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Garden Angels Club Comes to ACS



With grant funding, the ACS food forest garden broke ground in January 2023. For the past 10 months the garden has been planted in phases and has reached the stage where many helpers are needed to maintain it. Our garden club launched on November 27 with thirteen inaugural members and two magnificent leaders. The club will teach students about horticulture and plant growth and provide hands-on experience in community service. Members of our parish community are also welcome to participate in the club.

Pictured above are members of the Garden Angels Club with the leaders, Terri Cole and Tracy Marvel. Terri and Tracy are members of St. Gabriel Parish and are trained catechists in the parish faith formation program. They both love gardening and passing on their faith to our young people. The club will meet every Monday after school for horticulture lessons and hands-on experience tending the plants in the garden. Adults who would like to volunteer in the garden can contact Keli McCann in the school office. Students interested in joining the club may register in January for the next 8-week session.

If you are wondering what's growing in the food forest garden, here is a sampling of what you will find there:

- ◆ deciduous trees such as apple, peach, fig, plum, jujube, and apricot.
- ◆ tropical plants and herbs such as mango, ice cream bean tree, bare-root bananas, dragon fruit, thyme, and rosemary.
- ◆ a variety of citrus trees including lemon, lime, and grapefruit.
- ◆ a Mary rose garden with benches and a gently bubbling fountain.



IMPORTANT DATES

December

10	Piano Recital, 11:45
13	Picture Retakes
20	Christmas Concert, 6:30
21	Noon Dismissal Christmas Break
Jan.8	Classes resume

**View the ACS
[School Calendar](#)**

The Mission of Annunciation Catholic School

Within our strong Catholic community, we develop children to their fullest God-given potential - spiritually, intellectually, morally, socially, and physically.

6th grade donates to the imprisoned, inspired by literature.

St. Ignatius of Loyola taught his students to see God in all things and every person., even if that person is incarcerated. The sixth-grade class at Annunciation Catholic School finished reading the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar and were inspired to sponsor a charity drive.

The novel takes place in a juvenile detention camp in Texas. The students collected toiletry items like soap and shampoo and donated these necessities to a juvenile detention center in Phoenix.

The book taught the students empathy for teenagers in detention and gave the students an opportunity to live out the corporal work of mercy, “Visit the Imprisoned.” “We have been trying to find a theme for the sixth grade,” literature teacher Edmund Hubbard said. “We started talking about the works of mercy and it has really stuck. It is tangible. The students can really see their actions make an impact.”



In the novel, the main character, Stanley, works all day in the sun. At the end of the day, he only has four minutes to take a shower. Jessica Doney is a parole officer and works overtime at a juvenile detention center in Phoenix. She said the young inmates often request items like body wash, shampoo, face wash and deodorant. “Detention provides the youth in its care with the bare minimum when it comes to toiletry items,” Doney said. “For instance, the youth are given a cone of soap to wash their body and wash their hair.”

The sixth-grade students understood these young adults may have made mistakes, but they still deserve basic human dignity when it comes to hygiene.



“After we read the book *Holes*,” sixth grader Sami Vitolo said. “It made me think that the people in prison do need help and they need stuff and people change.”

Due to regulations, only airplane carry-on size, 2-ounce containers are allowed to be donated to the detention centers. This was a perfect opportunity for the sixth graders to take their own savings and use it to purchase affordable supplies for the drive. They only needed their parents for a ride to Target.

“We felt really amazed that we somehow accomplished this,” sixth grader Ariyan Baasten said. “We were giving to the poor and we also felt happy because they are going to be happy when they get the stuff.”

The ACS students are not naive. They know the inmates have committed serious crimes, but the students believed they should be treated with dignity.



“Bottom line, they are still God’s children,” Doney said. “I am so thankful for your (school’s) generosity and your humanity toward these youth that often feel misunderstood, scared, forgotten, and labeled.”

Middle School Teachers Win Golden Gator Award

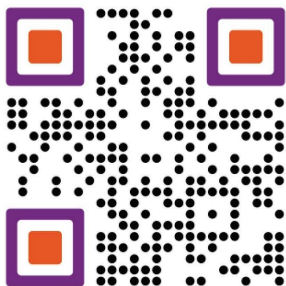
Congratulations to Mr. Hubbard, Ms. O’Keeffe, and Mrs. Cullen for receiving the Golden Gator Excellence in Teaching award from Xavier College Preparatory. This award was created by Xavier so that incoming freshmen are able to nominate a 7th or 8th grade teacher who had inspired her and significantly helped her along her academic route and guided her toward academic success.



#VitalToLife



ADVANCE APPOINTMENTS are encouraged.



DONATE BLOOD
vitalant.org | 877-25-VITAL

St. Gabriel the Archangel **BLOOD DRIVE**

Sunday, January 28th

8 a.m. - Noon

Vitalant Bloodmobile in Parking Lot
32648 N. Cave Creek Rd. ~ Cave Creek

To schedule an appointment, visit donors.vitalant.org (Enter Sponsor Code: gabriel) or scan the QR code. For questions please contact Joe Rostowsky at (480) 241.0406



ACS Artists at the Tempe Festival of the Arts

The Tempe Festival includes artwork from hundreds of students throughout the state. Six ACS students received 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade for their age group. As a whole, our school received 24% of the 1st-3rd place finishers. In addition, 5 of our students received honorable mention. See their rankings below. We are blessed to have the best art teacher in the state . Way to go, Mrs. Himmelein!!!

Honorable Mention

Congratulations to:

- Lucy Pierz ,Grade 1
- Santiago Gutierrez, Grade 1
- Emerie Costa, Grade 1
- Iris Phelan, Grade 3
- Ellie Dyer, Grade 6

Category	Winner	Name of Art Piece	School
Best In Show	Valeria Guerrero Torres	El Pulpo	Mountain Point
2nd Overall	Alyssa Piekarski	Leuven Town Hall	SteffMayberry Studio
3rd Overall	Chloe Greetis	Howdy	Chaparral High
Kindergarten & 1st - 1st Place	Ava Pacheco	The House of My Savior	Annunciation Catholic School
Kindergarten & 1st - 2nd Place	Harlow DeMerrit	The Mixed Up Rainbow	Kerene Brisas
Kindergarten & 1st - 3rd Place	Hannah Santoro	My Rainbow Valley	Keyrene Norte
Grades 2- 3 - 1st Place	Nicholas Vitolo	Summer of 2023 Sand Castle	Annunciation Catholic School
Grades 2- 3 - 2nd Place	Miloh Malhotra	Untitled	Cerritos Elemetry School
Grades 2- 3 - 3rd Place	Kateri Gutierrez	Under the Sea	Annunciation Catholic School
Grades 4 - 5 - 1st Place	Olivia Henricks	The Mighty Bell Pepper	Annunciation Catholic School
Grades 4 - 5 - 2nd Place	Connor Cunningham	God Food	Annunciation Catholic School
Grades 4 - 5 - 3rd Place	Samantha Camarano	Untitled	Cerritos Elementary School
Grades 6 - 8 - 1st Place	Leah Kim	Breakfast Friends	Shadow Mountain
Grades 6 - 8 - 2nd Place	Amelia Wicker	Vermillion Sand Dunes	Annunciation Catholic School
Grades 6 - 8 - 3rd Place	Alexis Aguilar	Untitled	New School for the Arts and Achedemics

Below: *The House of My Savior* by Ava Pacheco, Kindergarten

Right: *Summer of 2023 Sandcastle* by Nicholas Vitolo, 3rd Grade

All the winning artwork will be on display at the Christmas concert on December 20 in the church.



Fall Sports Season Comes to a Close

Thanks to all our players and coaches who participated in our fall sports season. Our girls volleyball and boys flag football teams worked very hard and had lots of fun competing with other schools in the Catholic Youth league. We appreciate the many hours of service given by all our parent coaches and those who assisted them.

Coach Jon Tranter: 5th/6th volleyball

Coach Suzie Alba & Coach Abe Titze: 7th/8th volleyball

Coach Monte Powers & Coach J.P. Johnson: 7th flag football

Coach Scott Arnold & Coach Mike Scagnoli: 5/6 flag football



Kiwanis of Carefree Awards Two More Grants to ACS!

ACS has received two more grants from the Kiwanis of Carefree. The first grant is for \$3,257 to purchase ten ScreenBeam Wireless Display Receivers. Having a wireless receiver allows for teachers to walk around and monitor the classroom while teaching on the interactive newline boards. This particular device is also very reliable and works at a faster rate than the wireless receivers we are currently using.

The second grant is for \$6,512 to purchase three more 3-D Printers for the science lab. Students in middle school enjoy using computer assisted design to create 3-D models. The addition of 3 more printers will increase the number of students who can produce 3-D models at the same time.

Please support Kiwanis of Carefree by donating to and shopping at their thrift store, the Kiwanis Marketplace. It is located in Cave Creek across from Dairy Queen. The Kiwanis Marketplace is also in need of volunteers. It's a great place for our middle school students to provide service hours to our community.

Learn more about Kiwanis at <https://kiwaniscarefree.org/>.



School Accreditation Update December 2023



Parent Survey Results

Our parent survey had a 63% response rate (WCEA considers 30% a good response rate), and the results indicate that our parents have a very high satisfaction with the school in terms of Catholic identity, academics, school staff, and administration.

- ◆ 97.8% of respondents feel that everyone in the school community knows and understands the school's mission.
- ◆ 95.5% of respondents believe that our school provides an academically rigorous Catholic religion program, taught by qualified teachers.
- ◆ 14% of respondents don't know if there is a person or group (such as a pastor or a board) who collaborates with school administration to make or recommend decisions for the success of the school.
 - ⇒ **Answer:** The school has an Advisory Council of 8 voting members who meet monthly with Fr. Chad and Dr. Pristash. Their current areas of focus include strengthening the partnership between parents and school, monitoring the accreditation process, and improving safety/security on campus. [Follow this link](#) to the Advisory Council page on the school website.
- ◆ Only 79% of respondents are aware that the school communicates how well students are achieving in comparison to similar students locally and/or nationally.
 - ⇒ **Answer:** We have posted our ITBS scores for grades 1-8 on the school website since 2011. We consistently score well above the national and diocesan scores at all grade levels. [Follow this link](#) to the scores on our website.
- ◆ 26.5% of respondents don't know the school's process for financial planning.
 - ⇒ **Answer:** The school has a Finance Council whose members include financial experts, the parish finance director and bookkeeper, pastor, principal, development director, and the chair of the Advisory Council. The Finance Council meets monthly to review finance reports and manage the budget. The school finances are published each year in the Annual Report. [Here's a link to last year's report](#), which is found on the school website. Our latest Annual Report is in production.
- ◆ 95.6% of respondents feel that our school provides enriching programs for students to develop their gifts and talents and enhance their creative, artistic, social/emotional, physical, and spiritual potential.

Accreditation Timeline

Feb. 15, 2024	Complete first drafts of chapters 1-3 for the Self Study Report
Feb. 28, 2024	Send the drafts to the Commissioner of Accreditation at the Diocese
Apr. 30, 2024	Begin writing the Educational Improvement Plan
Aug. 31, 2024	Send the Final Self Study to Commissioner
Sept. 15, 2024	Complete the Educational Improvement Plan
Nov. 6-8, 2024	Onsite Accreditation Visit

Essay Contest: How can the Church Evangelize in a Digital Age?



The St. Gabriel Knights of Columbus Chapter partnered with Annunciation Catholic School 8th grade students for entries into the KOC Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest.

This contest encourages today's youth to be more connected to their community and their faith. The goal of this program is to involve young Catholics in grades 8 to 12 (public, private, parochial, or home schools during the current school year) in civic discourse and instill in them religious and life-affirming values.

The topic this year dealt with evangelization asking students to compose a 500-750 word essay on the following prompt:

How can the Church evangelize in the digital age?

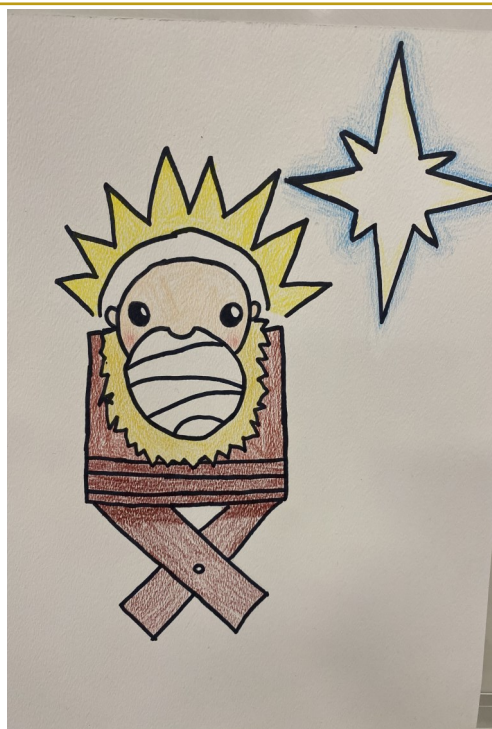
The students in Mrs. Cullen's religion class did an excellent job writing on a challenging topic. Students are scored on content, organization, and grammar.

This winners for the 2023 Contest were the following Annunciation Catholic School 8th graders:

1st Place - Alex Rozaci 2nd Place - Meadow Vogelsang 3rd Place - Cece Oveson

St. Gabriel's presents the winners annually with checks for \$100 (1st) \$75 (2nd) and \$50 (3rd). The first-place winner is entered into the state contest.

Thank you to Mr. John Friess, Knights Essay Contest Program Coordinator, and the Knights of Columbus at St. Gabriel's for their support of our school! Congrats to Alex, Meadow, and Cece!



ST. GABRIEL the ARCHANGEL CATHOLIC CHURCH CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve - Sunday, Dec. 24
4pm , 6pm, & 11pm

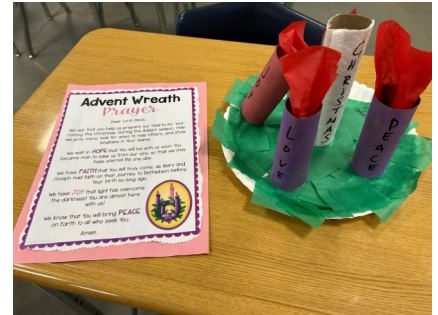
Christmas Day - Monday, Dec 25
8:30am & 10:30am

Alumni News



Annunciation Alums, Emma and Charlotte Wicker (Class of 2021, 2023), have brought art to our after school program offerings through the *ACS Art Angels*. Students in grades K-3 have been participating in holiday and religious themed arts and crafts throughout the semester, while older students in grades 4-8 have been working on sketching and drawing skills. *ACS Art Angels* will resume in February. Be on the lookout for signups in January for the next set of sessions.

Charlotte and Emma now attend Notre Dame Prep where they are involved in many extracurricular activities. They are both in the St. Thomas Aquinas honors program, which comes with a scholarship. They are using the proceeds from *Art Angels* to fundraise for the NDP choir trip to NYC in March where they will be performing at the Lincoln Center.



ACS Students Rock the Mountains in Cycling

Riding and racing bikes is part of the Morozowich family culture and Anna, Leah, and Owen all learned to ride and race at a young age (by age 2!). They race all over the country, each season culminating with the biggest event, the USA Cycling National Championships (usually referred to as "Nationals"). Leah and Anna have been blessed to almost always finish on the podium at Nationals year after year (you have to finish in the top-5 to earn a podium spot), demonstrating they are amongst the best junior cyclists in the country.



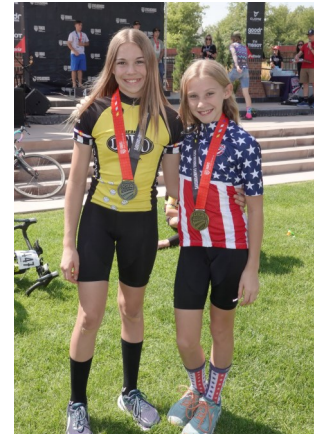
The past 2 years have been truly amazing with Anna winning 4 National Championships in cyclocross, mountain biking (twice), and gravel and with Leah winning the silver medal in cyclocross and gravel and the bronze medal in mountain biking! Owen is still too young to compete at Nationals, but he hopes to emulate his sisters and has already won 3 State Championships in cyclocross (twice) and mountain biking. They all agree that the skills they have learned to prepare for cycling apply to all aspects of life!



Leah Bronze Medalist at Mountain Bike National Championships 2023



Anna Winning Cyclocross National Championships 2022 (Connecticut)



Anna Wins and Leah Silver Medalist at Gravel National Championships 2023 (Nebraska)



Vibrant Vinnie Gives Closing Prayer for SVdP



Congratulations to the president of Vibrant Vinnies, Cece Oveson, who gave the closing prayer at the general membership meeting downtown at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Other Vibrant Vinnies and ACS alumni were in attendance for the commissioning of the new Diocesan Council president, Shirley Smalley. Shirley was the adult liaison for the Vibrant Vinnies for many years and shared her vast experience with SVdP. She taught many ACS students that you are never too young to serve those most in need. We are glad that the ACS Vinnies were there to honor her. Best wishes to Shirley in her new leadership role.

Musical Talent Abounds at ACS

Congratulations to Sami Vitolo for her 2 solos in the Holiday Celebration performance of the Upscale Singers! Sami is part of the Upscale Kids which are a group of 8 – 12 local young singers who perform regularly with the Upscale Singers making every show a multi-generational happening. This gives talented youth from our North Valley an opportunity to perform and develop their skills. ACS Music teachers, Mrs. Trayer and Mrs. Reynolds were in attendance and were thrilled by Sami's performance.



Mrs. Trayer (pictured above) and Mrs. Himmelein were very proud of their music students who performed at the piano recital held on Sunday, December 10 in the parish hall. A total of 24 students participated and all did an amazing job. Picture above with Mrs. Trayer is 4th grade pianist, Jack Kraus.

School Administration

Pastor

Fr. Chad King
frchad@stgacc.org

Principal

Dr. Sharon Pristash
spristash@acsphx.org

Dean of Students

Ms. Lynne O'Keeffe
lokeeffe@acsphx.org

Director of Development/Marketing

Mrs. Keli McCann
kmccann@acsphx.org

Director of Operations/Facilities

Mrs. Lynn Schwartz
lschwartz@acsphx.org

Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Maria Garcia
office@acsphx.org

School Nurses: nurse@acsphx.org

Mrs. Joann Perraut
Mrs. Bridget Primavera
Mrs. Stephanie Raiff

For the complete staff directory visit

<http://acsphx.org/about-us/staff-directory>

ANNUNCIATION

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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Cave Creek, AZ 85331

Phone: (480)361-8234
Fax: (480)207-6730

www.acsphx.org

E-mail: office@acsphx.org
School Hours 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Office Hours 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Find us on [Facebook!](#)

Spelling Bee 2023



Twelve students in grades 5-8 competed in the school level spelling on December 1. These students were the top three spellers in the classroom spelling bees in November.

Pictured above:

Victor (6), Chase (6), Sami (6), Monte (7), Amelia (7), Drake (8), Josie (5) Bella (5), Meadow (8), James (7), Aiden (5), and Josh (8)



First and second place went to James and Meadow. James will compete in the Diocesan Spelling Bee on January 24 at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School.

Congratulations, Spellers!