



# Growing DISCIPLES

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## DIOCESAN STUDENTS PLACE SECOND AT THE STATEWIDE RELIGION BEE

The atmosphere buzzed with anticipation at Xavier High School in Cedar Rapids on April 26 as students gathered in eager anticipation of the Inaugural Statewide Religion Bee. Five exceptional middle school students from Saint Albert, St. Augustin, and St. Luke the Evangelist represented the Diocese of Des Moines by showcasing their knowledge and faith.

Having already demonstrated their expertise at their respective School and Diocesan Religion Bees, these students united as a team to tackle an array of thought-provoking questions that delved into the depths of religious understanding. From identifying the religious order with the most educational institutions to discerning the significance of Pope Francis's distinctive skullcap, each query ignited spirited discussion and quick-witted responses.

Our students demonstrated exceptional knowledge and sportsmanship throughout the event, earning second place. Their remarkable performance fills us with pride and excitement for the opportunities that lie ahead in the coming years. Here's to another year of enlightenment and discovery at the Religion Bee!



*Religion Bee participants: Leo Buyske, Mackey Buyske, Patrick Lora, James Pease and Gianna Jones.*

## APPLY FOR AN ESA BEFORE JUNE 30!

Eligible families who submit an application before the June 30 deadline will receive \$7,826 per child in ESA funds to use toward enrollment at an accredited non-public school. ESA funds are renewable annually, roll over, and remain available until high school graduation or age 20. For the 2024-2025 school year, all incoming kindergarteners and current public school students qualify for an ESA. Many families already enrolled in Catholic schools may also qualify for an ESA based on income. By 2025-2026, All K-12 students in Iowa will qualify for an ESA, regardless of income. We encourage all families to learn about ESAs and see if their family qualifies at [ESAsForIowa.org](https://ESAsForIowa.org).

## SCHWEIZER FAMILY TO PROVIDE THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT BISHOP'S CELEBRATION

On Saturday, August 24, the Diocese of Des Moines will host its annual Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines. The event unites the community in celebration of the life-changing impact faith-centered education at its schools has provided for over 150 years. The diocese will honor exceptional individuals dedicated to Catholic education during the event. This year's honorees include:

### Administrator of the Year

Ann Andersen, Shelby County Catholic

### Teacher of the Year

Jane Brown, St. Augustin Catholic School

### Volunteer of the Year

Megan Kluesner, Sacred Heart Catholic

### Honorary Chairs

Frank Harty of Des Moines

Dennis and Connie Purdum of Creston

This year's event will also feature a keynote address from the Schweizer family, a name synonymous with excellence in athletics and a proud product of the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools. The family, represented by three generations, including Olympian Karissa Schweizer, will share their unique experiences and insights, highlighting how Catholic education has been instrumental in their academic success and beyond.



*The Schweizer family at Karissa's induction to the University of Missouri Hall of Fame ceremony.*

Karissa's roots in Urbandale and her journey through Dowling Catholic are steeped in a rich legacy of athleticism and determination.

Daughter to Mike and Kathy Schweizer, both of whom boasted successful collegiate track careers at Mankato State, Karissa inherited a passion for running from a lineage of champions. Her grandfather, Frank Schweizer, an NCAA Division II All-American runner at Mankato State, left an indelible mark on Dowling Catholic, coaching track for over four decades. Although he retired before Karissa's high school tenure, his legacy thrived through her family's continued dedication to the sport.

The family's connection to Dowling's track program runs deep, with Karissa's father and uncles, Steve and Doug, leaving their own tracks on the school's history. Even her siblings, Kelsey and Ryan, followed suit, lacing up their shoes to represent Dowling on the track. Ryan's athletic prowess shone brightly as he clinched eight impressive state championships, including a swimming title. His achievements extended beyond high school, as evidenced by his stellar performance at the 2017 USA Track and Field Junior Championships, where he secured third place with a remarkable 3:49.04 PR in the 1500m event. He's a valued member of the University of Notre Dame's track team.

To reserve tickets or to get involved in this year's event, call (515) 237-5079 or email [lholsms@dmdioocese.org](mailto:lholsms@dmdioocese.org).

## SHELBY COUNTY WISHES A FOND FAREWELL TO ANN ANDERSEN

As we look back on the incredible journey of Catholic education at Shelby County Catholic School, we are compelled to recognize the profound influence of one exceptional individual—Ann Andersen. With deep appreciation, we announce her well-earned retirement after 30 years of unwavering commitment to education, including 13 transformative years as a school administrator. Her leadership has inspired us all to strive for excellence in education.

Andersen earned an Associate Degree in Business from Iowa Western Community College, a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Buena Vista University, a Master's Degree in Effective Education with a Reading Coach concentration from Drake University, and a Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership from Drake.

Her career in education is one of continuous growth. She began as a mathematics teacher for grades 6-8 at St. Joseph's Center in Earling, IA, and later at St. Michael's Center in Harlan, where she left an indelible mark on classrooms spanning grades 2 through 6. Her dedication extended beyond the classroom as she coordinated religious education for St. Michael Parish, guided second-grade religious education and sacramental preparation, and spearheaded the summer Bible School program. Some of her notable contributions include introducing innovative teaching methods, organizing successful community outreach programs, and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Recognizing her exceptional contributions, Andersen will be honored as Administrator of the Year at the upcoming Bishop's Celebration of Catholic Schools on August 24, 2024.

*Ann Andersen, Shelby County  
Catholic School*



Her calling as an educator transcends her professional qualifications; it is a testament to her selfless dedication driven by faith. Known for her compassion, understanding, patience, resilience, graciousness, and generosity, Andersen embodies the ideal qualities of a school leader. Her leadership style, which places others first, her patience in teaching, and her embodiment of love, serve as a beacon of inspiration for the Shelby County Catholic community.

As Andersen embarks on this new chapter of her life, surrounded by the love of her family—including her husband, son, daughter, and five cherished grandsons—we extend our deepest gratitude for her tireless dedication, boundless compassion and enduring legacy at Shelby County Catholic School. Please join us in celebrating Ann Andersen's extraordinary career and wishing her a retirement filled with joy, laughter and countless blessings.



## COMMUNITY UNITES TO BUILD A SCHOOL CHAPEL

By Emily Melcher

In the summer of 2023, Principal Gretchen Watznauer of St. Theresa Catholic School had a visionary idea: to transform an unused classroom into a serene sanctuary, a place for students, teachers, and staff to find solace and connection through prayer. Fast forward to March 26, 2024, and that vision became a reality as Bishop William Joensen blessed the newly minted Little Flower Chapel, consecrating its altar and sanctifying its sacred space.

Principal Watznauer's aspiration for a chapel within the school was born out of a desire for accessibility and intimacy in moments of prayer, especially during the bustling school day. Her dream took flight with the support of parish figures like Father Raphael Assamah, Kenneth Seymour, the parish business manager, and Tony Tedesco, the facilities director.

The journey from concept to blessing was a collaborative effort, with Father Trevor Chicione, the diocesan Vicar for Divine Worship, providing invaluable guidance. Tedesco, alongside dedicated volunteers Thomas McMahon, Jon Thill, and Denny Koenigsfeld, poured countless hours into crafting the chapel into the serene haven it is today.



The chapel's creation came at minimal cost, thanks to the community's generosity. Pews were donated by a church in Des Moines and meticulously restored by a crew of volunteer workers. Parishioner Mike Tigges lent his expertise to repair the drywall, while McMahon contributed a restored crucifix. The Seymour family's donation of wood-carved Stations of the Cross adorns the chapel walls, a poignant reminder of Christ's sacrifice.

Tedesco's thoughtful touches, including small lights illuminating the stations and creating a calming ambiance, added to the chapel's atmosphere. Watznauer contributed a marble holy water font, ciborium, and chalice, while Molly Tedesco, curated altar cloths and even handcrafted additional sets. The chapel's adornments, from a statue of St. Therese to salvaged stained glass windows, were lovingly donated by members of the school community, each adding a layer of significance to the sacred space.

As the doors of the Little Flower Chapel open to the St. Theresa Catholic School community, they reveal not just a physical space but a testament to the power of collaboration, generosity and faith, offering solace and inspiration to all who enter its hallowed halls.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR GRADUATES

This past May, across the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools, 429 eighth graders earned their diplomas and 354 seniors graduated from Saint Albert Catholic and Dowling Catholic High Schools. These seniors earned more than \$12.6 million in college scholarships and 98 percent plan to continue their education in the fall.

On behalf of the Catholic Schools Office, we want to share a heartfelt congratulations to all graduates throughout the diocese. May the peace of Christ be with you on this special occasion. We are so very proud of each of you. God bless each of you, now and always.



## 65 DOWLING STUDENTS EARN THE IOWA SEAL OF BILITERACY

We are thrilled to announce that 65 dedicated Dowling Catholic World Language Department students have successfully completed the challenging requirements to earn the 2024 Iowa Seal of Biliteracy. This spring, our students demonstrated their language proficiency in Spanish, German, Portuguese, and Vietnamese.

To earn the Seal of Biliteracy, students must exhibit proficiency in both English and another language by passing an online assessment that evaluates their speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills.

The State of Iowa awards the Seal of Biliteracy to honor and value language as an asset, recognize the importance of language diversity and cultural identity, and equip students with essential 21st-century skills that enhance their opportunities in the workforce and the global community. Congratulations to our outstanding students on this remarkable achievement!





## DIOCESE OF DES MOINES CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools includes 16 schools serving 23 counties in central and southwest Iowa. Catholic schools in the Des Moines Diocese build Christ-centered, collaborative, inclusive partnerships with parents, students, and parishes to provide innovative academic excellence and inspirational faith formation. To learn more about the Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools, visit [dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools](http://dmdiocese.org/catholic-schools) or email [grow@dmdiocese.org](mailto:grow@dmdiocese.org).

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St. Augustin, Des Moines

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