



THE MAGAZINE OF SAINT MATTHEW SCHOOL

Volume 8, Issue 1

CORDE LEONIS

—Proverbs 30:30

Fall 2025

Silver Jubilee

A Celebration 25 Years in the Making

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PRINCIPAL'S LETTER
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Dear Saint Matthew Community,

The year is 2001. You may have been buying tickets to see *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* or *Harry Potter and the Sorcerers Stone*, or you stayed at home to watch the Baltimore Ravens win the Superbowl. You might have been lucky enough to purchase the first generation iPod and upload more music than you could have ever imagined at the time. Perhaps you were looking for information online, and you stumbled upon a new website called Wikipedia that was filled with pages upon pages of information. Maybe, just maybe, you were in Franklin, TN to see Saint Matthew School officially open its doors for the first time to welcome students and families to receive a Catholic education.

Twenty five years later, Saint Matthew School is thriving. In those twenty five years, a great deal has occurred on this campus. The campus has expanded from one class per grade to two classes per grade. The facilities have expanded to account for all of those new students joining the campus. The Pre-School opened its doors to students at the age of 3 and 4. SMS has brought home more championships, trophies, plaques, and banners than we have room for in the gym. We have been featured in news stories, online articles, and topped the lists of premier schools in the Franklin area. SMS established great traditions, such as Polar Express Day, Lion Challenge, and Mane Event that brought members of the community together to celebrate the school. Saint Matthew School has become a staple Catholic school in the Diocese of Nashville, and one that is talked about with the utmost respect.

None of this would have been possible without the tireless efforts of different groups on this campus. First and foremost, to the teachers who put in the hours beyond the school day. The teachers who go above and beyond creating lesson plans, setting up hands-on activities and

labs, and giving everything they have to their students on a daily basis. The teachers who coach, run different clubs, sit on various boards, and chair committees that invest time, energy, and ideas into making this the best school each and every year. We are blessed to have had such an impactful faculty/staff from the moment this school first opened its doors to today. Words cannot express how thankful I am for our teachers who chose Saint Matthew School.

I would also like to thank the families, who believed in this school from the day they stepped foot on campus and walked into the school. To the families who helped build this school from the first day of the groundbreaking to the first official day of school. To the families who volunteer their time to coach, be a room parent, help run school events, and donate to our Annual Fund. Our families have no shortage of education options in the Nashville area, yet they chose Saint Matthew School. From the bottom of our hearts here at Saint Matthew School, thank you for choosing to be a part of this amazing school and for representing our school proudly.

I cannot wait to see how this school continues to grow, how our students continue to thrive, how our alumni continue to succeed, and how our community continues to love and support one another. I know it cannot be said enough, but thank you to all who have been involved in Saint Matthew School over the past twenty five years. Here is to another twenty five fantastic years at Saint Matthew School.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr. Anthony Simpson

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THE SAINT MATTHEW SCHOOL MISSION

Educating children as we pass on the traditions and teachings of the Catholic faith.

Our magazine name, *Corde Leonis* means "Heart of a Lion." Proverbs 30:30 is a bible verse that describes our community and our beloved mascot, "the lion, the bravest of beasts, he will draw back from nothing"

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PRINCIPALS

OUR PAST

2001 thru 2023

BARBY MAGNESS:

In August of 2001, Saint Matthew School opened its doors and I was proud to be chosen as the first Principal. Finding the best teachers and creating a curriculum that served all students by meeting their individual needs was an important part of my job as Principal. During my time as Principal (from 2001-2015), I interviewed and hired over 79 faculty members, who all contributed uniquely to the development and growth of SMS. Under that umbrella, a proud achievement was when we received our first SACS accreditation in 2004, 3 years earlier than planned. We were the youngest school to receive accreditation in Middle Tennessee.

Another highlight was watching ideas turn into traditions such as the first Mane Event (2001-02), first Lion Challenge (2002-03), first White Lion Award (2004), first Floating Rosary (2012-13) and many more. During this time, the school also saw 2 Popes, 3 Bishops, 6 Priests, and 329 graduates. One of my favorite things during my time at SMS was receiving over 580,000 morning hugs!

In all my years as an educator, I am most proud of starting Saint Matthew School. Saint Matthew was the school I dreamed of for many years. My dream came true and it continues today by building children's futures one heart at a time.

TIM FORBES:

I am grateful for my time as principal of Saint Matthew School. Reflecting back, I realize the profound impact the community and students had on me. The growth the school experienced during my tenure was a reflection on the staff and faculty of the school. I believe we had the hardest working team in Middle Tennessee. Outside of a hospital or a university, the level of education and experience the faculty possessed was second to none. Teachers like Kristina Tons won the National Mensa Award, Monica Kelsey served as the only campus minister in a Catholic elementary school in the state, and Angela Bacaling and Kelly Paulus expanded the service learning program.

We had some nice accolades placed on the school. Thanks to the hard work of several individuals, we added a grade level to the school, helping increase enrollment. Donors were very generous with the level of philanthropic giving. However, I think our greatest opportunity for growth did not come from an extrinsic award or a measure of our school's test scores. I believe the Covid-19 pandemic placed the greatest amount of strain on the school, but also gave the community the opportunity to demonstrate our resilience and love for one another. In the fall of 2020, Saint Matthew School was the first to open in the state. During that time, there were many concerns and anxiety was high. The students, faculty, and staff continually sacrificed and gave of their time and energy to ensure classmates and students were safe, educated, and most importantly, loved.

Much like today, the pandemic showed a spotlight on the community's differing views. Some in the parent community believed the pandemic was overblown; while others did not believe the administration was taking enough precautions to keep everyone safe. While those two opposing views caused tension, families were able to share their concerns through the context and actions of faith.

I would like to brag about the school for its test scores or athletic achievements. However, it was the pandemic and our dependence on our common Catholic faith that I am most grateful for during my time as principal.



@stmatthewschooltn



www.youtube.com/channel/UC8YAwwaoSFTcozQuNsWfJwQ/videos



YEARS of
PRIDE



SILVER JUBILEE JAMBOREE

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Twenty-five years and counting! Saint Matthew School celebrated the start of our twenty-fifth school year with the Silver Jubilee Jamboree, planned fittingly around the Feast of Saint Matthew, our patron saint. With great anticipation, a carnival and an adult evening event set the stage for a celebration unlike anything Saint Matthew School has ever hosted. Spirit Week (Sept. 8–12) kicked off the festivities with Spirit Day, Time Capsule Tuesday, “When I Grow Up” Day, Thankful Thursday, and an incredible Frassati Friday honoring the canonization of Saint Pier Georgio Frassati and Saint Carlo Acutis.

On a beautiful, sunny Saturday, Sept. 13, the Silver Jubilee Jamboree—sponsored by Mid-Tenn Ford—opened at 1:00 p.m. with a flurry of activity and fun! The gym housed the silent auction and Bingo, with special guest callers including founding principal Barby Magness; former secretary Cindy Schiller; Dr. Simpson and Coach Edmondson; and former principal and assistant principal, Tim Forbes and Susan Hawkins, who closed out the Bingo games. Each caller holds a special place in the 25-year history of SMS.

The school lobby offered a variety of activities, including face painting by the SMS cheerleaders, a photo booth, and the ever-popular Cake Spin. While cries of “Bingo!” echoed through the gym, the outdoor atmosphere came alive with Irish folk music performed by SMS parent Eamonn Dillon and friends. Additional activities included grade-level game booths—ring toss, plinko, basketball toss, cotton candy, inflatables, and more. Father Ryan and St. Cecilia also hosted a booth filled with fun prizes. A fan favorite was the Dunk Tank, where students eagerly used their tickets to drop their favorite principal, teacher, or associate pastor into the water. As the day warmed, excitement grew when the Williamson County Fire Department arrived to spray their fire hose across the field, creating the ultimate giant sprinkler for children to run through.

The celebration continued into the evening following Mass. Live music from Hayden Carpenter set the tone as guests enjoyed dinner from three delicious food truck vendors, a biergarten, a cornhole competition, and football games shown on outdoor screens. The silent auction moved outside so partygoers could browse the fantastic class art, concerts, gift cards, and other amazing items.

Though the Jubilee Jamboree concluded, the 25-year celebration carried on! Former Saint Matthew pastor Father Mark Sappenfield (2015–2021) presided over Tuesday morning school Mass. On Thursday, Father Raines celebrated the Feast of Saint Matthew with a Eucharistic procession, visiting and blessing every room in the school and church with the Monstrance. In conjunction with the Feast of Saint Matthew, Bishop Spalding celebrated Mass on Saturday night. Bishop Beckman, Bishop of the Knoxville Diocese and former Saint Matthew priest (2002–2015), returned to preside over Mass on Sunday. It was truly special to celebrate Mass with both Bishops during our 25-year Jubilee.

Next semester, we will continue the Silver Jubilee celebrations during Catholic Schools Week, at our annual Donor Dinner, Grandparents Day, and on the last day of school!



WWW.STMATTHEWNTN.ORG/SCHOOL





7TH GRADE RETREAT

“I thought this retreat was a great opportunity to learn more about ways to make your friends, your parents, and most importantly, God, key parts of your life. I also got to spend time with friends and received inspirational insight from the speakers. This retreat was a great way to build my faith and have fun with my friends.” —Brayden Coronado (SMS ‘27)



ESSAY CONTEST

Congratulations to Aldyn H. (7th grade), winner of the 2025 Diocese of Nashville Veterans Day. Aldyn presented her impactful essay at the SMS Veterans Day musical celebration.



8TH GRADE - SNEEDVILLE

Any 8th grade student or chaperone who has taken the volunteer service trip to Sneedville, TN, has truly experienced how “serving others” can make a difference. This trip offers students a hands-on opportunity to meet real people living in poverty —many without basic necessities such as clean water or food. Many participants describe it as eye-opening, life-changing, and a powerful lesson in gratitude. The weekend before Thanksgiving, SMS brought a group of 8th-grade volunteers to Hancock County to assist Project Jubilee, an organization whose mission is to help the people of Hancock County, TN, meet their spiritual, economic, social, and physical needs in the name of Jesus Christ. Our SMS team supported the Sneedville community by handing out Thanksgiving meals, distributing children’s books, meeting and assisting families in need, making repairs at the Project Jubilee facility, and more.

8TH GRADE RETREAT

“During our retreat to Camp Marymount, I experienced the act of serving others. Our whole grade got to help out the camp’s staff by doing work around the premises. My group and I got to work on raking leaves, counting boxes of supplies, and pulling weeds. All of the things I did to help out at Camp Marymount helped me understand more of why we serve others and God. Overall, I had a great time and I learned a lot from the service we were able to provide.” Thank you so much for the opportunity! —Betsy Bateman (SMS ‘26)



KINDERGARTEN AT HONEYSUCKLE FARMS

Kindergarten enjoyed a “farmtastic day” at Honeysuckle Hills Farm. They learned about the life cycle of a pumpkin and got to bring home their own! They also enjoyed other activities, including a hay ride, corn maze, and merry-go-round.



PRE-K ZOO

Would you pet a snake? Some of our Pre-K students were brave enough to do just that as they enjoyed a visit from the Nashville Zoo! The zoo brought a variety of animals for the students to have a hands-on learning experience.



2ND GRADE - APPLE PIE DAY

Crisp apples crunched as students sliced and peeled in preparation for 2nd grade’s annual Apple Pie Day. They rolled the dough, measured sugar and spices, and mixed up all the ingredients. Put it all together and—voilà—apple pie! The best part, of course, was taste testing!



4TH GRADE - HERMITAGE

“Welcome to the Hermitage, home of our 7th U.S. president, Andrew Jackson.” 4th graders served as junior docents at the Hermitage where they interacted with guests and shared their knowledge, which included facts about the daily lives of the people and notable locations on the plantation.



6TH GRADE RETREAT

The 6th grade retreat at Camp Marymount focused on team building and bonding with new people in the grade. The 6th graders completed different team activities that involved communication, cooperation, and determination. “My experience at the retreat was exciting and a good change of scenery for the day! I learned how to cooperate with people more easily and how working together is a better solution to any problem.” —Spencer Martinez (SMS ‘28)



SAINT FRASSATI PRESENTATION

We celebrated the extraordinary event of the canonization of Saint Carlo Acutis and Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati with a school assembly. We welcomed Christine Wohar, author of *Finding Frassati*, and co-founder and executive director of Frassati USA, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the cause of canonization and spread the spirituality of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. She told us about the lives of these saints and particularly, Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati, whom she has studied extensively. The life of this young man shows that we can be holy by living our friendships, studies, sports, and service to the poor in a constant relationship with God. Her presentation highlighted how these two new saints are patrons for youth and young adults.

Her presentation was followed by SMS '24 alumni, Andrew Garland who had the opportunity to go to Rome for the Canonization of these 2 young saints. Garland recounts, "In early September, Father Ryan offered a once in a lifetime opportunity. This opportunity was to go to Rome for the Canonization of two young saints, Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis. On September 3rd, a small group of 12 students and 3 teachers headed to Italy. We landed and took a bus to the small town of Assisi, where Carlo Acutis is buried. We even got to see the partially incorrupt body of Saint Carlo!"

"The next day we took another bus ride over to Rome where we stayed for the remainder of the trip. We arrived in Rome for the papal audience. This is when the Pope rides around in his car then gives a blessing over all the people that attended. When Pope Leo was riding past us, a fellow student named Gavin had a breathtaking experience. The Pope took the Father Ryan hat that Gavin was holding out to him! The next day was the canonization mass of the two saints which was an unforgettable experience. So, if you ever have a chance to go and do something for your faith, I would strongly encourage you to take the chance." — Andrew Garland (SMS '24)



MODELING CHRIST

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ALL SAINTS DAY - 1ST GRADE

In celebration of All Saints Day, a day dedicated to the saints of the Church, first grade students researched, wrote, and presented reports about their feast day, legacy and patronage. This first grade tradition has taught many Saint Matthew students about living their faith for the glory of God.

THE LIVING ROSARY — "HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE..."

Our eighth graders led a beautiful school-wide Living Rosary as they encircled the church holding illuminated lanterns symbolizing rosary beads. Students took turns reciting each prayer of the rosary while their classmates lifted the glowing lanterns to represent each bead, creating a reverent and moving visual of prayer.



ROOM IN THE INN - 8TH GRADE

SMS 8th graders continued to live out the SMS motto of serving others as they prepared, served, and shared a hot meal with the Room in the Inn guests. These gentlemen are welcomed to Saint Matthew, where they are fed, clothed, and given a warm and safe place to sleep. "It was a wonderful experience to serve the Nashville homeless community at Room in the Inn. Hearing the stories of the visitors gave us a touch of reality and helped us realize how fortunate we are. One of the men we met, J.D., served in the U.S. Army as a trainer and has recently fallen on hard times. As an entire class, we were truly grateful for this experience and hope to be able to serve at RITI again." — Mrs. Richard's 8th Grade Class

FEAST OF SAINT MATTHEW

The Blessed Sacrament processed through Saint Matthew School to honor the Feast of Saint Matthew. Father Raines blessed each and every classroom and office on the Saint Matthew campus. We continue to ask for the prayer and intercession of Saint Matthew, the patron saint of our community.



THANK YOU DONORS!
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Annual Fund

The 2025-26 Annual Fund is underway! Our goal this year is \$120,000 and we need your support to reach this goal! The Annual Fund provides experiences for our students beyond what tuition alone can provide. Donations to the Annual Fund are 100% tax deductible, and the donation ‘year’ runs through 6/30/26.

Giving levels shown include donations across ALL funds (including Annual Fund, Tuition Assistance, the Endowment Fund, School Operations, and individual funds like athletics, music and library.) Sponsorships for Mane Event, and Trivia Night are shown to the far side of this section. Thank you to all our donors — we are so grateful for your support!

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To donate to the Annual Fund, visit www.stmatthewtn.org/school/ and click the SUPPORT option on the left. On the Give page you can donate through credit card or your existing mobile payment service/digital wallet account.



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The Saint Matthew Annual Fund plays a vital role in supporting the day-to-day excellence of our school. From ensuring a safe campus through our security plan, to investing in exceptional teacher training, to providing daily care with our on-site nurse—your contributions directly impact the well-being and success of every student. I’m proud to share that, once again, we’ve achieved 100% participation from our dedicated faculty and staff, a powerful testament to their belief in our mission and programs. Now we invite you to join them. Thank you in advance for your generous support of the SMS Annual Fund.

— DR. ANTHONY SIMPSON
ST. MATTHEW SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

FALL ATHLETICS

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5TH-6TH FLAG FOOTBALL

The 5th–6th Grade Flag Football team completed an outstanding season marked by resilience, growth, and championship-level performance. After experiencing two regular-season losses, the Lions rebounded with discipline and determination ultimately securing the No. 4 overall seed in the inaugural DAC Tournament. In the semifinal round, Saint Matthew delivered one of the most memorable wins of the year, defeating the previously undefeated and top-seeded Saint Rose Stars in a dramatic, hard-fought matchup. The victory propelled the Lions into the championship game against Saint Michael Academy. The team showcased exceptional defensive execution in the finals, controlling the pace of play from start to finish. Behind their defensive leadership and balanced offensive rhythm, the Lions earned a victory to capture the first-ever Junior Division Flag Football Championship in conference history.

7TH-8TH FLAG FOOTBALL

Led by All-League performers Wyatt Bradley and Mikey Knapp, the Varsity Flag Football team delivered another exceptional season within the Diocesan Athletic Conference. The Lions navigated the regular season with precision and consistency, entering the Diocesan Tournament with a perfect record and the confidence of a top contender. In the semifinal round, Saint Matthew displayed its trademark intensity, securing a dominant victory and advancing to the championship game against long-standing rival, the Saint Henry Tigers. The title matchup featured a strong championship atmosphere, with both teams battling to a first-half stalemate. Despite the Lions' disciplined defense and competitive effort, Saint Henry's offensive firepower prevailed in the second half, handing the Lions a hard-fought defeat. Saint Matthew concluded the season as League Champions and Tournament Runners-Up, further solidifying the strength and continuity of the Varsity Flag Football program.



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CORDE LEONIS FALL 2025



CHEER

Lion nation showed up to support our varsity basketball teams and cheerleaders at The Battle of Bellevue competition in November. Cheer competition votes were determined not only from the cheers but also a well-executed, clean routine with high energy, good showmanship, and crowd engagement. Our SMS crowd was loud and proud, propelling our cheer squad to CHAMPIONS of the Battle of Bellevue!

CROSS COUNTRY

SMS hit the trails with 171 runners strong—the largest program in school history! Coaches Scott Bradley (6th–8th), Margy Cramer (3rd–5th), and Elizabeth Abaray (K–2nd) led the Lions to another incredible year.

Our varsity girls were unstoppable—DAC and Regional Champions—placing nine runners in the top 15 at the DAC Championship, led by Isla Barretto (3rd), Addie Rojas (4th), Molly Brooks (5th), Audrey Cramer (6th), and Audrey Sheesley (7th). Additionally, Isla finished 4th at Regionals and 16th at State.

On the boys' side, Wyatt Bradley won the DAC Championship title, helping the team finish 2nd in DAC. Wyatt also took 2nd individually in the HVAC and at Regionals. Other leaders in the DAC Championship included Mikey Knapp (7th) and Winston Bradley (12th).

The 3rd–5th grade teams dominated, too. The girls had two DAC Champions (Amelia Simpson, 4th/5th grade & Evelyn Bradley, 2nd/3rd grade). The girls were crowned Regional Champions with 8 girls in the top 20! The boys team took home 2nd place at Regionals behind strong performances by Hudson Couturier, Joseph Simpson, Matthew Cramer and Rooney Morgan.

The future looks bright for the SMS XC program, as seven athletes from the K–2 team placed in the top ten at the DAC Championship.



5TH-6TH HVAC SOCCER

Rain did not dampen the energy for the 5/6th grade Lady Lions soccer team competing in the HVAC championship game on Nov. 20. After defeating USN (1-0) in a semi-final nail biter, they advanced to play Oak Hill in the HVAC final. The well matched final was thrilling with 60 minutes of battle, 10 minutes of overtime, and a heart pulsing PK shootout to claim the HVAC 5/6th girls CHAMPIONSHIP title! The team was coached by Tristan Lonergan and Sam Preston (Director of Student Support). “What set this team apart was their togetherness, every player lifted the others up. Their teamwork turned a great season into a championship one.” says Coach Preston

VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

The Varsity Lady Lions navigated one of the toughest divisions in the conference. Throughout the season, the girls showcased resilience, teamwork, and high-level play. Their postseason run featured a thrilling quarterfinal upset over Holy Rosary—a match fueled by energy, effort, and a never-quit mentality. The Lions' journey concluded in the semifinals against the eventual champions, the Saint Bernard Bears. The varsity squad was led by All-League performer Betsy Bateman, whose leadership and skill set a strong tone for the program.

VOLLEYBALL JV NAVY & JV WHITE

The JV White and JV Navy teams delivered exceptional seasons, each showing tremendous improvement as the year progressed. Both teams built strong chemistry and confidence, developing into cohesive units. The JV Navy team made an impressive postseason run of their own, advancing to the semifinals before ultimately falling to the eventual champions, Saint Henry. Their tournament performance reflected discipline, teamwork, and a promising future for the program. Several JV athletes earned All-League recognition, including:

Amelia Bateman (White)
Callen Hart (White)
Harper Hodes (Navy)
Claire Allegetti (Navy)

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ELECTIVES

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Engaging Students...Electively

We have just completed our first semester of electives! The elective program is spearheaded by SMS Curriculum Director, Michelle Puryear.

"I read an article called, The Joy of Electives that made me think about the idea of student choice and student engagement for our middle school students. Most of the time, students do not have control over what is in their schedules, but creating an elective schedule and giving the students the opportunity to choose what they would like to participate in, gives them some agency. Studies have shown that the more a school allows students to voice their interests and creates opportunities in the schedule for them to pursue those interests, the more students' motivation, engagement, and joy are likely to rise. In addition, there are so many talented faculty and staff members at Saint Matthew, I thought this would be a good opportunity for them to share their gifts and talents with our students."

We offered a wide variety of electives to our middle school students from sewing to geography, cookie decorating to mock stock picks and everything in between. We even had an opportunity to involve one of our talented dads as one of our elective instructors. "We are hoping to involve more and more community members as our program grows," says Puryear.

Overall, I think it was a wonderful learning experience for the students and a rewarding experience for the instructors involved."



BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Students read 8 books chosen by the diocesan librarians, and compete in February to answer questions about each book. The top 4 students will then compete against winning teams from other schools in the diocese in April. In the Battle of the Books elective, students get a head start on reading, discussing the books, and creating quiz questions to prepare for the Saint Matthew competition.

WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS

In the Wide World of Sports, we spent time this semester learning about a multitude of different sports. The students learned about Rugby, Sumo Wrestling, F1 Racing, E-Sports, and many others. We also spent time in competition through Fantasy Football and College Football Pick-Ems. The class had a blast watching highlights of all sports, and gaining a deeper understanding of the sports around the world.



MANE MESSENGER

Welcome to The Mane Messenger, Saint Matthew School's very own student-driven news source, delivering fresh, exciting content every semester!

Our talented student writers present a delightful array of creativity and information, featuring editorials, interviews, reviews, puzzles, and the ever-popular advice column, Ask LuLu. But that's not all! They amplified the excitement with The Mane Minute, a video showcase capturing all the excitement at Saint Matthew School. This bi-monthly YouTube series features hilarious bloopers, student anchors, A/V experts, and tech enthusiasts. Tune in for an unforgettable experience!



EDIBLE ARTISTS

Students expressed their creativity by turning plain cookies into edible works of art using icing. They experimented with a variety of options like making chocolate chip cookies, brownies, energy bars, rice crispies & lots of cookie decorating.



STITCH & STYLE

Twelve students enrolled in the first SMS sewing class this semester. We were blessed to have many donated machines and cotton fabric from parishioners for the sewists to use during the 8 class periods. They learned how to operate their machines and each completed a pillowcase and a reversible tote bag. The SMS sewists also learned a few hand stitches and practiced sewing on buttons!

AVEC AMOUR (FRENCH)

Students enjoyed learning prayers, introductions, the alphabet, numbers, colors, the days of the week, seasons, conversations, foods, and songs in French! We celebrated the end of the course with "un petit déjeuner" including les croissants avec de la confiture, chocolat chaud, des fraises, et des bananes!



LOOP DE LOOPS (KNITTING)

In the Loop de Loops knitting elective, our objective was to teach the basic terminology and tools of knitting. We used scarf and hat looms which made the knitting process easier for those with little to no experience. By the end of the quarter, students hand knitted hats and scarves just in time for cold weather!

GAMERZ

In GAMERZ, students played classic and strategy-based games like Trouble, Connect 4, and more. Through friendly competition, they practiced sportsmanship, teamwork, problem-solving, and fair play—all while having a great time. This elective gave students a fun, low-pressure space to connect, think critically, and enjoy the spirit of board game competition together.



MONEY MAKERS

Students learned basic economic and financial topics including balancing checkbooks, investing in equities and debt, return on investment, interest paid or received, taxation and commission. George F. & Liam A. had the largest percentage gain on their chosen stock (Warner Bros. +16%)



MIXED MEDIA MANIA

Students journeyed into a world of imaginative, figurative, and sculptural handbuilding. They explored multiple techniques and mediums, creating an unforgettable, fun, and interactive hands-on Art Studio experience. One of the highlights was their collaborative mural selected to be displayed at Cheekwood's Día de Muertos!

WHERE IN THE WORLD

The elective, 'Where in the World', focused on the geography of North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. We explored the major physical features of each continent, the climate and some cultural aspects of these diverse continents. During our last class, we enjoyed a presentation with videos and photos from a faculty member's recent trip to Kenya where they visited the Maasai Mara National Reserve on the border of Kenya and Tanzania. It was fun to expand on how much the students already knew about world geography and their love for learning.



CRAFTSMAN'S CORNER

SMS parent Tim Poplin designed projects to build the students' confidence in handling tools and creating woodworking projects for the community, the church, and themselves. They reclaimed wood from pallets and extra pews for future use in the church and community. They made DIY wood stains and used them and used them on three wood projects for themselves: A Christmas Tree-shaped table top decoration, an ornament, and a state-shaped sign.



GREENIES

"Our greenies elective was so special" says Mrs. Tons. We started a recycling initiative at the beginning of the semester. The group made posters and visited classrooms to discuss items that could be recycled at SMS. We learned about endangered animals and adopted a Hawksbill Turtle from the World Wildlife Organization. We spent a beautiful morning outside practicing Yoga and ended our time together with a flower arranging class. The students distributed their arrangements to staff members in the building.

Why SMS?

Since the doors of Saint Matthew School opened twenty-five years ago, one of our long-standing goals has been to welcome legacies—alumni returning to SMS with their own children. The greatest testimony to our school is when former students choose to enroll their children in the very place where they began their own educational journey.



Molly Schiller Jeter '07

How did attending SMS as a child factor into the decision to send your child here?

I loved my friends and parents' friends. The community of people was amazing and we still are super close with a bunch of families from my time at SMS! That's what I want/wanted for my boys and ultimately why we chose SMS!

What were your feelings taking your child in on his/her first day of school?

Nostalgia. It felt like a full circle moment. The hallways I remember being so big were so much smaller than my memory. I had so much excitement for Hank to experience things I did during my time at SMS.

Can you share some reflections from your days at SMS?

Some of my most fond memories are plays with Mrs Cassidy, 8th grade talent show, GrandParents Day, days spent at Camp Marymount, Sock Hops, swim parties, etc. Those are the things I remember most!

What changes at SMS have you noticed or have interested you the most?

That it offers a Pre K program. Two classes now for every grade is a huge difference.



Parker Williams Bohn '07

How did attending SMS as a child factor into the decision to send your child here?

There was no question on where our children would go to school. When our daughter, Quinn, became old enough for us to consider preschool, SMS was our first and only choice. Knowing my child would be cared for by the same people who cared for me was the driving factor in our decision. Many of the teachers and faculty who were there during my time at SMS are still employed today! I love seeing the faces of people who helped shape me as a young woman and knowing they will do the same for my children.

What were your feelings taking your child in on his/her first day of school?

On our first day of school with Quinn, I was overcome with emotions. I remembered the friendships I created at SMS that have lasted me through my adulthood. I remembered all of the memories in the halls. I remembered the times when we could be truly carefree. I felt excitement for all of the many years to come for her and our family. I also felt excited to be on the other side of the SMS experience, making friends with other parents and getting to watch our kids grow up and make lifelong connections.

Can you share some reflections from your days at SMS?

My days at SMS began with a big life transition. I moved here from a different state during a time that most kids are nurturing lifelong friendships. I was nervous to start at a new school and insert myself into the culture that I was not familiar with. One of the moments I remember the most was just days after we moved to Nashville. A parent in the class arranged a lunch for me to be able to meet some of the girls before school started. I immediately knew I landed in the right place. From that day, nobody would have known we hadn't known each other our entire lives. I am still friends with many of my classmates from SMS to this day. One of the most amazing treasures in life is now getting to watch my best friend, Molly Schiller Jeter, raise her family and send her children to SMS. Our sons will get to grow up together and experience the same friendships that we experienced at SMS.

What changes at SMS have you noticed or have interested you the most?

The biggest change at SMS I have seen is the growth and advancement of technology. When I was a student, it was much smaller. I love to see how much the school has grown and how many more families get to learn about how amazing SMS is. I also love to see the advancement in technology. Recently, during the Pre-K Halloween Parade, I was able to get a glimpse of the middle school STREAM lab. They had a podcast studio, which I thought was such an amazing idea. As a person who has always had an interest in marketing, something like that would have been so cool to get to learn in middle school! I think the way the school embraces technology and supplements their programs with things kids actually want to be doing and learning about is incredible.



Camille Marsden Heider '07

How did attending SMS as a child factor into the decision to send your child here?

My husband and I both received a Catholic education and feel we benefited tremendously from it, so we knew it was important for us to provide the same for our kids. When it came time to start applying, SMS was our first and only choice! I had such a wonderful and formative experience at SMS, and believe that the values instilled in me there at a young age shaped who I am and continue to guide me through life. I of course want the same for my children! I trust wholeheartedly that they are not only well cared for at SMS, but that they are seen for who they truly are and deeply loved.

What were your feelings taking your child in on his/her first day of school?

It truly felt like coming home—so familiar and comforting to walk through those doors again. It made me emotional seeing my daughter walk the very halls I did and to see some of the faculty and staff that are still there, like Mrs. Richards and Mrs. Donnelly! My daughter was welcomed with open arms just like I was years ago, which filled me with so much confidence dropping her off that first day and excitement for the year to come. I couldn't imagine her being anywhere else!

Can you share some reflections from your days at SMS?

I started in the 3rd grade at SMS the first year it opened. It was scary at first transitioning to a new school, but SMS quickly became my home away from home! I made great friends there and formed deep bonds with several of the teachers and staff, many of whom remain special people in my life to this day! I feel that what I learned at SMS influenced my life well past the years I went there. The seeds of seeking knowledge and serving others that were sown at St. Matthew remained very prevalent in my life as I chose to pursue higher education and dedicated my career to helping children with disabilities and their families.

What changes at SMS have you noticed or have interested you the most?

The school is much bigger now! It's amazing to see the growth SMS has had over the years. I'm especially grateful for the addition of the preschool which has allowed us to start our daughter there even sooner. I have actually found there's a lot about SMS that hasn't changed, which I think speaks to what an amazing school it has always been and continues to be. Even through tremendous growth, they have maintained the same caliber of teachers and staff, quality of education provided, expectations of students, and stayed true to the core values and mission of the school.



Will Ballinger '10

How did attending SMS as a child factor into the decision to send your child here?

I think everyone has a natural desire to reflect their own childhood into their children's, whether it's hobbies, tv shows or certain clubs/sports. We know what made us happy and what made us better and SMS did both of those things for me. I had full confidence sending my daughter to SMS because I am still to this day comfortable here. Seek knowledge, model Christ and serve others. I mean they kind of hit the nail on the head with that one. The older I get the more I realize that the school really lives by its motto, and that's a lifestyle I want my daughter to be a part of.

What were your feelings taking your child in on his/her first day of school?

It was very exciting. Seeing my daughter and my nephew in the same Saint Matthew uniforms that we wore brought a huge wave of nostalgia to me. Being able to relate to their daily schedules makes talking about school so much easier. It really helps that I know exactly where to go and exactly who to talk to. Knowing Saint Matthew school better than my child who goes there is a weird thing to think about, but I hope she gets to know it just as well as I did.

Can you share some reflections from your days at SMS?

Mystery trips, prayer buddies and the lion challenge are some of my favorite SMS memories. My friends and I, in eighth grade, made history at the variety show when we performed Men in Tights, (it's on YouTube.. watch at your own peril.) The eighth grade year really sticks out to me with the 8th grade trip and winning a soccer championship. But I also vividly remember the library, where my love for reading was founded. Saint Matthew is becoming a bigger school, and it's bigger than when I went there, but somehow I felt so secure and loved and known at Saint Matthew and that sticks out the most to me. I came out of middle school, confident that I was well educated, confident because I had success in athletics, and confident in my faith. To say that I was prepared for high school would be an understatement!

What changes at SMS have you noticed or have interested you the most?

I watched the 7-8th graders play a few flag football games this year, it looked like such a good time and I wish I could have done that with my classmates. I was a student when the gym was first built and the fields were first leveled, so seeing how far the athletic program has come is most interesting to me. The way the boosters, the alumni, and individuals like Libby Crow and Josh Edmonson have developed the athletic department into one of the finest around is remarkable and surreal. SMS is truly a hub for athletics and that brings a lot of excitement to the kids and parents alike.

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GRACYN BECKER - MIAMI UNIVERSITY



AMANDA PALO - DICKINSON COLLEGE

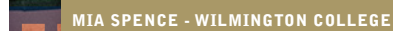


ISABELLA BRODOSKI - XAVIER UNIVERSITY



CADEN ZANE - MT. OLIVET

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CORDE LEONIS FALL 2025



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A full-page photograph of a bride and groom. The groom is on the left, wearing a black tuxedo with a white shirt and a dark bow tie. He has dark hair and a beard, and is smiling. The bride is on the right, wearing a white strapless wedding dress with a full skirt and a long veil. She has blonde hair and is smiling. They are standing in front of a building with large stone columns. The lighting is bright, suggesting an outdoor daytime setting.

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A group photo of the wedding party, including the bride, groom, and bridesmaids, standing outdoors in front of a large tree. The bride is wearing a white gown and holding a bouquet of white flowers. The groom is in a dark suit. There are four bridesmaids in light blue dresses and two groomsmen in light blue suits. A ring bearer in a light blue suit stands in the front row. The photo is labeled with the number 7 in a small box in the top left corner.

If your son or daughter has moved from your home, please contact Lori Bellante at lbellante@stmatthewtn.org with his/her current address. We'd love to keep in touch with them.



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<https://www.stmatthewtn.org/school/support>

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JOIN US FOR THE COACH CROW GYM DEDICATION CEREMONY



We will be honoring Coach Crow on January 29, 2026,
during the White Out game. Come celebrate this jubilee moment with us!