



St. Pius X / St. Leo School

Alumni News

Fall 2023

CLASS OF 1973 CELEBRATES 50-YEAR REUNION

The St. Pius X Class of 1973 held their 50th class reunion on July 29, 2023. A great group of approximately thirty (30) classmates started the festivities by attending a tour of St. Pius X / St. Leo School.

Alumni enjoyed visiting their elementary school where they made their first friends, learned about God, and acquired the skills and academic foundation that prepared them for life.

Later, the alumni gathered at Clancy's restaurant on 168th and Center Streets in Omaha. Classmates enjoyed sharing memories from their younger years, talking about the families they have built, and catching up on life events that have occurred over the past 50 years.

Many members of the Class of 1973 have stayed connected throughout the years through email as well as the Class of 1973 Facebook page. Classmates who have not yet joined the Class of 1973 Facebook page are encouraged to do so. Reunion attendees have vowed to remain connected for the rest of their lives.

The Class of 1973 wishes to extend special thanks to Michaela Smith and Kim Kenney from St. Pius X / St. Leo School and to the Class of 1973 Reunion Committee, Karen Zink-Linafelter, Ann Cannon, Tom Owens, and Doug Myers for organizing the reunion.



Class of 1973 50th Reunion Photo: Saturday July 29, 2023.



Class of 1973 classmates on a tour at SPSL. Left to Right: Katie O'Donnell-Wagner, Tim Metzler, Don Reilley, Rick Jenkins, Tom Owens and Leslie Schaefer.

Cannon, Tom Owens, and Doug Myers for organizing the reunion.

Thank you to all those alumni who attended. To those classmates who were unable to attend, they are encouraged to keep in touch and attend future gatherings for the Class of 1973.

PANTHER HAPPENINGS



CLASS OF 1961

Patricia (Banker) Rodgers resides in Katy, Texas. She enjoys reminiscing about the teachers she had during elementary school. The Sister she remembers most as a teacher at Pius was Sister Marian who taught piano lessons. She also has fond memories of 8th grade lay teacher, Miss Grice. Patricia has good memories of the flooded parking lot where students would ice skate and then go to the gym vestibule to get warm!

CLASS OF 1969

Lorna (Dilocker) Singer currently resides in Clarksville, Arkansas. Her husband Ron passed away in 2000. Her daughter Robin will be 50 years old this year. Lorna has two great-grandchildren: Desmond and Brantley.

CLASS OF 1973

Tom Ryan wishes to share with the SPSL community: "My level of maturity has NOT increased since 1973. However, my wrinkles have!"

CLASS OF 2007

Jon Rieschl and his wife Kim welcomed a baby boy, Jordan James, on April 7, 2023.



CLASS OF 2008

Olivia (Harrison) Vollmer and her husband Tommie welcomed their first child, Vincent Thomas, on April 17, 2023. They reside in Omaha.



CLASS OF 2014

After graduating from SPSL, **Austin Sage** was eager to join the workforce. Upon turning 16, Austin started working part-time for Omaha MECA as an AV technician and later as a Senior Lead AV&IT Technician at Baxter Arena. Austin graduated from Creighton Prep and then MCC with an Associate Degree in Video Audio Communication Arts. Thereafter, he worked as a

Tier 3 AV Support Specialist for the University of Nebraska System. During this time Austin decided to go back to school and get a Bachelor of Computer Information Sciences at Bellevue University with a focus on Network Engineering and Security. Austin is now working at the University as a production engineer for Nebraska Public Media. He also owns Sage's Spins and Productions LLC, a freelance DJ, video, and production service. Austin is engaged to be married to fellow SPSL graduate from the Class of 2014, Allison Monzu!

Allison Monzu is a Nebraska State Capitol Tour Guide. In fact, when SPSL 4th graders were on a field trip to the State Capitol recently, Allison gave them a tour! Mrs. Mary Holtmeyer enjoyed having the opportunity to introduce her current students to her former student, Allison.



CLASS OF 2015

Jolie Peal graduated from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln with a Bachelor of Journalism. Jolie is now working for Nebraska Public Media as a multimedia reporter/producer.

CLASS OF 2017

Anna Preston is writing an original play as part of her senior thesis project at Creighton University. Anna is working toward her B.A. in Theatre Performance while also studying Computer Science. Recently, Anna took a trip to Australia.

CLASS OF 2020

Lilly Risch Bakhit and **Sophie Owens** were chosen from a highly selective applicant pool to attend a two-part Sacred Heart Network pilgrimage, "*Belong and Act as One: Discovering our Sacred Heart DNA.*" During the summer of 2023, Lilly and Sophie were part of a 24-person intergenerational and intercultural cohort of just five U.S. Sacred Heart students/young alumna; young adults from Chile, Mexico, and Poland; and five Religious of the Sacred



Heart. They began their journey in Rome to explore the history and roots of the Society of Sacred Heart. Their second destination was Lisbon where they participated in World Youth Day with Pope Francis.

Martha Engel (2020) and **Helen Christen (2022)** were both recognized with a Marian Identity Award at Marian High School in May, 2023. This award recognizes those who, like Mary, demonstrate a willingness to say “yes” to God’s call. In addition, Marian High School honored **Kenadie Rudloff (2020)** and **Ellie Brabec (2021)** with an Empowerment Award because they demonstrate resilience, advocacy, and an ability to problem solve.

CLASS OF 2021

Kaylene Bialas received a Spirituality Award from Marian High School for actively seeking opportunities to nurture her faith and beliefs.

CLASS OF 2022

Molly Herek received a Core Value Award from Marian, because she is a student who puts faith and spirituality in action and uses her talents to better her community.

In addition, **Clare Engel** was honored because she fosters a welcoming and positive spirit while also working collaboratively with others.

Upcoming Class Reunions

Calling all classes graduating in 8’s and 3’s – it’s reunion time! Please be sure your contact information is updated by visiting spsl.net/alumni-profile so we can let you know about the latest reunion news. To help plan a reunion or to be a Class Ambassador for your class, please contact Michaela Smith at michaela.smith@spsl.net.

These graduating classes have a milestone reunion this year:

- 5 Years: Class of 2018
- 10 Years: Class of 2013
- 20 Years: Class of 2003
- 25 Years: Class of 1998
- 30 Years: Class of 1993
- 50 Years: Class of 1973

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

This Fall, **McKenzie Blaine (2014)** started her Master of Environmental Science degree at Yale University. McKenzie was also awarded a fellowship to conduct research during her time at Yale. McKenzie credits her education at SPSL as a major factor in her accomplishments.



“SPSL helped build my educational foundation which has contributed to my academic rigor in high school and beyond. Teachers at SPSL did a great job at making classes engaging. Although my favorite subjects were math and science, the English courses I took provided significant help to my writing skills, which is incredibly important for academic and career success,” McKenzie said.

According to McKenzie, her family’s love of nature along with her education at SPSL was instrumental in her future success. “I was given a learning environment that successfully prepared me for high school. The structure of my education in grade school as well as the meaningful friendships I made, the teachers I had, and the topics I learned about all aided my academic trajectory,” McKenzie explained.

“While in grade school, my friends and I would enjoy a dinner from Pasta Fridays and spend hours playing outside on the playground together. Now, as an adult, I still look forward to coming back to Omaha during Lent and returning to SPSL for Pasta Fridays,” McKenzie said.

So what does the future hold for McKenzie? After completing her degree at Yale University, she hopes to pursue a career devoted to environmental research and education with an eye toward securing clean air, good water quality, and healthy food systems for others.

“I hope to be a passionate educator similar to the ones I had at SPSL, in high school, and in college. Receiving an education in an intentional and passionate manner inspired me to continue my path into academia, and I intend to do the same for others,” said McKenzie.

ALUMNI NEWS

MEMORIALS AND TRIBUTES

Memorials and Tributes are a wonderful way to remember or honor a loved one. Listed below are generous donations received from or in honor of SPSL Alumni for the SPSL Education Endowment Trust Fund between April 3, 2023 and September 20, 2023 (SPSL Alumni designated by graduation year).



Bill Allen

Mary and Daniel Vogel (1974)

Madonna "Donna" Dyksterhuis

Steve and Darley Adams

Glen Franks (1969)

Tom and Margaret (Guziec) Hoarty (1962)

Ray Fugger

Jean McGill
Mark and Teresa Stillmock

Phyllis Haller

Anne Jenkins (1969)

Bill and Claire Hewitt

Geralyn Hewitt Mason (1970)

Kathleen Johnson

Mary Joy Anderson
David Michael and Linda Gouger
Julie and Dwight Johnson
Marie Johnson
Noelle Johnson
Richard and Karol Kubat
Charles and Joan Mack
Mike and Janet McDermott
Linda Stevens
Sharon Vanbuskirk
John and Nancy Votta
Herman and Ellen Weist

Mary Ann Krogft

Jim Waldron

Conleth W. McGill

Debra (Solis) Anderson (1977)
Mark Bartolomei
Kristy Bashus
Connie Dunham
Tiziana Green
Jeanne Henry
Kathryn (1971) and William Jurgensen Jr.

M. Nan Kelsey
Ann Kenney
Anne Mahoney
James McGill
Jean McGill
Thomas McGill
Susie (Kenney) Nelson (1983)
Catherine Pedersen
Karen (Campbell) Rosenthal (1980)
Amy and Brian Sauser (1996)
Richard Schuler
Elizabeth Schumacher
Katharine Stuthman
Dawn (Smith) Young (1986)

Carolyn Sampson

Rebecca (Sampson) Johnson (1986)

Mathew Smith (1983)

Melissa Achola
Teresa Bayne
Dave Dougherty
Jon and Melanie Gross
Mary Hafner
Linda (Schall) Hitzemann (1984)
Aimee Jackman
Joel Juracek and Family
Heather Kraska
Michael Malloy
Mike and Rosie McGuire
Thomas Meister
William and Margaret Monzu
Joseph and Margaret Pazderka
Mark and Debra (Smith) Portz (1974)
David and Anna Schwarte
Patricia Spawn
Timothy and Renee Tewes
Melissa Turner
Faith White
John Yost
Robert and Maureen Young
Mary Jo Ziskey

Thelma L. Wesely

Kathryn (1971) and William Jurgensen Jr.

Denny Wurtz (1973)

Jon and Cara Steuter
Ben Wurtz
Lisa and Tom Wurtz (1964)

We apologize if there are any omissions or misstatements in the Memorials and Tributes. SPSL is incredibly appreciative of all gifts to our school.



OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY

The St. Pius X / St. Leo School community extends our deepest sympathy to the families of:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Sr. Ronnie Brune | Former SPSL Teacher |
| Michael Durkan | Class of 1979 |
| Glen Franks | Class of 1969 |
| Bill Giles | Class of 1971 |
| Patti (Vogt) Kidd | Class of 1965 |
| Leo Sawatski | Class of 1964 |
| Mathew Smith | Class of 1983 |
| Todd Theel | Class of 1973 |

BERNIE JACKSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

As part of the 2023 SPSL Graduation activities, a very special scholarship was awarded to **Beau Visty (2023)**. Each year, the Bernie Jackson Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a St. Pius X / St. Leo School 8th grade graduate who will be attending Creighton Prep High School the following year. Beau was selected for this scholarship because of his positive attitude, excellent work ethic, and his caring approach to others. Congratulations, Beau!



THE MISSION OF SPSL SCHOOL

St. Pius X / St. Leo School is a diverse community forming students in the Catholic faith to excel in academics and service to others.

Memorial Scholarships

You may contact Michaela (Messenger) Smith ('90) at 402-551-6667 for more information on setting up a memorial scholarship in honor of your loved one.

USE YOUR QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTIONS TO HELP SPSL

As you consider your qualified charitable distributions (QCD) this year, please prayerfully consider SPSL School as your charity of choice!

A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your IRA custodian, payable to a qualified charity. QCDs can generally be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year. A QCD is excluded from your taxable income. It is always recommended that you consult with your attorney and financial advisors on financial matters.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT SPSL

Will you become an Education Partner at SPSL?

Like most organizations, SPSL has experienced changes throughout the years.

For many years, classrooms were filled with teachers of religious orders, and our school was tuition-free. With the change to lay faculty, parent-paid tuition became a central source of funds to operate our school, and tuition has increased as the cost of a Catholic education rises each year.



Tuition and fees for the 2023-24 school year are \$3,800 per student while the actual cost to educate a student at our school is \$7,190. Approximately 30% of SPSL students qualify for free or reduced lunch under federal guidelines. Parents continue to pay as much tuition as they are able, and our two parishes (St. Pius X and St. Leo the Great) continue to provide significant financial support, yet 40% of our families need tuition assistance.

You can help! The Education Partners program at SPSL matches willing donors with students in need. Will you become a partner in education with a SPSL student? If you can do so, please return the enclosed envelope with your donation to help with tuition for a student in need. A gift of \$100 would cover a week of tuition at SPSL. **Any amount is helpful!**

Your contribution is entirely anonymous, and the student's family is simply told that a generous donor has assisted the student financially. A few times a year you will receive a note from your student partner updating you on his/her progress.



As alumni of SPSL, you have experienced firsthand the benefits of a SPSL education. We hope you will consider a gift to pay those benefits forward to deserving students today by becoming an Education Partner. St. Pius X / St. Leo School's motto is "More than a

School, It's a Community." And it is a community—a community of people from the past, the present, and the future working together.

Become an Education Partner!

Please return the enclosed envelope with your donation to help with tuition for a student in need.

Questions? Contact Michaela Smith by calling 402-551-6667 or emailing michaela.smith@spsl.net.

Thank you for your support!



MORE THAN A SCHOOL, IT'S A COMMUNITY

Enrollment at SPSL increased by 18 students this year compared to the 2022-2023 school year.

694 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PRE-K-8TH GRADE



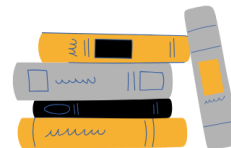
Service to others is celebrated every day at SPSL and culminates with a school-wide day of service in May called Mission Day.



60%
SPSL FAMILIES ABLE TO PAY THE FULL TUITION PRICE OF \$3,800 FOR THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR



95%
STUDENTS FROM THE SPSL CLASS OF 2023 ATTENDING A CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



20% OF OUR MOST RECENT HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAM CANDIDATES WERE AWARDED AN ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP.

SPSL academics emphasize high school readiness and critical thinking. Junior high at SPSL includes opportunities for advanced math and literature courses, mod scheduling, and electives based on interests.

Our Mission: St. Pius X / St. Leo School is a diverse community forming students in the Catholic faith to excel in academics and service to others.

SPSL SPIRIT WEAR

St. Pius X / St. Leo School Spirit Wear is open several times throughout the school year. It will be open November 6-19 with delivery in time for Christmas! Visit our school website at spsl.net/spiritwear/ to check out the latest spirit wear offerings. **GO PANTHERS!**



WORK AT SPSL SCHOOL



SPSL School is currently hiring for Extended Care. If you are interested, please contact Principal Sepich by email at cory.sepich@spsl.net.

FUTURE SPSL ALUMS

Do you have a Future SPSL Alum? Submit information regarding your new little one to Michaela Smith by emailing michaela.smith@spsl.net within one year of birth and we will send you a "Future Panther" t-shirt or onesie and publish the good news in an upcoming SPSL Alumni Newsletter.



JOIN US FOR INDIVIDUALLY UNIQUE, TOGETHER COMPLETE

All SPSL Alumni, Parents of Alumni, and friends are encouraged to gather at Creighton Prep the evening of Saturday, October 21, 2023 for the St. Pius X / St. Leo School Fall Fundraiser: *Individually Unique, Together Complete*. You are an important part of the SPSL puzzle, and we would be honored to celebrate the past, present, and future of SPSL with you! This is the biggest fundraiser of the year, and it provides much needed support for our school.



Our Fundraiser includes cocktails and appetizers, a plated dinner, silent auction, raffles, and an open bar all evening long! Funds raised will support capital improvements for our school, teacher education, technology, the SPSL endowment trust fund, and our school operating budget. You may purchase event tickets online using this QR code or contact SPSL School at 402-551-6667.

Even if you are unable to attend the event in person, you may still participate by using your smart phone and bidding online. You may sign up to participate in this way using the QR code as well.



We hope to see you on October 21. Thank you for supporting St. Pius X / St. Leo School!

ON THE CALENDAR

Tuesday, November 14, 2023: Grab dinner at Godfather's Pizza between 4:00 pm – 9:00 pm and 20% of your purchase will revert to SPSL when you identify your purchase as part of the SPSL fundraiser night event.

Tuesday, November 28, 2023: Please consider participating in an online giving opportunity: Giving Tuesday! Proceeds will provide needed support for teacher salaries – the largest part of the SPSL operating budget.

Saturday, February 3, 2024: Save the date for Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Round-Up at St. Pius X / St. Leo School. Contact Kim Kenney at kim.kenney@spsl.net for more information or to set up a tour.

Friday, May 10, 2024: SPSL students will participate in the annual Race for Education, a fundraiser involving walking, running, snow cones, and fun. This is a great way to support SPSL.

Thursday, May 16, 2024: Class of 2024 Graduation Mass at 8:30 am at St. Pius X and Graduation Service at 7:00 pm at St. Leo the Great.

Monday, May 20, 2024: The 20th Annual SPSL Golf Tournament will be held at the Field Club Golf Course. Email joe.toppi@spsl.net to join in this day filled with golf, fun, and friends.

For more information on all our upcoming events, visit the St. Pius X / St. Leo School website at www.spsl.net.



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ALUMNI - TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

We want to hear from you! Is there any interesting news or events that have happened recently in your life? Did you get a new job or a promotion? Have you recently been married or added a new member to your family? Have you moved? We encourage you to share your news with us and your fellow alums.

Name (Maiden and Married) _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip

E-mail Address _____

Phone (____) _____ St. Pius X / St. Leo Class of _____

High School Attended _____ Year of Graduation _____

Sibling's Names _____ Spouse's Name _____

Name and Ages of Your Children _____

Business _____ Position _____

School Currently Attending _____ State _____

News for Our Alumni Newsletter _____

Please mail to: St. Pius X / St. Leo School, 6905 Blondo Street, Omaha NE 68104-4600
Attention: Alumni News

Please email to: michaela.smith@spsl.net

Or visit www.spsl.net/alumni-profile to update your contact information online.