



Annunciation Press

Quarterly Newsletter

Summer
2025
Volume XVII
Issue 1

WHAT'S INSIDE

Back to School BBQ	2
Kindness of Buddies	3
Welcome New Staff	4
Color Fun Run Fundraiser	5
ACS Advisory Council News	6
Building Project Update	7
Student Cell Phones Policy	8
ACS Little Leaguer's	9
Alumni News	10
Gifts from Kiwanis	11
Adult Faith Formation	12
Vibrant Vinnies	13



IMPORTANT DATES

September

- 4 Labor Day, no school
- 12 All School Rosary, 2:20pm
- 19 Fun Run, noon dismissal
- ACS Family Mass, 10:30am
- 21
- Community Prayer, 2:20pm
- 29

October

- 2 Noon Dismissal, K-8 parent teacher conf.
- 3 No School, K-8 parent teacher conferences
- 10 No School; Diocesan Educator Day teachers offsite
- 13 No School, Columbus Day
- 24 Trunk or Treat at 5:30pm
- 31 Noon Dismissal-All Saints Day/Grandparents day

Annunciation Kicks Off Year 17!

On Wednesday, August 6, all students and staff were welcomed to campus for the start of the 17th year of Annunciation. We celebrate another record year of enrollment, improvements to the campus, and some amazing new staff members (see inside!).

The first day began with our annual First Day Prayer Service in the parish hall. Dr. Pristash welcomed the students, staff, and parents, and our Student Council officers led the prayer. As



always, our welcome back theme was JOY — to find true joy in life, you must think first of Jesus, then Others, and finally, Yourself. We are especially joyous about all our new students and their families! We are so happy to have you join the ACS family.



We look forward to a great year ahead and pray for God's blessings for our school family!

Special thanks to the ACS Student Ambassadors (pictured left). They were very helpful during our back to school open house, and our first community prayer event. We are very thankful for their commitment to serving our school during their last year at Annunciation.

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.

Another Great Back to School BBQ!



Thanks to our ACS Dad's club and our ACS Development team of Dena Wholey and Christy Brown for planning and running our very fun back to school BBQ on Saturday, August 16!

We had a tremendous turnout with over 200 students and parents in attendance. While the temps were pretty warm that evening, our 8th grade parents arranged for Kona Ice to come out and provide cool treats for the kids. All proceeds will support the 8th grade class trip fund.

We are so blessed to have so many new and returning families in attendance. Their spirit of support and community is uplifting and brings the promise of another great year at Annunciation.

"If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!"
 -St. Catherine of Sienna



A movement amongst the church for all youth to encounter the Lord in His Church and becoming lifelong disciples.

Registration Now Open

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
 SUNDAYS: 5pm - 7pm
 Youth Center
beginning September 7th



SCAN QR TO REGISTER

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
 MONDAYS: 6pm - 7:30pm
 Youth Center
beginning September 8th

QUESTIONS? Contact: Steven Piorkowski at: youth@stgacc.org or 480-595-0883 xt8219

Kindergartener's Meet Their 8th Grade Buddies!



Each year, during the first week of school our kindergarten students are introduced to their 8th grade buddies, who assist their new young friends at weekly Mass and monthly rosary. 1st graders are also paired with a 7th grade buddy, and 2nd graders get 6th grade buddies.

The middle schooler buddies help instill good behavioral habits in their young friend, while learning to be responsible and nurturing to others. They grow in friendship and share a joyful bond that often brings their families together as well.



5th Grade Teacher/ Middle School Resource, Mrs. Alison Mohns



We are happy to announce that Mrs. Alison Mohns is our 5th grade teacher for the new school year. She has been a regular substitute teacher at ACS for the past year, with experience at all grade levels. She will also be providing math support in the middle school, so Vice Principal Raiff will assist with some of the 5th grade teaching duties along with Mrs. Cunningham who will continue to teach 5th grade Language Arts.

Mrs. Mohns has two Masters degrees – a Masters in Education for Mathematics and Sciences and a Masters in Environmental Science – in addition to her teacher certification. She has twelve years of teaching experience prior to substituting at ACS. She has a love for ACS like all of us do and is committed to providing your children with the best possible learning experience in 5th grade.

Special Ed Coordinator, Mrs. Rachel Flemming



We are blessed to welcome Mrs. Rachel Flemming to the ACS Faculty as our Special Ed. Coordinator and part time Middle School Resource Teacher.

A native of Arizona, she attended Horizon High School and ASU for her undergraduate studies where she earned a B.A. in Special Education. She went on to graduate from NAU with her Masters in Special Ed. She taught in the PV District for 10 years as a middle school Special Education teacher where she focused on Resource Math as well as study skills and organization.

She and her husband are the proud parents of 2 boys ages 3 and 5 who will eventually attend ACS. Rachel loves to talk sports and is a huge hockey fan. Helping students who need a little extra is her passion. She looks forward to supporting both students and staff at ACS.

Assistant Director Development and Marketing, Mrs. Christy Brown



We welcome back Mrs. Christy Brown who has accepted the role of Assistant Director of Development and Marketing. She will be working with the Director of Development and Marketing, Dena Wholey, promoting our school to the community and assisting with fundraising.

Mrs. Brown's two older children graduated ACS and currently attend Notre Dame Prep. Her youngest child is in 4th grade at ACS. As a parent volunteer, she chaired our 2022 spring gala and is one of the founders of our annual Christmas Market. Her husband, Doug, has coached our sports teams and helped with our school events as well. Christy previously enjoyed the role of teacher aide in Kindergarten with Ms. Miley.



SAVE THESE DATES:

AUG. 27: Register online at MyBooster.com

**FIRST 100 PARENTS THAT REGISTER HAVE
A CHANCE TO WIN 2 FRONT ROW SEATS TO
CHRISTMAS CONCERT (\$200 VALUE)**

SEPT. 10: Kickoff for Donations on MyBooster.com

SEPT. 12: Pep Rally in the Parish Hall

SEPT. 19: Color Fun Run

BECOME A FUN RUN SPONSOR TODAY!

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT YOUR SPONSORSHIP WITH
COMPANY LOGO IS SEPTEMBER 10, 2025!**

Benefits of sponsorship:

- 100% of your sponsorship will directly fund educational costs
 - Business recognition within our community
 - Tax advantages for your business

School Advisory Council

The Advisory Council's mission is to provide strategic counsel and direction to the Pastor and Principal in order to assist them in accomplishing the mission of the school. Read the [Annunciation Catholic School Advisory Council Bylaws](#) posted on our school website.

Advisory Council Responsibilities

Planning, Policy formulation, Finance, Development, Accreditation, Communication, Selection and evaluation of the principal

Advisory Council Members

Council members include parents and grandparents of current students and alumni as well as parishioners of St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church.

- Chelsea Cordell, Chair - ACS parent of three ACS graduates.
- Marcie Mills, Chair -ACS parent of a graduate and a 6th grader
- Andrew Krahe, Secretary - ACS parent of a first grader
- Don Raiff -ACS grandparent two graduates and a 7th grader
- Jenn O'Neill – ACS parent of a graduate and a 7th grader
- Joan Pernice, St. Gabriel parishioner
- Aerin Jacob- St. Gabriel parishioner
- Jeff Zorn– ACS parent of a third grader
- Marcia Balestrino, St. Gabriel parishioner



A Message from our Advisory Council Chair

I'm honored to serve as Chair of the Advisory Council this year, and I want to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Chelsea Cordell, and my family and I have been part of the ACS community for 8 years. I'm proud to say that all three of my children are ACS graduates. My two girls went on to Xavier and graduated, and my son Sawyer graduated last year and is a freshman at Notre Dame Prep. This school has played a major role in shaping who they are, not just academically, but in faith, values, and character, and for that I will always be grateful.

Stepping into the role of Chair is both a privilege and a responsibility I take to heart. The Advisory Board exists to support the mission of ACS, to listen to the needs of our community, and to work collaboratively with school leadership to make decisions that will help our students and our school thrive. This year, I'm especially excited about the opportunities ahead, working to strengthen communication between families and the school, building on our strong academic and faith-based foundation, and exploring new ways to enrich the ACS experience for every student. Together, I believe we can continue to make ACS a place where faith and learning flourish hand in hand.

Thank you for your continual support of ACS. I look forward to an incredible year ahead, and I welcome your ideas, feedback, and prayers as we move forward together.

Blessings,

Chelsea Cordell, Chair



Campus Projects on the Horizon

Senior Facility

A 125 unit facility will be built on the portion of our parish campus adjacent to Rancho Paloma Road. The facility will be built and managed by the developer. It will provide three levels of living — senior living, assisted living, and memory care. The plan is for the residents to become integral members of our Catholic Community.

Gymnasium

A full-size gymnasium with a stage is in the planning stages and will hopefully be built concurrent with the construction of the senior facility. The gymnasium will provide indoor space for athletics, PE, and many other school and parish events.

The plans for the construction project are currently at City of Phoenix awaiting permits. The developer is hoping for groundbreaking in the early part of 2026. Once we have broken ground, the construction will take 18 months or less. Watch for more information about this project in future newsletters and the church bulletin.



www.acanthusseniorliving.com



Proposed site of
school gymnasium



Student Cell Phones at ACS



Every parent will eventually hear, “Everybody has cell a phone except me!” Rest assured, it is not the case. We recently conducted a survey of all middle school parents (84 students in grades 6-8), and the results were both surprising and encouraging. Currently, **45% of our middle school students do NOT have a cell phone**. Parents who have held off on getting their child a cell phone can let go of the guilt.

For the 55% of students who *do* have a cell phone, the survey indicated that only 18 of them will bring their cell phone to school on a regular basis. Our policy for cell phone and personal devices in middle school is below. It is also in our school handbook on the website. Thank you to all parents and students who understand and respect this policy.

CELL PHONE AND PERSONAL DEVICE POLICY

The administration discourages students from bringing phones and personal devices to school, but we realize it is a necessity for some. Middle school students who bring a device to school will be required to keep it **powered off and secured** in a **locked cabinet** in the student’s homeroom from arrival until dismissal. Elementary students must keep personal devices powered off and in their backpacks. Random searches of student backpacks, lunchboxes, lockers, and pockets will be conducted (see the **Right to Search** policy in the school handbook).

FIELD TRIPS

Students are not allowed to take their phones or other devices on field trips. Parent drivers are required to enforce this rule in their car. Failure to comply with this rule will result in loss of chaperone/driver privileges for that parent for the remainder of the year. This applies to the children in the car with their parents.

DISCIPLINE

If a student violates this policy, a teacher or administrator shall take the following progressively serious disciplinary measures:

- **1st Offense:** The phone/device will be confiscated, and a \$50 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.
 - **2nd Offense:** The phone/device will be confiscated, and another \$50 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.
 - **The student will receive a one-day suspension.**
 - **3rd Offense:** The phone/device will be confiscated, and a \$100 fine will be charged. The phone/device will need to be picked up at the school office by a parent.
 - **The student will receive a three-day suspension.** For the remainder of the school year, the student will not be allowed to bring his/her phone to school.
-

ACS Little League All-Stars!

Antonio and Adriel Diaz, ACS students in grade 6th and 4th respectively, made it to the little league all-star teams! Antonio was selected for the 11u team, while Adriel was chosen for the 10u team. Both boys had the privilege of competing at the district level. Although Antonio's team narrowly missed out on winning the district championship by just one run, Adriel's team achieved an incredible feat by winning the district title undefeated. After winning a spot for the state tournament, they traveled to Sierra Vista, where 14 teams from all over Arizona competed for the state title. Adriel's team went undefeated in state tournament too and won the state championship!

Congratulations Antonio, Adriel, and the entire Diaz family!



Annunciation Picture Day

Wednesday, Sept. 10

Student Uniform required

K-7 blue school polo

8th light blue school polo

All girls wearing the plaid jumper
must wear white peter pan
collared blouse.

Retakes Wed., Oct. 22

ORDER NOW!

Dorian

Summer 2025

ACS Campus Improvements

New turf on the Playground

*FlexGround under play structure
repaired and resealed*

*Interior of school classrooms and
common areas repainted*

School fencing repainted

*New uniform closet in the parish
hall*

*New security cameras on the back
sport court and grass field*

Alumni News

ACS Alumni at Clemson University

Siblings Iain and Maddy Erskine, Annunciation graduates of '20 and '21 respectively, have been very busy since they left our school. Iain attended Brophy College Prep as an honor student, where he played soccer and graduated in 2024. He went on to attend Clemson University taking along with him 26 college credits he earned in high school. Now, a college sophomore, he is majoring in biomedical engineering with a pre-med track and is aspiring to be a interventional radiologist. He is very busy with his studies.

Maddy, who is one year younger, attended Xavier College Prep where she was a Great Books student, and a member of the crew team, National Honor Society and National Spanish Honor Society. She graduated in May at the top of her class and followed her brother to Clemson where she is freshman pursuing a medical engineering degree with a pre-law focus on patent law. Maddy was able to transfer 36 college credits she earned in high school.

Iain and Maddy's parents, Dr. Tom Erskine and Mrs. Claudia Erskine R.N., have been long time volunteers and supporters of Annunciation Catholic School. To this day they still continue to volunteer their time, talent, and treasure and we are so very grateful for their love and support.



Left: Maddy, Dr. Tom, Iain and Claudia Erskine.

Above: Maddy on her first day of school at Clemson University.

Top right: Maddy and Iain sightseeing while visiting family in Antigua, Guatemala this summer.

ACS Teachers Receive a Gift from Carefree Kiwanis

For the second year in a row, the Kiwanis Club of Carefree provided gift cards for our teachers to help them purchase classrooms supplies. On Thursday, July 31, representatives from Kiwanis visited our staff and gave each teacher a \$200 Wal-Mart gift card. This is huge gift to our teachers and our students! Thank you to Kiwanis member Darrell Doepke for spearheading this program. This generous program provided gift cards not only to ACS teachers, but also for other teachers in the local Cave Creek schools.

Kiwanis has provided thousands of dollars to our school to purchase Chromebooks which has allowed us to provide a device for each student in our school from Kindergarten through 8th grade.

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.

To learn more about Kiwanis visit <https://kiwaniscarefree.org/>.



Above: Dr. Pristash along with Kiwanis members: Sandra Carrier, Executive Director, Tim Dimon, Larry Key-Treasurer, and Darrell Doepke.



**Make an Impact in Your Community ...
Shop at the Kiwanis Marketplace Thrift Store!**



FOUNDATIONS — of FAITH —

A Journey Through the Catechism

Adult Faith Formation: Fall/Spring '25/'26

Discover the heart and soul of your Catholic beliefs with Foundations of Faith: A Journey Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This engaging, 20-session series was filmed across 40 locations, spanning 4 continents and 10 countries, showing you the universal beauty of the Church.

Learn From:

Dr. Edward Sri
Fr. Mike Schmitz
Jeff Cavins
Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio

Beginning September 9th

Tuesday Nights
6:00 - 7:30pm
Adult Faith Formation Bldg.,
2nd Fl.
St. Gabriel Room

Facilitated By:
Deacon Matthew Irish

Questions? Contact Dcn. Matt: adultfaith@stgacc.org



**SCAN QR
TO REGISTER**

Vibrant Vinnies

A Society of Saint Vincent de Paul youth conference for 5-8th graders

Meetings once a month, Service on your schedule

"Never too young to serve the Lord"

Why Join?



Fulfill the two great commandments:
Love of God and love of neighbor



Discover your spiritual gifts, attributes
and strengths



Meet people who share your values
and have fun



Put your faith into action with age-
appropriate acts of service (earn hours)



Increase empathy and gratitude



Participate in team-building activities
and group discussions



Low time commitment means it's
easy to fit Vinnies into your schedule!



<https://form.jotform.com/252175266395161>



**Apply Online
By Aug 30!**

School Administration

Pastor

Fr. Chad King
frchad@stgacc.org

Principal

Dr. Sharon Pristash
spristash@acsphx.org

Vice Principal

Mr. Matt Raiff
mraiff@acsphx.org

Dean of Students

Ms. Lynne O'Keeffe
lokeeffe@acsphx.org

Director of Operations/Facilities

Mrs. Lynn Schwartz
lschwartz@acsphx.org

Director of Development/Marketing

Ms. Dena Wholey
dwholey@acsphx.org

Administrative Assistant

Mrs. Maria Garcia
office@acsphx.org

School Nurses: nurse@acsphx.org

For the complete staff directory visit

ANNUNCIATION

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

32648 N. Cave Creek Road
Cave Creek, AZ 85331

Phone: (480)361-8234

Fax: (480)207-6730

www.acsphx.org

Email: office@acsphx.org


School Hours 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Office Hours 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Class of 2026



The 8th grade class of 2026 has an exciting year ahead! This fall they will prepare for the High School Placement Test (HSPT), visit various high schools, and together with their parents, choose the best fit for their future. Once the high school application process is complete, they are ramping up for Catholic Schools Week, awaiting high school acceptance letters, and looking ahead to their class trip to Flagstaff before graduation festivities in May. It's amazing how quickly the 8th grade year flies by! We wish them a joyous and successful final year at Annunciation. May God bless our ACS Angels!



VOLLEYBALL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NIGHT


Xavier College Preparatory
VS
Notre Dame Preparatory

A high energy evening of faith, family,
and fun with exciting raffles, giveaways,
and activities as we come together to
cheer on our teams and celebrate our
Catholic community!

**Wednesday,
Sept. 24th**

Xavier College Preparatory's
Winsor Activity Center
Fresh @4pm
JV @5pm
Varsity @6pm

Catholic
school
students plus
one adult get
in for free!
Make sure to
come in your
school's shirt!



XCP has a clear bag policy for sporting events. Thank
you for helping create a safe, fan-friendly
environment.
If you need more tickets, please purchase them at
GoFan.co

