



Annunciation Press

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2025
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Issue 2

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IMPORTANT DATES

January

- 1 Holy Day of Obligation
- 5 Classes resume
- 16 Early dismissal, 12pm
- 19 MLK Jr Day, No School
- 25 Catholic Schools Week
All school Mass 10:30am
- 30 8th gr. vs. Staff VB match

February

- 13 No School
- 16 Presidents Day No School
- 18 Ash Wednesday
- 20 End of Trimester 2

March

- 6 & 9 No School
- 27 Early dismissal, 12pm

ACS Food Forest Garden & Garden Club

Two years ago, an idea was planted at Annunciation: our students should know where their food came from, how to grow and care for edible trees and plants, while also remembering it is God who created all of these for our needs and enjoyment. With this in mind, Dr. Pristash created the Garden Club for students to learn from and work within our very own vibrant and growing food forest.

A food forest is a food producing garden that mimics a natural ecosystem, designed to be self maintaining with multiple layers of trees, herbs and edible plants. With over 55 fruit trees, berry plants, and herb plants along with various grape vines, our food forest and garden are based on the needs of the plants, all natural (no pesticides), growth, sun and shade.



The garden is growing celery, beans, squash, carrots and more. There's also a beautiful Mary Garden full of rose bushes to honor Our Blessed Lady. Many of the rose bushes were donated and dedicated to the memory of many mothers and grandmothers of our school and parish, including the beloved mother of our very own pastor, Fr. Chad King.

The ACS Food Forest and Vegetable Garden is the perfect place for students to learn, plan, and embrace all the amazing plants and trees that we can grow - even in the desert! Our students are learning life long valuable skills such as how to care for the soil and water, maintain the plants, manage pests humanely with barriers. Additionally, research shows school gardens planted by the students who then watch them grow and harvest them, are more likely to eat healthy food, feel a connection to the world around them and be engaged in their community. (See schoolgardensummit.org) Plus, the Garden Club is FUN!! It's not just another hour of school, it's a special time where our volunteer moderators (Mrs. Cole, Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Zirkelbach) help the students enjoy their time together in a fun and relaxing environment.

The Church teaches that taking care of God's creation, designed to nourish and beautify our world is the responsibility of all Christians. Interested in learning more about Food Forest? Contact Dena Wholey in the ACS Development Office by email at dwholey@acsphx.org to learn more.

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.

ACS 2025 Annual Spelling Bee



The 14th annual ACS Spelling Bee took place on Friday, December 5 in front of grades 4-8 and some very nervous parents.

The top spellers from grades 5-8 competed and the battle came down to the final word: **self-reliant!**

Pictured left, Grant Collins (8th) who took first place, and Ella Casey (7th) who finished second.

Pictured below are the finalist from each class.

Grant will move on to compete in the Diocesan Spelling Bee on January 21 at St. Mary's Catholic High School. Congratulations to our finalists and we wish Grant the best!

Special thanks to our judges, Mrs. Kelly Pope and Mrs. Jennie Cullen and to the event pronouncer, Mrs. Angela Riley and Ms. Lynne O'Keeffe.

Our Spelling Bee finalists pictured left, Grant and Ella. All participants pictured below: Wilson P., Mason B., Grant C., Leila C., Ella C., Olivia M., and Giada M. Front row: Alessandra M., Hunter P., Angelo C., Norah G., and Grace R.



Dear Parents of Boys,

I hope this message finds you well. We are excited to announce that we are starting a Trail Life USA program for our boys within our community.



What is Trail Life USA?

Trail Life USA is a faith-based and outdoor adventure program designed to help boys grow in character, leadership, and life skills. It emphasizes outdoor experiences, personal development, and a commitment to faith and community.

Why is this Important? In today's world, providing our boys with opportunities to develop resilience, leadership, and strong moral values is more important than ever. Trail Life USA offers a supportive environment where boys can learn valuable skills, build lasting friendships, and grow in faith.

Why Do We Need Volunteers? To make this program a success, we need dedicated volunteers who are passionate about mentoring and guiding our boys. We welcome both men and women to join us in this rewarding endeavor, whether through leadership roles, organizing activities, or simply providing support.

If you are interested in volunteering for Trail Life USA or would like more information concerning Trail Life and how your children can join us, please feel free to reach out to me at MrPapaMarquez@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to building something special together for our boys!

Warm regards,
Esteban Marquez
ACS Parent



Merry Christmas!
***Wishing your
family great
Tidings of
Comfort and Joy***



**DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING REPORT
ADVISORY COUNCIL OCTOBER 20, 2025
SUBMITTED BY DENA WHOLEY**

2025/2026 FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Color Fun Run

- Friday, September 19th

Oktoberfest at Harold's Cave Creek Corral

- Saturday, September 27th

Trunk or Treat

- Friday, October 24th

Book Fair

- Friday, October 31st
- Grandparents' Day

Charleston Wrapping Paper

- October 27th - November 25th

Christmas Market/Santa Claus/Wreaths

- Monday - Friday, December 1st - 5th

Christmas Concert

- Thursday, December 18th

Mother Daughter Tea

- TBD

Sports Family Night

- TBD

See's Candy

- March 23rd - April 2

Monte Carlo Gala de la Joie

- Saturday, March 14th

Daddy Daughter Dance

- Saturday, March 28th

The Lion King Musical

- Friday, April 24th - Sunday, March 26th

COLOR FUN RUN

GOAL: \$88,000

INITIATIVE: These funds will partially fund the difference between education cost and tuition income. The difference is \$2,948 per student.

BUDGETED INCOME: \$88,000

BUDGETED EXPENSE: \$15,000

BUDGETED NET INCOME: \$73,000

BOOSTERTHON DONATIONS: \$82,127

ACS SPONSOR DONATIONS: \$13,988

GROSS INCOME: \$96,115

EXPENSES: \$15,869

NET INCOME: \$80,246

**POTENTIAL CORPORATE MATCHES:
\$7,000**

POTENTIAL NET INCOME: \$87,246

COLOR FUN RUN 2025 EXPENSES	
Blow up Costume	34.9
Volleyballs	147.88
Pretzels	33
Izze Soda	18
Honest Juice	18
Frozen Fruit Bars	44
6th Grade Pizza "make-up"	95.4
K-5 Pizza Winner	95.4
MS Pizza Winner	95.4
Popcorn	36
Pizza Movie K-5	95.4
Pizza Movie MS	95.4
Granola Bars for Registration	80
Painters Tape	16
Magnets	5.6
Baby Wipes	42.48
Office Max Lamination	74.85
Daily Teacher Winner Sprouts	400
Top 5 Student Winner GC	125
Paper Bags For Snacks	28.5
Plastic Thank You Bags	36
Dixie Cups for Throwing Color	23
Lables	10
Colorful Wigs	54.54
T-Shirts	3,488
Boostertion Service Fee 13%	10,676.46
TOTAL	15,869.21



THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S LEADERS...
TOGETHER WE RAISED \$96,000!



Angels Learn and Grow During the Fall Sports Season

Our ACS Angels powered through the fall sports season fielding six teams for various sports. Our 8th grade volleyball team (picture right) finished 2nd in 8th grade bracket of the CYAA Small Schools Tournament. Our 7th grade volleyball team (pictured below) finished 3rd in the CYAA large school 7th grade bracket. Thank you Coaches Pollock, Alba, Warner & Bennett!

The 5/6 girls volleyball team had a stellar season with just one loss. Thank you Coach Johnson for your time and dedication!

The 5th/6th grade boys flag football team lost only 1 game all season. Coach Nick Dyer was very proud the boys!

Our 6th - 8th flag football team had fun and worked hard learning from Coach Frank Pollack. Thank you Coach!

We had 5 runners on our first ever Cross Country team! Coach Dave is very proud of his team. All 5 qualified for the championship!

We are proud of all of our athletes for representing our school so well! Coming up this winter, basketball and softball!





Get ready for tasty, hands-on cooking adventures delivered right to your school—no kitchen required! Kids whip up wholesome recipes, explore global flavors, and dive into languages, geography, nutrition, and STEAM. All ages, all abilities, all food allergies welcome. It's THYME to stir up creativity, confidence, and lifelong skills!

ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC SCHOOL

DAY: Tuesdays

TIME: 3:15-4:15pm

CLASS DATES:

Spring 1: 01/20, 01/27, 02/03,
02/10, 02/17, 02/24, 03/03

Spring 2: 03/17, 03/24, 03/31,
04/14, 04/21, 04/28, 05/05, 05/12

7 WEEKS

8 WEEKS

OPEN TO STUDENTS IN K-5TH

SIGN-UP NOW!



phoenixestickyfingerscooking.com

HANDS-ON! 🍎 **ENGAGING** 🍌 **100% NUT FREE** 🥬 **ALLERGY FRIENDLY**

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

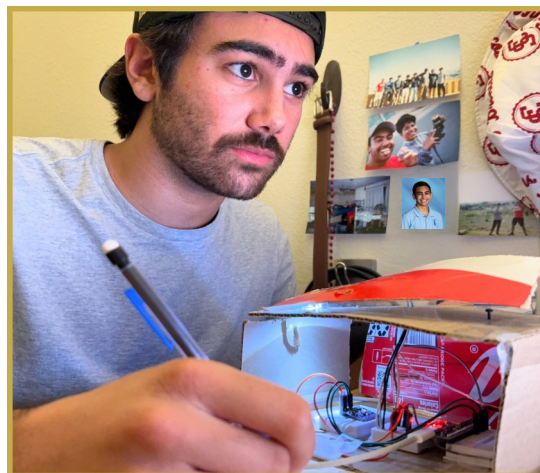


Jackson Stack Draws Inspiration from Time at ACS

Alumni News

After graduating Annunciation Catholic School (class of 2021), Jackson Stack attended Brophy College Prep with honors. Now he continues to excel as an emerging leader in biomedical innovation. Jackson is studying Bioengineering on a Pre-Med track at Santa Clara University, he is committed to becoming a physician-engineer focused on developing accessible health technologies.

During a brief pause in his primary hemoglobin-analysis project, Jackson created KEIRA, the Knowledge-based Ensemble Intelligent Risk Assessor, a machine-learning system designed to predict cardiovascular risk. KEIRA evaluates clinical and lifestyle variables using an ensemble of Random Forest models and has already demonstrated an impressive 87.7% accuracy in early testing. Jackson is also refining his original hemoglobin device with upgraded CAD housing and new material testing.



Jackson often reflects on the formative experiences that shaped his academic and personal passions, including his time in the Annunciation music program. He recently shared with his former teacher, Mrs. Trayer, that performing at school Masses deeply influenced his lifelong love of guitar. Her encouragement, he explained, gave him confidence during pivotal years—support that helped fuel both his musical journey and the discipline he now brings to engineering, research, and service.

Today, in addition to his studies and research on early-stage disease detection, Jackson volunteers in hospital settings and works part-time as an EMT—living out the values of service, curiosity, and compassion fostered during his years at Annunciation Catholic School.

Matthew Hits the Ground Running at Brophy College Prep!



Recent ACS graduate, Matthew Himlin, class of 2025, attends Brophy College Preparatory. He participated in Brophy's Cross Country Team during the fall season, setting new personal records. He is an active member of various campus clubs, including the Brophy Neuroscience Initiative, the Key Club, and the Asian Pacific Islanders Club.

Matthew continues to play the cello, and performs with the Brophy Honors Orchestra. His favorite class is Scripture, and his hardest class is AP Seminar Environmental Science. In the spring semester, Matthew plans to compete in Track & Field and continue his scouting activities.



Service Spotlight

Sebastian (Mickey) Bax and Jaxon White 8th Grade



Sebastian and Jaxon are two eighth graders at Annunciation who are quick to pull out their phones for a battle on Clash Royale (a mobile strategy game). But twice a month, for an hour after school, they put down their phones and pick up cleaning cloths, as the service project team leaders for Vibrant Vinnies. By helping to maintain the church's sacred space, they demonstrate respect and gratitude for the place where worship, fellowship, and service take place. Their efforts ensure that the environment remains welcoming, peaceful, and ready for all who come to pray or participate in parish activities.

During this service project, students from the Vibrant Vinnies work together to complete tasks such as dusting pews, disinfecting common spaces, and organizing worship materials. Through teamwork and shared responsibility, they demonstrate cooperation, attention to detail, and stewardship. Each small task contributes to the greater mission of keeping the church beautiful and functional for the St Gabriel's community. They are quick to compliment each other, "Mickey is great at staying on task," says Jaxon, while Sebastian replies that Jaxon "is an inspiration to everyone!"

Beyond donating their time and efforts, they hope their service will encourage other students to volunteer and to grow spiritually and personally.

Cleaning the church is an act of humble service and reflection, allowing the boys to connect their actions with their faith. By giving their time and energy, they show that serving others—even in simple, unseen ways—is a meaningful expression of love, respect, and devotion.





ADVENT 2025

Calendar of Events

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE

6:30pm // CHURCH

***Multiple Priests Available to Hear Confessions**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20TH & SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

CATHOLIC CHATS W/Deacon Matt

Immediately following ALL MASSSES in Parish Hall

"WONDER HOW TO KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS?"

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED DECEMBER 24TH - JANUARY 4TH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24TH

Adoration 9:00am - 3:45pm // Benediction 3:30pm

CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASSES

4:00pm // 6:00pm // 11:00pm

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25TH

CHRISTMAS DAY MASS

10:00am

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1ST

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD - HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION // NEW YEAR'S DAY

Mass Times: 8:15am & 6:30pm

ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC SCHOOL PRESENTS

MONTE CARLO *Gala de la Joie*

MARCH 14, 2026 | GRAYHAWK GOLF CLUB | CASINO, DINNER, & AUCTION

TO HELP RAISE FUNDS FOR
ACS GYM FLOOR OF DREAMS



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
[http://acsphx.org/about us/staff directory](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

Email: office@acsphx.org

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

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

**ACS NIGHT WITH
THE PHOENIX SUNS
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30 AT 7PM**



**ONLY 60 DISCOUNTED TICKETS AVAILABLE!
Includes exclusive access to
pre-game warm-ups courtside!!!**

**Send questions to Mike Scagnoli, ACS Dads Club,
msscagnoli@gmail.com.**

ACS Family Night with the Phoenix Suns!

Join us for ACS Night at the Phoenix Suns game on **Friday, January 30, @ 7pm. [CLICK FOR TICKETS!](#)** Celebrate the conclusion of Catholic Schools Week with exciting Phoenix Suns basketball! Limited, discounted tickets are available for purchase now! The experience includes exclusive access to pregame warm-ups courtside ahead of the Suns vs. Cleveland Cavaliers. Send questions to Mike Scagnoli, ACS Dads Club, msscagnoli@gmail.com.

New After School Clubs Coming in January!

New club beginning in January! [Crazy Cool Science Club](#) is coming to ACS for K-5 students and will meet on Mondays from 3:15-4:15pm. Runs from Jan. 12 - May 11, 2026. \$250 per student. [Register today!](#)

Sign up today for the MOST fun Art club ever! [Art Angels Spring Session](#) Mrs. Cullen on Wednesdays starting February 11!

Another new club beginning in January! Sign up for the winter session of [Play Well TEKnologies offering Minecraft Engineering using Lego's](#) on Thursdays from 3:15-4:15pm, starting January 15- March 5, 2026.