

A MAGAZINE FOR THE ALUMNI, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF JOLIET CATHOLIC ACADEMY

TRADITION



Fall 2023





Letter from the President/Principal



Dear JCA Community,
It is with great gratitude that I welcome you to another school year! Thank you for your continued prayers and positive thoughts, and as always, thank you for your commitment to our Angels and Hilltoppers. We welcome the Class of 2027, and we celebrate **All** of our students as we again have a strong enrollment hovering at 600 students. We have a freshmen class of 168- the largest in the last 10 years. We are definitely on the rise and our school community is as strong as ever!

This year we are proud to announce our next Strategic Plan 2023-2028- **Expanding our**

Legacy. This past spring over 75 of our community members, students, parents, faculty and staff, Board members, and alumni worked to create our next road map for success at JCA! We developed 6 strong Goals and 25 strategies to incorporate into our day-to-day activities and the BIG Picture of JCA operations. The following are the Goals (with the entire plan posted on our website)

Goal A – Curriculum and Instruction - By 2028 JCA will evaluate and build upon our solid foundation of curriculum and instruction and our ultimate student goals of graduation and college / career life.

Goal B - Building and Grounds - By 2028 JCA will examine various facets of our Building and the surrounding grounds and implement strategies to have the best possible environment for our students, visitors, and community.

Goal C – Spirituality and Sponsorship - By 2028, JCA will continue to infuse our Carmelite and Franciscan and Catholic mission throughout all school programs and our community.

Goal D- Student Life - By 2028 JCA will build upon our efforts to make sure that ALL students and families feel welcome and that we provide a diverse number of opportunities in all facets of JCA life for students to be involved and succeed.

Goal E- Teacher Retention and Professional Development. - By 2028 JCA will continue to focus on our faculty and staff and encourage an environment that is built on morale, teacher retention, and professional development.

Goal F- Institutional Advancement (Admissions, Marketing, Development) - By 2028, JCA will continue to evaluate our overall Development program which includes Admissions, Communications, Development, Alumni and Special Events and work to build upon what is already set in order to offer new opportunities which in turn will produce a JCA education for all that are interested.

Needless to say, we have a lot of wonderful things happening on campus. **Our prayers are for you and your family and for a successful 2023/ 2024 school year.** We hope to see you on campus soon and hope to hear about all of the wonderful things happening in your lives too!

Blessings always,

Jeffrey R. Budz

Dr. Jeffrey Budz
President / Principal

OUR TRADITION

Published by the Institutional Advancement Office

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Marissa Corsi



Zachary Pekol



Luke Pekol



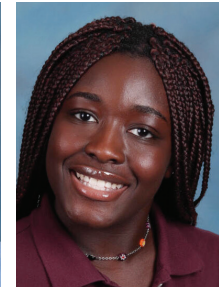
Thomas Kemp



Allison McCarthy



Anthony Birsa



Vivica Bofah

The Tradition of Academic Excellence Continues

The Joliet Catholic Academy Class of 2023 graduated on Sunday, May 21 in the JCA Student Activity Center. Earlier that week on Tuesday, JCA graduates took part in a Baccalaureate Liturgy led by Principal Celebrant the Most Reverend Carl Markelz, O.Carm., at the Cathedral of St. Raymond. The Class of 2023 received awards highlighting the numerous accolades they garnered during their high school careers. Sunday's graduation culminated in JCA's newest graduates walking the stage and receiving their diplomas.

JCA's most prestigious award recognizes the two students who have upheld the highest standards of honesty and reliability, courtesy, concern, and respect for others, have carried out their accepted responsibilities with enthusiasm and dedication, influenced their peers by their positive attitudes, and have given witness to the Gospel values.

JCA Angel of the Year Award:
Marissa Corsi

JCA Hillman of the Year Award:
Zachary Pekol

Each year the Administration of Joliet Catholic academy awards the Valedictorian and Salutatorian of the senior class. This year's outstanding nominees were:

Salutatorian:
Zachary Pekol

Valedictorian:
Luke Pekol

Each year the JCA Athletic Department honors students who demonstrated both academic and athletic achievement.

Scholar Athlete Award:
Allison McCarthy and Thomas Kemp

The JCA Spirit Award recognizes students who have displayed academic excellence, school spirit, cooperation, loyalty, and service to the JCA community.

JCA Spirit Award:
Vivica Bofah and Anthony Birsa

Joliet Catholic Academy Student Awarded \$200,000 NROTC Scholarship

Joliet Catholic Academy graduate Leo Anastopolous was recently awarded the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship worth more than \$200,000 from the United States Marine Corps. This incredible scholarship pays the cost of full tuition, books, and other educational fees at many of the country's leading colleges and universities. Anastopolous, who took his oath as a midshipman on June 26, 2023 will attend Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, Florida this fall. He plans to major in electrical engineering and minor in naval science. Upon commissioning as a Naval Officer, he intends to attend Naval Nuclear Power School and serve as a Nuclear Propulsion Officer in the US Navy. "On behalf of the Joliet Catholic Academy administration, faculty, and staff, we would like to congratulate Leo on this tremendous achievement and wish him the best of luck at Jacksonville

University, and ultimately serving in the Navy," said Dr. Jeffrey Budz, Joliet Catholic Academy President/Principal. "We are very proud of Leo and we know that he will find success in all that he does post-high school." The purpose of the Navy ROTC Program is to educate and train qualified young men and women for service as commissioned officers in the Navy's unrestricted line, the Navy Nurse Corps, and the Marine Corps. As the largest single source of Navy and Marine Corps officers, the Navy ROTC Scholarship Program plays an integral role in preparing mature young men and women for leadership and management positions in an increasingly technical Navy and Marine Corps. In addition to the NROTC scholarship, Anastopolous received a merit scholarship from Jacksonville University, covering four years of room and board.





News from around campus



Brown & Blue BBQ

On September 30th we had our inaugural Brown & Blue BBQ. Parents, Alumni and Friends joined at the Heritage Quad under the brilliance of our Victory Light. The night was full of live music, food and fellowship. We look forward to bringing everyone together next year!

Homecoming 2023: "Under the Neon Lights"

The Class of 2024's Homecoming Court was announced during JCA's annual Homecoming Week (October 1-October 7). The week began with the annual Senior Bowl Flag Football Game and then included "Spirit Days" (daily dress down themes for the student body), and two All-School Homecoming Pep Rallies, a Super Shadow Day, Parade, Homecoming Football Game, and the annual Homecoming Dance. JCA students danced the night away with this year's "Under the Neon Lights" themed dance. The JCA Homecoming Court was announced at the beginning of the week and this year's King and Queen were announced in front of the student body at the Pep Rally. JCA seniors Dillian Johnson and Claire Blotnik were crowned King and Queen. Additional members of this year's JCA Homecoming Court included Tessa Bebar, Amelia Cameron, Olivia Karnezis, Jordan Reeves, Emerson Ziesmer, Griffin Alessio, Hiram Grigsby III, Michael Hobbs, Max Hrvatin and Connor O'Donnell.



Br. Neil Conlisk
Theology Teacher

Fun Fact: I'm a Carmelite friar, and did a chaplaincy internship for a summer at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington DC.

Mr. Schumacher
Theology Teacher

Fun Fact: I love trivia! I can name every NCAA D1 school and mascot, and I can quote certain episodes of TV shows verbatim.

Mr. Palmasani
School Counselor

Fun Fact: Spent a year in San Diego, California as a volunteer teacher.

Ms. Harris
Spanish Teacher

Fun Fact: I like to collect (hoard, lol) books and coffee mugs.

Mrs. Batchelor

Counseling Department Intern
Fun Fact: I'm a Disney fanatic and love helping people plan their vacations!

Dr. Will-Henn

Math & Science Teacher
Fun Fact: I have a black belt in karate!

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK



We are pleased to introduce a dedicated group of individuals who have chosen to make Joliet Catholic Academy their home. Please join us in welcoming Br. Neil, Mr. Schumacher, Mr. Palmasani, Ms. Harris, Mrs. Batchelor, and Dr. Will-Henn. JCA is blessed to have the best faculty and staff!

SAVE THE DATE

Grandparent Mass

"Our grandparents are beacons of spiritual light guiding their grandchildren toward a deeper relationship with God and teaching them the value of prayer and love."

JCA students will be celebrating their grandparents with Holy Mass at **9:00 am** on **November 21, 2023**.

Following Mass, a Continental Breakfast will be served. All Freshman and Sophomore students will be asked to invite their grandparents to this Celebration of Thanks.



Jubilate 2022 Call for Cash: Cafeteria Revolutions

Along with a fresh coat of paint we were able to purchase 20 new tables and 200 new chairs, which includes café height tables and stools. In addition to the Call for Cash donors, a special thank you goes out to JCA board member Scott Czerkies '94 for his work on the design, color scheme, and layout for the new cafeteria upgrades.

Also, a huge thank you to the Class of 1970 for their donation to the Faith, Family, and Tradition Wall sign in the cafeteria.

Thank you for providing this beautiful space for our students!



It was great to have the **Most Reverend Carl Markelz, O.Carm., (JCHS '80)** on campus on October 4th to celebrate JCA's annual Heritage All-School Mass. We honored the contributions of our co-sponsors the Carmelites and Joliet Franciscan Sisters. Freshman and transfer students were invested with the Carmelite scapular and new faculty members were given a San Damiano Cross. In his homily, Fr. Carl spoke about the teachings of both orders and how our students can live out those values in life.

On Friday, October 20th, the **JCA Fall Spirit Raffle** concluded with the official raffle drawing in the JCA administrative board room. Each year, the JCA Spirit Raffle is a supporting activity that helps reduce overall tuition by bridging the gap between tuition and the full cost to educate students. Congratulations to all Winners! What a great day to spread some happy news to people who support JCA.

1. **\$15,000 winner – Pete Wilson of Romeoville**
(sold by Kera Fitzgerald)
1. **\$5,000 winner – Gary Ross**
(Grandfather of Grace & Abigail Dulinsky)
2. **\$2,500 winner – Sandra Osburn**
(Grandmother of Alex & Elaina Osburn)
3. **\$1,000 winner – Ken Gilroy**
(Dad of Taylor Gilroy)
4. **\$1,000 winner – Doug Adamic**
(Uncle of Lauren Weiss)

Congratulations to all of our winners!

Our top student sellers for the raffle were:
1st Place - Kera Fitzgerald (Sophomore)
2nd Place - Adante Washington (Freshman)
3rd Place - Demetrios Dactelides (Senior)
4th Place - Cameron Whately (Freshman)
5th Place - Frank Schuler (Freshman)



To everyone who sold a raffle ticket, purchased a ticket or supported this fundraising event, JCA wishes to thank you. According to Chris Voss, JCA's Director of Special Events, "JCA recognizes the hard work and dedication of our families. They are the heart and soul of this fundraiser. Our top student sellers did an outstanding job of selling."



JCA inducts 9th Hall of Champions- Business & Industry Class

The mission of the Hall of Champions: Business & Industry is to honor SFA, JCHS, and JCA graduates for their accomplishments throughout their professional careers ranging from medicine, law, education, entertainment, business, technology, and more. With over 23,700 alumni and counting, the lessons instilled by both the Carmelites and Franciscans over JCA's 154-year history of Catholic education in the Joliet community has consistently cultivated leaders that have produced a world-wide impact.

Lee Crowther '56 – Lee volunteered to serve two years in the U.S. Army, including one and a half years active duty in the Korean conflict after graduating Joliet Catholic High School. Lee joined his dad in the family roofing business in Joliet after returning home from Korea. While building the family roofing company, he always cared for his employees. A particular pastime they all shared was they all loved softball. To provide ample opportunity to enjoy the game, he built a Crowther Roofing baseball stadium on his roofing company property dedicated to 12" slow pitch softball leagues, complete with stands, nightlights, press box and concession stands. Lee and his brother, Scott, started and became principals in the early 1970s of LJ Crowther Inc. Roofing company and operated the business out of Romeoville, Illinois where it still exists to this day. In 1974, Lee moved to Ft Myers, Florida and started Crowther Roofing and Sheet Metal of Florida Inc. He continued to grow this business under his leadership. With his family, he expanded the operating base of the company to two more locations in Florida, one in Sarasota, and one in Jupiter. More services were added as time evolved in order to serve a broader demand for Florida Construction services. Lee added a Commercial Division, a Residential Roofing and HVAC Division, A Lightweight Concrete Substrate Division, and a Truss Framing Division all within the last 20 years that provide a bundled service offering to its loyal and repeat customer base. After 9/11, Lee was awarded a charred roofing slate sample from the Pentagon in return for the financial support provided as a charter member of the National Roofing Contractors Association. The support aided in the rebuilding of roof systems at the Pentagon complex after AA flight #77 crashed into the Pentagon. In December of 2022, Lee was given an honorary Bachelor's degree in Life Success and Community Service by Florida Gulf Coast University. Today, Lee continues as Chairman of the Board of Crowther Roofing & Sheet Metal of Florida Inc. Crowther Roofing and Sheet Metal of Florida Inc. is consistently ranked in the top ten commercial roofing contracting companies in the country with revenues in excess of \$100,000,000, employing more than 700 people.



Scott Czerkies '94 – Scott was born and raised in the Joliet-area. After attending Troy grade schools and graduating from Joliet Catholic Academy, he pursued his childhood dream and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He continued his education at UIUC with a Master of Architecture and Master of Science



in Civil & Environmental Engineering (Construction Management). During his architectural education, Scott interned for Thomas Buchar's (JCHS '67) Joliet architectural firm. After graduation he worked for Legat Architects as an associate architect and project manager. While at Legat, he was on the project team for the Tinley Park Metra Station (Oak Park Avenue) that was named one of the 150 Great Places in Illinois by the American Institute of Architects. In 2006, Scott became a Licensed Architect and founded his own architecture firm (Czerkies Design, LLC) in 2007. The firm has been involved in many commercial, residential, and educational projects, including the design of JCA's Warning Innovation Research Center. Currently, Scott balances his work life between architecture and real estate. He and his older brothers, Craig (JCHS '88) and David (JCHS '90), own and manage several agricultural, commercial, and industrial properties within Illinois. Scott contributes much of his success and values to his parents, Edward and Carolyn Czerkies. Both born in Joliet, Scott's parents worked hard to set a lasting influence on the focus of family, work, and community. Upon moving back to Joliet in 2007, Scott began his involvement with local organizations by joining the board at Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home. He has also served as Holy Family School Board member and president and was on the building committee during the 2020 HFS expansion. Throughout the years, Scott has enjoyed coaching many sports teams within the area (YMCA basketball, Joliet Park District soccer, Holy Family cross country, volleyball, and basketball). Most recently, he has found great meaning in being part of the Will County Habitat for Humanity. In addition to being a board member, Scott contributes his architectural skills to designing and detailing many of the homes built by the local chapter. As a student of the first four-year class to graduate from JCA, Scott maintains many lifelong friendships from his high school years. Most notable is his wife, Laura Milo (JCA '94). Together they have four amazing children, three of whom are currently attending JCA (Lanie '23, Miles '24, Charlie '26, and Louie '27). Scott finds his greatest pride in all of their accomplishments.

Phyllis Olsta '51 – Phyllis attended the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus, St. Francis Academy ('51), and Joliet Junior College earning an AA Liberal Arts. Upon graduation she worked as a clerk stenographer at U.S. Rubber Company at the Joliet Arsenal. In the late 1950s and early 60s, Phyllis performed with the traveling Ice Varieties Skating Show, and was a hostess on the Transcontinental California Zephyr for the Burlington Railroad. She also had a wonderful opportunity to work at the State of Illinois Pavilion at the New York World's Fair alongside Walt Disney. In addition to being a longtime Cruise Directress for the Matson Lines Monterey & Mariposa South Pacific





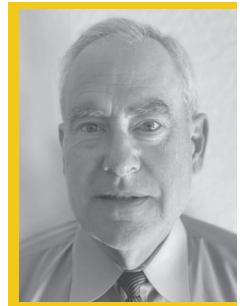
(world passenger ships), she also worked for the Catholic Church in Fairbanks, Alaska, helping to establish the Monroe Foundation (raising funds for the first Catholic schools in Alaska). In 1982, Phyllis volunteered in Juno, Alaska helping establish a recreation program for senior citizens and worked on the Alaska marine highway system. She then worked for the Golden Bear Travel Service and worked on the Princess and Holland America lines. In between her travels, Phyllis would visit Joliet and attend Mass at St. Paul's and get together with her old SFA friends. She has always held the City of Joliet close to her heart along with the Franciscan Nuns for building in her a strong study and work ethic which she has carried with her throughout her life. Phyllis has established the **Phyllis Olsta Endowed Scholarship Fund** for JCA students. According to Phyllis, "it's like a gift that keeps giving back, it's a wonderful present to give to Joliet Catholic Academy, a school that has done so much for all of us." Phyllis is retired now and resides in Portland, Oregon. Due to her declining health, she regrets that she is unable to attend the Hall of Champions for Business & Industry and congratulates all of the inductees. She is grateful for receiving her Catholic education, for all the teachers, the priests and nuns who made us all wonderful successes in society but especially thankful to Our Lord for her long healthy life!

Dr. Anita (Kraus '83) Lane – Anita started her Catholic education at St. Joseph's school. This was her family's parish for multiple generations. She began high school at Joliet Central but transferred to St. Francis Academy her junior year. She was inspired to go into medicine by her science teacher Mr. Robert Cambic, who taught her science for five years at St. Joes and two years at SFA. She then attended Northwestern University where she met her husband Phil. She received her medical degree from the University of Illinois, married Phil, and then



completed her Internal Medicine residency back at Northwestern. Anita and Phil moved to Phil's hometown, Colorado Springs, in 1994. She worked for a large medical group for 18 years before she and a colleague started Touchstone Internal Medicine, a direct pay practice. In 2017 Anita bought an old bank building 500 steps from her home, renovated it and moved her practice there. She also rents space in the building, (The Oasis at 6 Elm), to a facial plastic surgeon, a Culinary and Lifestyle physician, a Pilates instructor, a massage therapist and an aesthetician. Anita became the sole owner of Touchstone this year. Outside of medicine Anita has enjoyed performing in musical theater productions. She has climbed more than a dozen of Colorado's 14,000-foot mountains. She and Phil are the proud parents of three daughters and are active volunteers in their community.

Hon. Richard C. Schoenstedt '74 – Rick Schoenstedt was born and raised in Joliet. He attended St. Raymond grade school ('70) and Joliet Catholic High School ('74). Rick received his B.A. from Marquette University in 1978 and his J.D. from DePaul University School of Law in 1981. He married his wife, Mary Beth in 1985 and they have three beautiful daughters, Lorien, Katie and Emily, all of whom attended JCA. Rick was a general practice partner in several law firms in Joliet from 1981 to 2001 when he was appointed an Associate Judge in Will County, followed by his election in 2002 as a Circuit Judge and his election in 2012 as Chief Judge. Rick is a former member of the Illinois Conference of Chief Judges, the Will County Bar Association Board of Directors, Joliet Catholic Academy School Board, Crisis Line of Will County Board of Directors, St. Mary Immaculate School Board, and he received the Will County Bar Association's lawyer of the year award in 2020. Rick retired in January 2021 and divides his time between Joliet and Scottsdale, Arizona.



JCA inducts 9th Hall of Champions- Athletics Class

JCA's Hall of Champions pays tribute to the boys and girls' athletes, coaches and contributors from the three schools that make up JCA: De La Salle (1920-1933), Joliet Catholic High School (1933-1989) and St. Francis Academy (1869-1989). JCA was established July 1, 1990. Joliet Catholic Academy has announced its seventh Hall of Champions class, which continues to speak to the depth of tradition and talent on and off the playing fields that the Angels and Hilltoppers have produced over the years.



Kathy (Mondrella '74) Major – Kathy is a 1974 SFA alum. After high school graduation, she played Volleyball at Creighton University. She coached High School and Junior Club Volleyball in Nebraska from 1978 through 1990. Kathy began her career in Education in 1982 at Millard South High School in Omaha, NE, as a teacher, school counselor, and coach. Kathy then moved back to Lockport where she served as Varsity Volleyball Coach at JCA in the years 1996 through 1999. In her third year as Girls' Volleyball Coach, she took the team to a fourth place finish in the 1998 IHSA State Volleyball



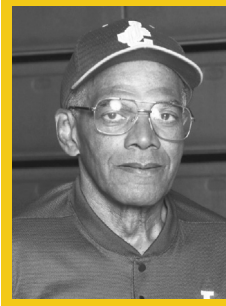
Tournament. In 1997, she also took on the roles of Girls Athletic Coordinator/Dean of Students where she instituted the Angel Golf Program. In 2004 Kathy transitioned to JCA's Counseling Department into the role of school counselor and returned to the coaching ranks as the Angel Golf Coach from 2009 to 2013. In her third year as golf coach, the 2011 team was the first Angel Golf Team to advance to the Sectionals and the first to advance to the IHSA State Girls Golf Finals. She was the first JCA coach to lead teams in two different sports to the IHSA State Tournaments. In 2014 Kathy became the Director of Counseling at JCA. Under her leadership the Counseling Department instituted a Homeroom Advisory Program and significantly expanded the use of Naviance to assist parents and students in post-secondary planning. Kathy and



Hall of Champions

her husband, Gary, have three children Jeremy, Lindsey and Tyler. In 2022, they both retired to Loudon, Tennessee where they are enjoying their beautiful surroundings and the game of golf.

Cory McLaughlin – A teacher, coach, master motivator and great friend, Cory McLaughlin made a difference every single day at Joliet Catholic High School and Joliet Catholic Academy. And he did it with humility, without ego, for little fanfare. Affectionately known as “Coach Mac,” McLaughlin was always the first to arrive for Saturday morning meetings after a Friday night football game. Coaching and teaching was more than his profession – it was his life. One that he lived fully. McLaughlin, who taught for decades at Dirksen, started as a football coach on the lower levels in 1977 at Joliet Catholic High School during the heyday of Gordie Gillespie’s run of renowned state championship teams. He moved up to the varsity as a defensive line coach in 1984. He became the defensive coordinator in 1986, wrapping up that job for Joliet Catholic Academy in 2012. He returned as the defensive line coach from 2013 to 2021. McLaughlin also took over as an assistant wrestling coach in 1977, eventually moving up to be the head coach, and he continued his career as Ryan Cumbee’s associate coach in 2020 as the Hilltoppers emerged as a state powerhouse. A lifelong bachelor, McLaughlin dedicated his days to helping kids. He bought players meals when they needed them. He saw the best in people, never the worst, striving to make moments and memories his players would remember. In looking at how revered the JCA football and wrestling programs remain, one can point to McLaughlin as a pillar of that success. He loved the school, his fellow coaches, the student-athletes, and everything about being a Hilltopper. And that is what he will always be.



Leo “Count” Michalak – Leo worked at Corn Products in Argo, Illinois as a welder and supervisor for 35 years. He attended Joliet Catholic High School in 1947-1948. Leo could not play sports because he had a paper route in the mornings and evenings. He transferred to Lemont High School, graduating in 1951. While at Lemont High School Leo played football, basketball, and baseball. The team went undefeated in football and earned Conference Champion Titles. Eight team members played all three sports while Leo played as an end, punter, and was on the kick-off team. His high school baseball team ended the season with a 13-1 record. Leo coached Lemont Pop-Warner football teams from 1974 through 1989 when Jim Boyter asked him to help coach freshmen football at Joliet Catholic High School. He continued at the sophomore level, coaching football until 2015. Leo began coaching youth baseball in 1968 continuing until 1989. Leo joined the JCHS baseball staff in 1989 and continued through 2015. During his tenure, the teams he assisted won State Championships in 1994, 2009, and 2013. Currently, Leo is an assistant baseball coach at the University of St. Francis coaching with his son, Brian. Leo also gave pitching lessons to several area players. This list includes professional players Chris Michalak (his son) and current JCA assistant baseball coach Ryan Quigley. In 2002, Leo was named JCA Assistant Coach of the Year and was recognized by the State of Illinois Senate as an Assistant

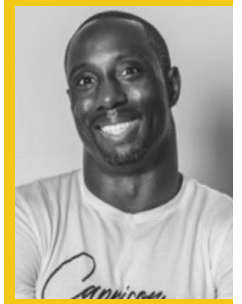


Coach at JCA in 2009. Among his other accomplishments, Leo is a member of the Joliet Hall of Fame for Bowling. He twice bowled his highest game of 280. Leo and his wife Janis (Grant) Michalak have been married for 65 years and reside in Lemont. They have four children: Lori, Greg, Brian, and Chris Michalak. Leo and Janis have nine grandchildren.

Lindsey Major ‘07 – Lindsey Major was a three-sport athlete in her time at JCA, earning three Varsity letters in Volleyball, four Varsity letters in Basketball, and four Varsity letters in Softball. She was a four-time All-Area and All-Conference selection in Softball; All-State and Super 60 All-Tournament selection in Softball; numerous All-Area and All-Conference selections for Volleyball and Basketball; and a Wendy’s High School Heisman Award finalist. Major was key in leading JCA to several Conference and Regional championships in all three sports as well as two State medals in Volleyball. She also led her travel softball team, Orland Park Sparks, to two Top 10 finishes in the ASA National Championships. Major earned the University of Iowa John and Peg Slusher Catching Scholarship as an incoming Freshman. She was named the starting catcher and a Big 10 one-to-watch in her sophomore season but suffered a career-ending injury in that season. In her playing time at Iowa, Major was a key contributor in their Top 25 national rankings and Big 10 Conference Championship and Super Regional appearances. Major also threw out 96% of attempted steals. She earned four Academic All-Big 10 Awards. Currently, Major is an executive in the music industry and resides in Nashville, Tennessee with her husband and two dogs. She was featured in Billboard Magazine’s 2022 Women in Music Top Executives edition, named as a finalist for Music Biz’s 2023 #NEXTGEN_NOW One to Watch Award and was named the 2023 Nashville Emerging Leader Award winner in the Entertainment & Music Business category.

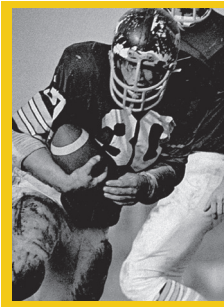


James L. Randle II ‘97 – James graduated from Joliet Catholic Academy in 1997 where he held the single season rushing record for some time until Ty Isaac broke this record in the State Football Championship game. James’ outstanding records also include being the first to rush for 300 yards in a playoff game along with rushing for 2,600 yards in a season. James was named All-Conference, All-Area and First Team Class 5A All-State along with MVP for Team Illinois. While James does not like to speak about his sports accomplishments, he would like to mention that he has been in the locker room of every level of football, but his biggest accomplishments involve being the best dad to his three children, Christian (18), Journee (16) and Kayden (13). He also takes pride in being a devoted husband to his wife, Rhonda, and the best brother to his sister, LaTonya. James also wants to acknowledge his parents, James Sr. and Shirley Randle. James and his family reside in Princeton, Texas where he is currently an Employee Relations Partner in the Legal Department at Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits. He is also active as a personal trainer and motivator. James is honored that JCA has considered him to be inducted in the Hall of Champions for Athletics and he professes to be a lifetime supporter of Joliet Catholic Academy.





Rick Thayer '77 – Rick Thayer's career as a football player took him across the country, but Joliet has always been his home. And Joliet Catholic has always had his heart. Thayer, who goes by Ricky, graduated from Joliet Catholic High School in 1977. He played running back and on the defensive line for back-to-back Class 4A state championship teams under the guidance of Gordie Gillespie.



After continuing to play football at the University of Miami, Thayer transferred to Carroll College in Helena, Montana. As a sophomore, he played under coach Jerry Yost at Joliet Junior College, then played and graduated in 1982 from Hillsdale, where he was the team MVP. Back home, in 1985, Thayer was the general manager/owner of T&T (Thayer & Tomczak) Restaurant and Pub in Joliet along with his brother, Tom, and friend Mike Tomczak, both standout players for the Chicago Bears at that time. Ricky then opened Thirty Buck Restaurant and Bar with former Hilltopper teammate Eric Beltzhoover. Rick's mom, Ann, was the cook, and you'll never eat a better meal in your life. Ricky is married to Danna, and they reside in Joliet. You can see him most hours of the day at Thirty Buck, named after one of the more famous plays in the Hilltopper football playbook. Over the many years, Thayer also found time to help as an assistant coach in football for his alma mater. He wants to thank all his coaches, but especially Gordie Gillespie, Tony Janc, Larry McKeon, Dale O'Connell, Pat Mudron, Jim Barello and Roger Gifford. His former teammates and coaches, however, were always thankful for him. Big and powerful with a heart of gold, Ricky Thayer will go down in Joliet Catholic history as a humble champion who never lost sight of where he's from – and the place he's always called home.

Maggie (Karges '04) Watson – Maggie was a three-sport athlete for two years at JCA and then put her focus on volleyball. She was co-captain of the first Volleyball State Title Team at JCA and joined Sports Performance for Junior and Senior years. She is in the JCA record books for aces and serve receive percentage. All-time leader list at JCA; third in career service points, first in career serve receive, sixth in career kills and fifth in career blocks. She was recruited by many Division 1 programs and continued on to play Division 1 volleyball at Bowling Green State University. Maggie graduated with a degree in Dietetics and Nutrition and has been health coaching for eight years and is in the process of starting a new health coaching business geared toward teen health – both in nutrition education and positive body image. Maggie has been married for 12 years, has seven-year-old twins, and resides in Oswego.

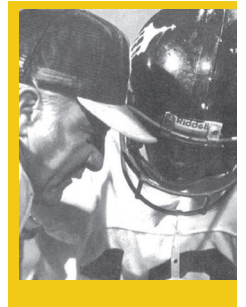


2001 honors: All-tournament at Munster, Herald-News Player of the Week, all-conference by the East Suburban Catholic, Herald-News second team all-area.

2002 honors: Team captain. Herald-News first team all-area, Daily Southtown all-area, all-tournament at Munster, all-conference in East Suburban Catholic, honorable mention all-state by Champaign News-Gazette.

2003 honors: Team captain. Chicago Sun-Times Preseason Top 50 player, all-tournament at Hinsdale Central, all-conference in East Suburban Catholic for third time, Daily Southtown all-area, Chicago Sun-Times all-area, Chicago Tribune special mention all-state, first team all-state by Champaign News-Gazette, Herald-News all-area, Herald News Co-Player of the Year, Class AA all-tournament by Illinois High School Association.

1975, 1976, 1977, 1978 JCHS Football State Champions – From the 1975 through 1978 seasons, coming out of place regarded as the "City of Champions," Joliet Catholic High School produced the first noteworthy, bona fide football dynasty in Illinois High School Association history. Much like the Dallas Cowboys under Tom Landry were known as America's Team, the Hilltoppers under Gordie Gillespie were the pride of the Prairie State, creating an iconic run of four straight Class 4A state championships while finishing with an amazing 51-1 record. The first state title came in 1975, with playoff wins over Bradley-Bourbonnais (20-7), Hillcrest (20-16), Naperville Central (20-8) and Springfield Griffin (34-14). The next year in 1976 saw the only regular-season loss, followed by the same result in the playoffs with wins over Hillcrest (28-14), Lake Park (34-14), Rockford Boylan (8-7) and Danville (16-8). In 1977 and 1978, the Hilltoppers went undefeated in both seasons. The 1977 team swept the playoffs, beating Crete-Monee (42-8), Glenbard South (20-3), Woodstock (26-7) and LaSalle-Peru (30-6). The 1978 team ramped things up defensively, posting shutouts in the entire playoffs with wins over West Chicago (22-0), Rich Central (26-0), Lake Forest (33-0) and LaSalle-Peru (25-0). That span was impressive, stunning, and historic, making Joliet Catholic the measuring stick for football programs across the state.



Do you know of someone deserving of a Hall of Champions Athletics or Business & Industry honor? Nominations can be submitted via mail or email to JCA Alumni Relations Director, Sue Bebar. SBebar@jca-online.org, or mailed to her attention at JCA - 1200 N. Larkin Avenue – Joliet, IL 60435

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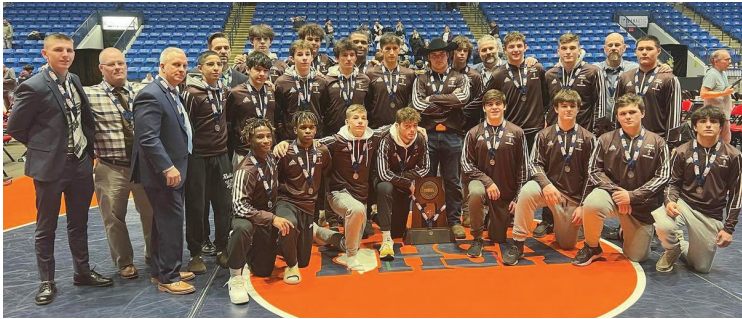
@JolietCatholic



Athletics: Winter Wrap-up

By Randy Whalen

It was another amazing season for the Joliet Catholic Academy boys wrestling team.



While the Hilltoppers fell just short of reaching their goal of being back-to-back Class 2A State Champions in the Illinois High School Association Dual Team State Finals, they brought home their second straight state trophy. Oh, and at the IHSA Class 2A Individual State Finals, between Feb. 16 and Feb. 18 at the State Farm Center in Champaign, JCA had a trio of state champions and four other placers. Winning state titles for the Hilltoppers were senior Gylon Sims, with an exciting 5-3 sudden victory over sophomore Josh Vazquez from Aurora Christian at 120 pounds, senior Mason Alessio, with a pin in 1:18 over junior Nick Mueller from Dunlap at 160, and junior Dillan Johnson with an 8-2 decision over senior Braden Hunter from Aurora Christian at heavyweight. Placing second was senior Jake Hamiti at 138 and sophomore Nico Ronchetti at 182. Finishing fourth was freshman Jason Hampton at 113 and junior Connor Cumbee at 152 pounds. Also wrestling at state was sophomore Noah Avina at 106, freshman George Hollendoner at 126, freshman Nolan Vogel at 132, freshman Luke Hamiti at 145, sophomore Zach Pomatto at 195, and senior Hunter Powell at 220 pounds as the Hilltoppers had 13 wrestlers at state. In the Dual Team State Finals, the Hilltoppers couldn't quite register back-to-back titles as they dropped a 28-27 bout to Washington on Saturday, Feb. 25 at Grossinger Motors Arena in Bloomington. Still, JCA won back-to-back state trophies after the program had never won one prior to last season. "It's funny because we were the favorites to win, but at the start of the season, I looked at our lineup and I said, 'We're young. This is going to be a rebuilding year,'" JCA wrestling coach Ryan Cumbee said. "The boys did a lot better than I thought we would. They proved me wrong. We, unfortunately, fell a little short." JCA (15-8) had five dual meet losses to out-of-state teams and had defeated Class 3A champion St. Charles East (36-32 on Dec. 29) and 1A champ Coal City (47-16 in the season opener on Dec. 14). The Hilltoppers shutout Jacksonville 69-0 on Friday, Feb. 24 in a quarterfinal and beat Geneseo 50-15 in Saturday's semifinal. But Washington (25-8), which lost to JCA 30-29 in the sectional last season, captured eight of the bouts including a tech fall and two major decisions to win its fifth Class 2A title since 2016. Still, with 10 of the 14 wrestlers who competed in the championship dual for the Hilltoppers being underclassmen, they will be poised to be back looking for another championship next season.

In **girls wrestling**, JCA had a three-person roster of freshmen Stephanie Ciechanski and Alison Jakovich, as well as sophomore Grace Laird. In the IHSA Girls Sectional at Geneseo, Laird (18-8) just missed qualifying for state at 120 pounds. She went 3-2, with a pair of pins, in her matches on Feb. 10 and 11. At 190 pounds, Jakovich (4-14) had a pin in her first bout but lost the next two.



Boys basketball was certainly a successful season for first-year head coach Adam DeGroot and the Hilltoppers. They did something they have accomplished for the third time in the past 35 years and only 10 times in school history. Win a regional championship. JCA (16-17) finished with a losing record. But that record doesn't tell the story of the season. "As a coach, you always hope our team is playing its best basketball in February and March and the boys did just that," DeGroot said. "We were battled tested running through a very difficult East Suburban Catholic Conference schedule twice. Our conference record (3-13) did not indicate how good of a team we were due to the difficulty in the schedule we played. "Our overall nonconference record was 13-4 which shows you how good the ESCC was. Of those four nonconference losses, all of those teams (Aurora Christian, Pontiac, Downers Grove North, Perspectives) made it to at least a sectional final while Downers Grove North finished fourth (in Class 4A) in the state."

The other regional championships in school history were in 1956 (single class), 1974, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1988, (all AA), 2014 (3A), 2020 (2A), and now 2023 (2A). The Hilltoppers have won two sectional championships (1979, 1988) and lost in the sectional title game five times (1956, 1981, 1983, 2014, 2020, and 2023). Interestingly enough, their last three regional title-winning seasons have all come with losing records, and the 1988 team finished at .500 (15-15). The Class 2A postseason run started with an 80-60 victory over Chicago Christian on Wednesday, Feb. 22 as JCA hosted its own regional. Junior James Pilapil led the way with 21 points. Seniors Anthony Birsas and Tyler Surin added 18 points apiece, while junior Drew Wills chipped in with eight points. On Friday, Feb. 24, the Hilltoppers had the thrill of winning a regional championship on their home court with a 63-46 victory over Julian. Surin (28 points) and Birsas (20 points) led the way in the win. The pair also combined for a highlight reel alley-oop slam as Surin's perfect pass found Birsas, who slammed it home early in the third quarter. Then, traveling to Julian for the sectional, JCA defeated Phillips, 63-61 on Wednesday, March 1 in the second semifinal. Birsas (24 points, 15 rebounds) led the way with a monster game. Wills (14 points), Surin (12 points), Pilapil (9 points), and junior Owen Wiers (6 points) all contributed as the Hilltoppers, who led 31-28 at halftime and 45-30 midway through the third quarter. held on for the victory.

In the sectional final, on Friday, March 3, Perspectives pulled away for an 81-47 win. Birsas (20 points, 17 rebounds), had another monster game and Surin (11 points) also chipped in for the Hilltoppers, who only trailed 16-15 after a quarter but were down 43-28 at halftime and 69-35 after three.

Athletics: Winter Wrap-up



"A special thank you to our seniors for a tremendous season," DeGroot said afterward of seniors Birska, Danny Kelley, Dwayne Killian, Nathan Korbar, Nakari McElrath, TJ Schlageter, and Surin.

The Hilltoppers will look to have seven juniors, Hiram J. Grigsby III, Christian Holman, Pilapil, Jack Ryan, Jake Troyner, Wiers, and Wills return for another run next season.

"We played (Class 4A state runner-up) Benet very tough in one of our last road games of the season and used that momentum heading into the playoffs," DeGroot said of a 62-56 loss on Feb. 14. "We were fortunate to host our regional this year which is always a big advantage. In the sectional semifinal, we had our biggest win of the season defeating a very good Chicago Phillips team 63-61. Perspectives (which lost to DePaul College Prep 50-46 in the Joliet Central Super sectional) was incredible in the sectional final and unfortunately, our run came to an end.

"All season long we talked about building a Culture of J.O.Y. That meant putting Jesus first, others second, and yourself last. I was so blessed to have such a special group of young men in my first year of being a head coach. Our senior leadership was absolutely incredible all season long. Tyler Surin and Anthony Birska really stepped up big when we needed them throughout the season."

In **girls basketball**, the Angels also compete in the extremely tough ESCC, which produced the Class 3A state champion, Nazareth, and the Class 4A state runner-up, Benet. "Being in the ESCC has its blessings," JCA girls basketball coach Kaitlyn Williams said. "We finished with an overall record of 15-16 in the hardest conference in the state. We use this conference as fuel and as a learning curve to defeat teams that are at the top of their conferences locally."

In the Class 2A Lisle Regional, JCA defeated Westmont 53-28 in a semifinal on Monday, Feb. 13. Guard Layla Pierce outscored the Sentinels by herself, pouring in 30 points. Fellow junior Faith Pietras added five points and nine rebounds. The Angels led 11-2 after a quarter and 28-11 at halftime. It was 46-17 after three. But in the regional title game, on Thursday, Feb. 16, JCA fell to Noble/Butler 60-29.

"This year, we showed our resilience and our potential of who we can truly be," Williams said. "It is extremely exciting to be coaching a close-knit group of girls who leave everything out on the floor. The seniors leaving leave us with big shoes to fill, but I know that our underclassmen are more than ready and prepared for this challenge."

The seniors are Cayla Czerak, Lanie Czerkies, Allison McCarthy, Mary Pietras, and Kylee Vercelote. The juniors are Lyndsay Black, Camryn Kinsella, Sophia Mihelich, Pierce, Pietras, and Ingrid Troha. Molly Ryan is a sophomore, while a trio of freshmen, Emma Beattie, Symone Holman, and Allie Lesters were also on the varsity.

Once again, the **JCA competitive dance team** did tremendously at state with a fourth-place finish in Class 2A. The Angels just missed a trophy for the fifth straight season. They won the Class 1A title in 2018-19 and finished third the next three seasons, the first two in Class 1A and last year in Class 2A. This season's squad won the Washington Sectional with a 90.97 score, which was over four points better than runner-up, Lincoln-Way West (86.93). In the State Finals, which were held on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 27 and 28, at Grossinger Motors Arena in Bloomington, JCA was fifth following Friday's preliminary round with a score of 89.71. The next



day, the Angels improved their score to a 91.86. But that left them in fourth place, just a tenth of a point out of third. Only the top three teams get a trophy. Lake Forest (92.72) was first, followed by Geneva (92.48) and Whitney Young (91.96). The members of the competitive dance team are seniors - Emily Bolek, Lillian Budny, Maria Grimanis, Naomi Kasper, Teagan Kubinski, and Maddy Vercelli. Juniors - Tess Bebar, Olivia Karnezis, Juliette Parenti, Laine Wilhelmi, and Emerson Ziesmer, along with sophomores Nora Buss and Liddia Koren, and freshmen Olivia Ciemny, Addysen Kirby, and Calleigh Kubinski.

The **Angel competitive cheer team** had another outstanding season. They qualified for the State Finals for the second consecutive year and just missed advancing to the final day. They placed 12th out of the 25 teams in the preliminary round in the Small School competition on Friday, Feb. 3 at Grossinger Motors Arena in Bloomington. There JCA finished with a 12th-place score of 83.63. Wilmington (85.17) was the 10th and final second-day placer.

"The cheerleaders worked hard all season and were excited to qualify for the IHSA State Series for the second consecutive year," JCA cheer coach Kristen Stuckwisch said. "The JCA Cheer Competitive Team competed and did well in many competitions this season."

JCA was in the followings competitions in the 2022-23 season:

- * Oswego Winter Invite - 1st place
- * Wilmington Invitational - Qualified for the Illinois Cheerleading Coaches Association (ICCA) Championships
- * Belvidere Winter Classic- 1st place
- * Niles West Invitational - 2nd place
- * ICCA Championships - 8th place out of 32 teams
- * IHSA Sectionals - 2nd place Small Division at Conant (87.18)/ Qualified for the IHSA State Series
- * IHSA State Series- 12th place

The following 16 athletes were on the cheer team: Seniors - Samantha Beckman, Stella Jesiolowski, Skyler Lacy, Brooklyn Martin, Paige Michel, and Ariana Reyes. The juniors are Amelia Cameron, Emma Cogley, Lillian Jungles, Madison Rangel, and Kayleigh Stuckwisch. A trio of sophomores are Gianna Brown, Alyssa Rowland, and Ava Smith, while Jessica Cyrnek and Maggie Toole were freshmen on the varsity squad. At the Lincoln-Way East Boys Swimming Sectional, on Saturday, Feb. 18, the Hilltoppers had sophomore Adam Kafka participate in two events. He registered four team points in each event, placing in the Top 10 in both the 50-freestyle (24.37 seconds) and the 100-yard breaststroke (1 minute: 08.13 seconds).

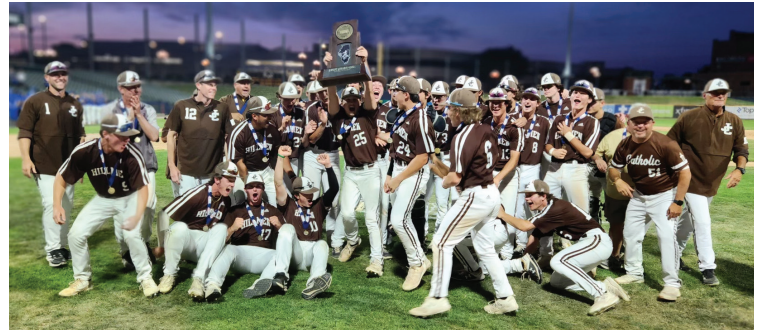


Athletics: Spring Wrap-up

By Randy Whalen

To win a state championship is always an amazing feat. To do it two years in a row, well, that's pretty incredible. That's exactly what the **Joliet Catholic baseball team** did last month. The Hilltoppers capped their spring season with a second consecutive Class 2A State Championship. The baseball championship was the 27th official Illinois High School Association one and fifth in the sport for JCA. That is the second-most in one sport, behind 15 for the football team. It's also the third JCA team to repeat. The football team did it three times, first with four in a row (going 51-1) between 1975-1978. Then three straight between 1999-2001 followed shortly thereafter with back-to-back titles in 2003 and 2004. The girls' volleyball team also capped an excellent run of going 80-4 and capturing consecutive state titles in the fall of 2008-2009. This season's celebration was even extended. That's because JCA honored the 2023 Class 2A baseball State Champion team on Wednesday, June 21, with a public gathering in the chapel at the school. While this was 18 days after the Hilltoppers captured their second straight Class 2A title with a 4-2 win over Columba on Saturday, June 3, at Dozer Park in Peoria, no one seemed to mind. After all, many players had to go to their summer ball tournaments directly after the high school season ended. Celebrating success is always excellent, and the JCA baseball team has had plenty of it. JCA President/Principal, Dr. Jeffrey Budz put it best in his opening remarks to the gathering. "Welcome to another celebration," he said. "We are getting spoiled. But we are never spoiled with moments like these." Thanks to the team, parents, coaches, and community. These are exciting times for JCA. "One of the things I'm most proud of is the workability of the kids, but also mostly their character. I had so many people coming up to me and telling me how great our kids are."

JCA Athletic Director, Jim O'Brien, echoed those statements. "Thank you, parents, from the bottom of my heart," he said. "To the players, thank you for being Hilltoppers, and wearing the uniform with pride." O'Brien then listed some of the amazing accolades that the baseball team accomplished, not only this season but in its history. This was the 14th time at state for the Hilltoppers baseball team, which is tied for the third most, and their 10th trophy, which ties Teutopolis for the most in state history. They are now also tied for the most baseball state championships with five. The JCA ones came in 1994, 2009, 2013, 2022, and 2023. Neighboring Providence (1978, 1982, 2014, 2015, 2016) has five, and so does Edwardsville (1990, 1998, 2019, 2022, 2023) which repeated in Class 4A this season. This is the fourth state title for coach Jared Voss, which ties him for the most in state history with Justin Fleener from Teutopolis (2010, 2011, 2017, 2019). It's also his state-record sixth title game appearance (finishing second in 2000 and 2004 in Class AA) and record eighth state finals appearance (finishing third in 2008 and fourth in 2010, both in Class 3A). Nazareth also repeated in Class 3A this season. Before the Providence three-peat in the mid part of last decade, there had been only two repeats. Those were Maine Township in a single class in 1958 and 1959, and Teutopolis in Class 2A in 2010 and 2011. Now there were three this season and all of them will try for the 3-peat next year. But this season's Hilltopper one was really special since 15 seniors graduated from last year's team. When Voss spoke, he thanked everyone of this season's players individually. He also thanked his assistant coaches, Tony Giese, Bart Kemp, Ryan Quigley, and Joe Rodeghero. Plus, he thanked O'Brien and the administration for their support. "There's always an attention to detail," Voss said of the help from O'Brien. "It's great when coaches



can step back and just be able to coach. "We had only two position starters back from last season, second baseman Tommy Kemp and right fielder Trey Swiderski. We also had a freshman, Lucas Simulick as a starter. Last summer, Lucas came to our baseball camp out of eighth grade. Now he was the starting shortstop on the state championship team."

Rodeghero, a 1972 Joliet Catholic graduate and baseball player, coached the Hilltoppers to second place in 1990 and the team's first state championship in 1994, both in Class AA. He's been back as an assistant since 2013.

"It never gets old," Rodeghero said. "I coached the team in 1994 and then the last three title teams I was an assistant. Every team is different. This group worked very hard for it and everyone persevered together. This senior group saw what it took last year and came together to make their own legacy. I'm thankful to be part of the program." TJ Schlageter, a three-year varsity player who threw a complete game three-hitter, with two walks and eight strikeouts in a 10-3 state semifinal win over Quincy Notre Dame, went 7-0 on the season. The senior lefty, who will attend Louisville, had 69 strikeouts and allowed 16 walks with 38 hits in 52 innings, finishing with an ERA of 1.48. "Everyone just bought in," Schlageter said of this season's success. "Especially the younger guys. They just put their head down, bought in, and worked their tails off. It's also just the coaches. They just do a great job. Nothing is given, everything is earned."

In the state championship game victory, the Hilltoppers (26-8-1) made the most of six hits. Senior third baseman Vincent Spotofora (2-for-4, R, 2 RBI) had an RBI in a three-run top of the first and added another one with another single in the third. Senior center fielder Brett Hulbert (1-for-1, 2 HBP) also had an RBI single and a third run scored on an error as all three runs in the first were unearned. Senior right-handed pitchers Nathan Ciemny (4 ING, 2 ER, 2 H, 3 BB, 4K) and Michael Tuman combined for the win, only allowing two hits, striking out six, and retiring the last eight straight to end the game. The Eagles (34-5), who defeated DePaul College Prep 9-0 in the opening semifinal, scored both their runs in the fourth inning. Kemp, who is the son of longtime coach Bart Kemp, was 4-for-4 with a run scored and two RBI in the semifinal win and added another hit in the state championship game. The two-year starter, who bats leadoff, led JCA with 41 hits on the season. "What made it special was a lot of guys stepping up. There was no backing down. Myself and all the seniors helped build everyone up.

"It (playing in Class 2A) doesn't matter. We play one of the toughest schedules in the state against a lot of bigger schools. We won the WJOL Don Ladas Memorial Baseball Tournament (for the first time since 2006 on April 2 with a 6-5 win over Plainfield Central). Plus, we beat (Class 4A state runner-up) Brother Rice (2-1 on March 22) and (Class 3A state champion) Nazareth (8-2 on May 4) this year and we could play with anyone." Because of the success multiplier, the Hilltoppers will move up to Class 3A next season.

Athletics: Spring Wrap-up



They have already embraced that and want to be able to play in the state finals in their hometown at Duly Health & Care Field in Joliet.

But they will have to do so without the services of the 10 seniors that graduated from this season's squad. They are, Ciemny, Hulbert, Kemp, Daniel Ooten, Schlageter, James Sharp, Spotofora, Andrew Struck, Swiderski, and Tuman.

"We were on a mission," Voss said. "Yes, we caught some breaks, but we created our own breaks. We earned it."

Two years ago the **JCA softball team** played for the Class 2A State Championship. While the Angels fell short, they got there. This season, they won a regional championship for the first time since then.



"Our record final record was 23-11, which was better than expected considering we had a transfer (junior Sydney Walker) and a freshman (Nina Sebahar) as our go pitchers," JCA softball coach Tina Kinsella said. "We didn't really know what to expect for their first year in the program." With only three seniors, including shortstop Mack Brow and center fielder Alina Schlageter, who were both three-year starters, it forced a lot of experience on the underclassmen, which is good for next year."

In the Class 3A regional title game, which JCA eventually won 6-5 in eight innings over host Providence, Walker hit a three-run home run in the bottom of the sixth the start an Angels rally from a 5-1 deficit. It was the fourth regional title in the last five played seasons for JCA. Making the Illinois Coaches Association All-State Team for JCA was junior outfielder Madison Patrick on the first team, Brow and freshman infielder Addison Rizzatto on the second team and junior catcher Wrigley Fanter on the third team.

"Being a 2A-sized school winning a 3A regional against Providence, no one expected JCA Softball to compete again, but we did," Kinsella said. "We have a big group of juniors, a few sophomores, and a couple of freshmen returning, so we will be ready to compete again."



In **boys' volleyball**, the Hilltoppers had an excellent season, finishing 27-8. While they fell short of winning their first regional since the spring of 2007, they had wins over local powers Lincoln-Way West and Lockport along the way. They also won 11-of-12 matches at the end of the season before falling to Plainfield East

25-21, 23-25, 26-24 in a semifinal in the Joliet West Regional. Making the Illinois Volleyball Coaches Association (IVCA) All-State Second Team were the Hilltopper 6-foot-9 twin tower tandem of seniors of Luke Pekol on the outside and brother Zach Pekol in the middle. There were five JCA players on the IVCA 2023 Boys Academic All-State Team. In addition to the Pekol twins, seniors Preston Buss, Carter Holbrook, and Jason Koenings were also named to the list. "We had a fantastic season," JCA boys volleyball coach Jeffrey Budz said. "It's hopefully one that has inspired the younger levels and showed them what kind of success is possible."

Last spring, the **JCA bass fishing team** captured the state championship, one of four that the Hilltoppers won in the 2021-22 school year. But it is a fickle event. So much depends on the spot a team is fishing in but there are other factors too. So this season, in the sectional at the Des Plaines River - Big Basin Marina, JCA was 10th (4 pounds, 5 ounces of bass fish) out of the 15 boats which were entered there. The Top 3 advance to state. So the Hilltoppers will look to get back to state next season.

In **track and field**, it was a very successful season for both the boys' and girls' teams. "The girls were led by (freshman) Symone Holman and sophomore) Larkin Calay in sprints and long jump," JCA girls track and field coach Rachel Reyes said. "Along with (junior) Claire Blotnik and (freshman) Ella Heinen in distance, and Mady Fleck in throws. The team had their best sectional performance ever, placing fourth as a team, with five first-place finishes, and advanced six total events to state from the (Class 2A) Hillcrest Sectional. "Symone competed in the 100, 200, and long jump in the state meet. She qualified for the final in the long jump and ended with a seventh-place finish (5.38 meters). Claire and Ella advanced to state in the 1600 and 800, respectively. The 4x800 team of Ella, Claire, (senior) Erin Nash, and (junior) Annie Tibbott also competed in the state meet."



The **boys' track and field team** also did well. "The boys were led by Adrian Washington and HJ Grigsby in the long jump and sprints," JCA boys track and field coach Hassan Stevenson said of the pair of juniors. "Also, (juniors) Josh Board and TJ Rza in sprints, (junior) Nathan Ciarlette, (senior) Jake Conn, and (freshman) Chris Corsi in distance, and (sophomore) Nate Magrini and (senior) Nate Hernandez in throws. 1

"The 4x200 relay team of Josh, TJ, Adrian, and HJ placed No. 2 all-time in the East Suburban Catholic Conference. The boys advanced in five events to the (Class 2A) state meet, including the long jump, 100-meter dash, and the 4x100 and 4x200. Adrian and HJ advanced to the long jump final and placed fifth (6.73 meters) and 10th (6.45 meters), respectively."

The **Angel girls' soccer team** struggled on the season with a 4-13-3 record. But they did have a trio of shutout wins (2-0 over Peotone, 7-0 over Marian Catholic, and 3-0 over Coal City). Plus, a huge 3-2 victory over St. Laurence, which ended up winning a Class 2A regional.



Alumni What's News



Joliet Catholic Academy President/Principal Dr. Jeffrey Budz and director of Institutional Advancement Ryan Quigley, alongside hosts Anita (Kraus '83) and Phil Lane, were thrilled to welcome alumni Colorado Springs Regional Reunion in July. The Lane's graciously hosted our SFA, JCHS, and JCA alumni in the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum's Chapman room. Our guests enjoyed the scenic views, received a state of the school address, and toured the museum. Alumni attending ranged from the Class of 1960 all the way to the Class of 2018.

A highlight of the tour was seeing the names displayed of David Sims and Kelly Murphy, JCA graduates and U.S. Olympians. Thank you once again to Anita and Phil Lane, as well as all of our alumni that traveled to attend.

JCHS/SFA 1978

Written by Deanne (Nonnie '78) Stanton

We celebrated together at our 45 Year reunion which began at 30 Buck on September 15th and 16th with a group attending the JCA vs. Niles Notre Dame game. Saturday afternoon Damon Zdunich welcomed a group to tour his winery, Bishop's Hill Winery. Saturday night we gathered at The Croation Club and enjoyed a meal created from scratch by Chef Toni and her Sous Chefs Deanne, Joyce and Bernie. We were blessed to have a group of 75 come together, including 11 from all over the country. A big thank you to all those that helped to put this wonderful event together! Another big thank you to all those who donated to our class gift and those who participated in our fundraiser. We will be making a sizeable donation to the Alumni Scholarship Fund. Pictures from the event can be seen on our Class Facebook page. If you would like to see the pictures, please contact Toni Vallera Muren through Facebook. We have a private group, and you have to be friends with Toni or another alumni to join the group. We are already planning our 50th and hoping everyone can join us for the big 5-0!

To ensure you receive information regarding your class reunion, make sure the Alumni Relations Office has your current contact information on file. E-mail alumni@jca-online.org call 815.741.0500, ext 269, or fill out the Alumni Contact Information at <https://www.jca-online.org/alumni/reunions/>



St. Pat's is awarded the virtual trophy for best-attended!



St. Francis Academy Uniforms from the late 60's, early 70's

In September, the JCA/JCHS/SFA classes of 1968, 1973, and 1978 celebrated milestone reunions. Several more classes will be celebrating reunions throughout this fall.

**WE LOVE TO HEAR FROM ALUMNI!
PLEASE SEND SUE BEBAR,
OUR ALUMNI RELATIONS DIRECTOR
AN UPDATE AT
[SBEBAR@JCA-ONLINE.ORG.](mailto:sbebar@jca-online.org)**



Dear JCA Alumni, Community, and Friends,

Inspired by our desire to continue providing an unparalleled student experience, we celebrate the successes attributed directly to YOU, our stakeholders in advancing the mission of Joliet Catholic Academy.

The specific goals of the JCA Institutional Advancement Office:

- That each young man and woman is cared for and supported by extraordinary faculty who remained inspired by our Catholic, Carmelite, and Franciscan mission of "Inspiring Growth in Knowledge and Faith".
- Ensure the continuation of our ultimate goal that no qualified student is denied admissions based on financial circumstance.
- Maintain a rigorous student experience full of enriching opportunities.
- Build upon and enhance our academic and extra-curricular facilities to inspire and encourage the pursuit of excellence.



Thank you once again to all of our stakeholders for believing in JCA. We closed out the 2022-2023 fiscal year with the Annual Appeal up 30% from the previous year. We set an all-time high, with over \$322,000 raised for operations and tuition assistance via the appeal.

Each year, centered around milestone reunions, we see class participation rates for annual giving go up coinciding with the reunion classes. Our challenge for this year's appeal is to:

1. Increase the overall percentage of alumni giving to the school.
2. Increase the overall percentage of young alumni giving back to JCA by focusing on smaller, recurring gifts.

What is the benefit to giving monthly? It is easier to budget your gift, you do not need to remember to send a check, and your gift renews automatically.

For the price of a premium Netflix subscription (\$19.99 per month), if we added just two new donors from every JCHS/SFA/JCA graduating class, we would raise an additional \$36,000. These funds would help over ten families in need of financial assistance, while also supporting curriculum needs, student activities, improved technology, and continued upgrades to our academic building.

Other Ways to Give:

1. Claim a 75% Illinois State Income Tax Credit by giving towards Tuition Assistance via the Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program.
2. Planned Gifts through JCA's Legacy Circle Program - Documented planned gift intentions to JCA are recognized by the benefactor's inclusion in JCA's Legacy Circle, which includes over 50 alumni and friends who have left a piece of their legacy to JCA.
3. Matching Gifts – See if your employer will match your year-end donation.

Please contact me directly at rquigley@jca-online.org or 815.741.0563 with questions regarding making an impact with your gift at Joliet Catholic Academy.

God Bless,

Ryan Quigley

Ryan Quigley '03
Director of Institutional Advancement

SAVE THE DATE JCA's 39th Jubilate "Let the Adventure Begin"

Jubilate will be celebrating its 39th Year on **Saturday, March 23, 2024**, at Bolingbrook Golf Club. Please mark your calendars, gather your friends, and get ready to "**Fly Away With JCA.**" Your "**Passport to Fun**" will open the door for you to enjoy live & silent auctions, raffles, dinner, dancing and visiting different countries. Jubilate's Co-chair couples, Nicole & Mike Murray and Tracy & Brian Zabel will be your tour guides to fun-filled adventures. Jennifer & Bryan Buss and Michele & Kurt Christensen will open the door for you to explore different countries and cities as they transform the surroundings of Bolingbrook Golf Club with their creativity and style. So "**Pack Your Bags**" and "**Book Your Flights**" for March 23, 2024. Your "**Adventure Awaits**" at Jubilate.

Please contact **Christine Voss**,
JCA Booking Agent,
with questions and
reservations:
cvoss@jca-online.org





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Please help us save printing and postage costs. If the addressee of this magazine has moved or if you are the parent of the addressee and s/he has a new address, please contact Sue Hansen, Development Coordinator at 815-741-0500 ext. 215 or shansen@jca-online.org so that we can update our records. Thank you for your help!

In Memoriam

With heartfelt condolences, we acknowledge the passing of the following members of our JCA family:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1941
Mary (Weber) Krysl</p> <p>1942
Sr. Bernard Marie Campbell, O.S.F.</p> <p>1943
Margaret (Lennon) Sticklen</p> <p>1944
Sr. Lucille Adelman, O.S.F.</p> <p>1945
Raymond J. Bertino
Lucille (Kestel) Flynn
Rosella (Aschenbrenner) Flynn</p> <p>1946
Joseph A. Feehan
John J. Nicholson
Anton R. Russ</p> <p>1947
Sr. Mary Eugene Baiardo, O.S.M.
Margaret (Henderson) Lorenz
Vera (Dalton) Miller</p> <p>1948
Patricia (Brulc) Rolih
Rosemary (Vogrin) Stephen
Marilyn (Smith) Thompson</p> <p>1949
Thomas R. Carbery
Bernard L. Haggerty
Leonard G. Heinz
John J. Konopek, Sr.
Joan (Graf) Pejasa</p> <p>1950
Geraldine (Knowles) Baskerville
Marilyn (Vogrin) Feehan
Bernard R. Ferencik
Polly Ann (Troha) Mondrella
Marilyn (Cox) Plese
Raymond J. Russ</p> <p>1951
Mary Ann Hasse
Marilyn (Nolan) Lonzo
Charles J. Lopez, Sr.
Mary (Olznoi) Nichele
Colleen (Murphy) Reeves
Raymond E. Sicinski
Francis A. Smego</p> | <p>1952
Sr. Laura Filipas, O.S.F.
Helen (Dumyahn) Malinowski
Raymond J. Muenzing
Jeremiah P. Sterr
Sr. Helen M. Vahling, O.S.F.
Helen (Grabske) Volrath</p> <p>1953
Joseph W. Adamic
Mary (Maloney) Baskerville
Mary (Heldman) Coon
Joseph A. Loscheider
Lillian (Stukel) Shuba</p> <p>1954
James F. Hischier</p> <p>1955
John R. Feeney
Sr. Rita Mandella, O.S.F.
William J. Nurczyk, Jr.</p> <p>1956
Donna (Vogrin) Arnold
Lynn (Bruce) Drolet
Sr. Suzanne C. Lesniewski, O.S.F.
Theresa (Buban) Slanicky
Arthur L. Tonelli
Arlene Ulrich</p> <p>1957
Joyce (Girard) Butler
John M. Dinoffri
Pedro R. Frausto
Louis R. Glavan
Gertrude (Padovich) Kaiser</p> <p>1958
Judith (Yonke) Farris
Barbara (Scherwha) Regis
Arlette (Snyder) Seppi
Catherine (Gutnik) Walls
Mary (Stalzer) Wanthal
Virginia M. Wrona</p> <p>1959
James E. Garrison
James P. Glavan
Stanley J. Gregorich
Geraldine (Rockwood) Sibling</p> | <p>1960
Robert J. Babich
Patrick F. Kiernan
Susanne (Delaney) Lee
Barbara (Pilon) Reynolds</p> <p>1961
Joyce (Ariagno) Brandolino
Carol (Gagliardo) Broske
Ronald W. Carnaghi
Jane (Gimpel) D'Ottavio
Angela (Fassio) Druckrey
Paul A. Green
Sheila C. Hayden
Thomas J. Levek
Lana M. Papesch
Robert J. Popek
Harold L. Raub
Mary Therese (McCarthy) Spreitzer
Sr. Mary Jo Young, O.S.F.</p> <p>1962
William M. Haley</p> <p>1963
Donald S. Kovic
Jean (Zentarski) Zimmerman</p> <p>1964
Juanita (Hayen) Doyle
John J. Lucenta, Jr.
Robert V. Mores
Sandra (Drauden) Richards</p> <p>1965
Arthur C. Barr, Jr.
William J. McGrath
Francis B. Offerman</p> <p>1966
Mary (Loscheider) Golimowski
Edward J. Pershey</p> <p>1967
Sharon (Scheuber) Benac
John P. Horrigan
Daniel J. Malloy</p> <p>1969
Deborah (Kastelec) Wall</p> <p>1970
Maryanne (Trizna) Ryder</p> | <p>1972
Richard P. Palmer</p> <p>1973
Peggy (Mulcahy) Eckert
Susan (Slaboszewski) Koizumi
Maryanne (Jankowski) Skole</p> <p>1974
Mary (McKeon) Misiurewicz
Richard F. Nelson</p> <p>1975
Kenneth Sweigard
Alan G. Toth</p> <p>1976
Richard R. Softcheck</p> <p>1977
James P. Bertino
Janet (Peceniak) McDonald</p> <p>1978
Francis J. Dolinsky</p> <p>1980
Julie (Pellegrini) Gosselin</p> <p>1981
Timothy A. Dyer</p> <p>1982
Robert P. Brophy
Julianne (Lonzo) Minato</p> <p>1983
John W. Ancel
Michael P. Duffy</p> <p>1985
Edward D. Carik</p> <p>1986
Michele L. Waszak</p> <p>1988
Anne (Steinhauer) Chakos</p> <p>1990
William F. Jenkins, Jr.</p> <p>1991
Daniel J. Ferguson</p> <p>2004
George MacZura, IV</p> |
|--|--|---|--|

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*