pastor of St. Mary’s, and enable the pastor to focus more on the spiritual life of the school and parishes. St. Mary’s pastor continues as a director of the board.

As interim president, Naatz is responsible for the institutional advancement of the school, its overall vision, leadership and management, supervision of all personnel, promotion and preservation of the school’s Catholic identity, religious mission and ministry of the school, its financial health, and oversees student recruitment and retention. He also will assist in the search for a full time president.

Guardian Angels Central Catholic is already familiar to Naatz because he began his career as an educator at Guardian Angels Central Catholic in 1972, when he taught English, coached football and track, and was the student publications moderator. He also has taught and coached at Roncalli Catholic High School, Creighton Preparatory School, and served as interim president of Jesuit Academy, all in Omaha.

Throughout his career as an



educator and administrator, Naatz has received several distinguished awards including: Creighton Preparatory School Teacher of the Year (1987), Creighton Preparatory School Coach of the Year (1991), Creighton Preparatory School Hall of Fame (2000), Archdiocese of Omaha Administrator of the Year (2007), Jesuit Partnership

Council of Omaha Ignatian Spirit Award (2015), and Creighton Preparatory School Sword of Ignatius (2022).

Naatz holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Kansas Wesleyan University, Salina, Kan., and a Master of Science in Secondary School Administration from Creighton University, Omaha.

Grateful for gold

Hass crowned Serious Prose state champion

During the biggest moment, Guardian Angels Central Catholic senior Isabel Hass delivered her best performance of the season.

With a gold-medal worthy performance, Hass was crowned state champion of Serious Prose at the Class C2 State Speech meet at Kearney.

“Once I found out I had won, I was super surprised, but I also felt really blessed,” Hass said. “I felt blessed to be given this opportunity; I was just really, really grateful.”

Heading into finals, Hass said she didn’t have any expectations on how her speech would be judged.

“Judges have either really liked my speech, or they haven’t. Knowing that, I was just happy to medal,” Hass added.

With that medal being gold, it was icing on the cake.

“With it being Isabel’s senior year, we were really hoping for the best, and were ecstatic when she received gold. She is such a natural talent, but really had to work hard this year on her piece,” GACC coach Devon Birchem said.

“From the beginning of the year, Isabel has taken the piece and made it her own; receiving numerous accolades from surrounding coaches and competitors that she has known throughout the years.”

Hass’ speech was a piece based on Stephen King’s *Misery*.

“This was probably one of my favorite speeches to perform,” Hass said.

Over Christmas, Hass watched the movie with Kathy Bates.

“Seeing her perform it, and her “crazy” in that movie, I got a lot of inspiration from that,” Hass said. “Being in Serious Prose, you overexaggerate things with your acting. Just rehearsing in my head is how I got the “crazy” out in my speech.”



Being an athlete and speech member did provide a challenge in terms of finding time to rehearse.

“Doing two extracurricular activities at once can be quite demanding. But both coaches the past four years have really coordinated well with each other to work with my busy schedule, which I’m so grateful for,” Hass said.

“I’ve always been known as being an athlete, but at speech meets, I’m known as the Serious Prose girl. It’s really interesting; there are a variety of people in sports, and a variety of people in speech. Being involved in both is a lot of fun.”

Not only did Hass excel for four years as an athlete, but in speech. In three trips to state, Hass captured sixth, third and first-place medals. Family played a big part in Isabel deciding to pursue high school speech.

“I’ve always had an extroverted personality. I’ve always been a little drawn to performing arts. My siblings, Noah and Sophia, introduced me,” Hass said.

“Watching them, I got an understanding of speech. It was a lot of fun. It brought my competitiveness out. I wanted to give it a shot, and I’m glad I did.”

Closing out her career with a gold medal didn’t come without some adversity. Heading into the State Speech meet, Hass was sick.

“I was really nervous about my voice,” Hass said. “But a lot of the people in the community were praying for me, and honestly, I think that is why I was able to perform.”

Hass performed three times in prelims, and once more in the finals. Her voice held out for each performance.

“I was super grateful to be given this opportunity to perform four times, and that my voice didn’t give out with that last performance,” Hass said. “My last time performing, it was really special.”

• GACC junior Caleb Ridder also brought home hardware as he placed fifth in Class C2 for Extemporaneous.

GACC boys captured 3rd in D1



Members of the 3rd-place Bluejays are, from left, front: Chase Smith, Luke Guenther, Sam Hass, Maverik Smith, Isaac Guenther, Diego Onate, Jaxson Brunsing; back: head coach Bryan Mendlik, Seth Baumert, Jesse Steffen, Konnor Kralik, Myles Dinslage, Joe Schwer, Bryce Bailey, Cody Hass, coach Nate Bruning and coach Duane Mendlik.



It's a priceless reaction following Myles Dinslage's game-winning bucket against NPSP. Celebrating the win over the #1 team is, from left, coach Duane Mendlik, coach Nate Bruning, Joe Schwer, Jesse Steffen, Chase Smith, Diego Onate, head coach Bryan Mendlik, Jaxson Brunsing (hidden) and Maverik Smith.



GACC girls secure third in Class D1

Above: Members of the 3rd-place Bluejays are, from left, front: Sydney Hutchinson, Isabel Hass, Jocelynn Skoda, Kelsy Steffen; middle: Izzy Kreikemeier, Kennedy Baumert, Kate Jansen, Adyson Luebbert; back: head coach Jerry Stracke, coach Lexis Utemark, Abi Toline, Charlie Dinslage, Juli Ridder, Ava Nixon, coach Kelly Dinslage and coach Kevin Kreikemeier.

Right: Bluejay Isabel Hass holds up the 3rd-place trophy. Teammates also pictured are Adyson Luebbert, Kennedy Baumert, Sydney Hutchinson (hidden), Kate Jansen and Juli Ridder.

Bluejays send three to State Wrestling

GACC had three qualifiers compete in the State Wrestling Meet held in February at Omaha. They were: Noah Brichacek (132), Trevor Steffen (138) and Jordan Timmerman (175).





Bluejay volleyball places fourth at State

GACC finished 4th at the Class D1 State Volleyball Tournament. Bluejay players are, from left, front: Kelsy Steffen, Jocelynn Skoda, Isabel Hass, Amber Kreikemeier, Jayden Ehrisman; back: Charlie Dinslage, Peyton Hutchinson, Tessa Lund, Ava Nixon, Izzy Kreikemeier, Addison Doescher and Juli Ridder.

GACC's Class of 2024

Seniors & Parents:

Bryce Nathaniel Bailey is the son of Mike and Deb Bailey ('91)

Seth William Baumert is the son of Tyler and Denise Baumert

Nickolas Kyle Daberkow is the son of Kelly and Kristin Daberkow ('90)

Myles Lane Dinslage is the son of Benjamin and Kelly Dinslage ('99)

Dax Michael Doernemann is the son of Jim and Lynda Doernemann

Jayden Ann Marie Ehrisman is the daughter of Mitch and Danelle Ehrisman

Isabel Irene Hass is the daughter of Dr. Brian and Julie Hass

Sydney Christine Hutchinson is the daughter of Chris and Christine Hutchinson ('94)

Amber Ann Kreikemeier is the daughter of Jay ('94) and Denise Kreikemeier

Gavin James Kreikemeier is the son of Todd ('85) and Leslie Kreikemeier.

Carter Patrick Nebuda is the son of Pat ('96) and Janelle Nebuda

Emerson Grace Ortmeier is the daughter of Dr. Chad and Becky Ortmeier

Kiley Addison Pojar is the daughter of Brian and Kim Pojar

Evan Michael Schuetze is the son of Justin and Laura Schuetze ('03)

James Dean Schuetze is the son of the late James Schuetze and Wendi Bunn ('98)

Joseph David Schwer is the son of Steve and Tracy Schwer

Jocelynn Rose Skoda is the daughter of Leigh and the late Adam Skoda

Jesse Adam Steffen is the son of Adam ('92) and Kristie Steffen

Kelsy Kay Steffen is the daughter of Adam ('92) and Kristie Steffen

Helena Clovena Steffensmeier is the daughter of Ryan and Charissa Steffensmeier

BIRTHS

Anthony '11 & Justine (Goeden) '11 Ridder, son, Trace James, DOB 7/23/23
 Tia (Wolken) '12 & Jeremy Fuhr, daughter, Sybil Jan, DOB 8/8/23
 Trevor '08 & Michelle Spenner, daughter, Avery Katherine, DOB 8/11/23
 Bryce '03 & Jessica Knobbe, daughter, Bergen Maybree, DOB 8/11/23
 Delanya (Minnick) '13 & Brett Hunke '13, daughter, Laityn Marie, DOB 8/31/23
 Tate '14 & Emily Dorcey, son, Kolby Michael, DOB 9/7/23
 Casey (Wiechman) '06 & Vincent Krejci, daughter, Hilary Marie DOB 10/11/23
 Brianna (Peatrowsky) '21 & Justin Williams, daughter, Penelope, DOB 10/17/23
 Aaron '02 & Ashley Cihacek, son, Atlas Cruz, DOB 10/18/23
 Jamie (Meister) '10 & Jared Bethune, daughter, Hattie Lee, DOB 10/20/23
 Caitlyn (Guenther) '09 & Cody Eiler, son, Bowen David, DOB 11/5/23
 Zach '02 & Wendy Ridder, son, Conrad Ralph, DOB 11/15/23
 Eric '16 & Hannah Klitz, daughter, Margo Leigh, DOB 11/17/23
 Makenna (Weborg) '14 & Austin Weborg, daughter, Elsie Mae, DOB 12/4/23
 Melanie (Stratmann) '14 & Derek Aschoff, son, Rocky Dale, DOB 12/20/23
 Brandon '15 & Lexi Meister, son, Luke Anthony, DOB 1/9/24
 Gabrielle (Knobbe) '14 & Kyle Lindhorst son, Maverick John, DOB 2/21/24
 Katie (Ridder) '08 & Jacob Neujahr, daughter, Kenedi Kay, DOB 2/22/24
 Alex '11 & Whitney (Uhing) '10 Stieren, son, Weston Hayes, DOB 2/28/24
 Nathan '11 & Tori (Kreikemeier) '14 Bruning, daughter, Harper Bea, DOB 3/1/24
 Kirsten (Klitz) '11 & Logan Owens, son, Chase Pat, DOB 3/20/24
 Anna (Weiler) '14 & Travette Dennis, son, Kirby J Byron, DOB 3/26.24

WEDDINGS

Jesse Prieto '15 married Skyler Miller on 8/26/23
 Justin Steffensmeier '00 married Jennifer Moser on 9/2/23
 Chett Simonsen '15 married Bailey Aden on 9/23/23
 Anthony Guenther '12 married Nicole Aschoff on 10/28/23
 Sara Wordekemper '16 married Drew Schmidt on 11/18/23
 Jonathon Hagedorn '11 married Andrea Barton on 11/25/23
 Blake Guenther '17 married Krista Ott on 12/2/23
 Nathan Bracht '16 married Zoey Bergman on 12/16/23
 Emily Franzluebbbers '15 married Derek Roeber on 1/20/24



Learning and leading through Christ

For more than 135 years, GACC has been preparing students to reach their fullest potential by learning and leading through Christ and we are planning for its successful future!

DEATHS

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO THEM O LORD
 Geraldine (Wortman) Trist '53, DOD 9/2/23
 Dennis Schlickbernd '71, DOD 9/13/23
 Douglas Schlickbernd '71, DOD 9/13/23
 James Strube '62, DOD 10/25/23
 Maxine (Vogltance) Petz '65, DOD 11/21/23
 Valeria (Knobbe) Schlecht '47, DOD 11/26/23
 Ambrose Peitzmeier '61, DOD 11/27/23
 Thomas Wellman '67, DOD 12/5/23
 Kim (Lehmkuhl) '79, DOD 12/13/23
 Leona (Ridder) Meier '67, DOD 12/14/23
 Catherine (Knobbe) Meier '67, DOD 12/21/23
 Mary Ann (Recker) Wuestewald '54, DOD 1/5/24
 Arlene (Ernesti) Woerdemann '59, DOD 2/3/24
 Vincent Rolf '58, DOD 2/20/24

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