

Alumni & Friends
**NEWS
LETTER**

Spring Edition 2026

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FOOTPRINTS

MAKING HISTORY **CRUSADER**

STANDOUTS!



CRUSADER WRESTLING

What a ride it's been for **Marquette wrestling**. Just three years ago, this program didn't even exist — and now we're celebrating a State Champion and a State Medalist on the biggest stage in Illinois. **Wesley Janick** captured the 2026 **IHSA 1A 120 lb State Championship**, and **Alex Schaefer** battled his way to a **5th-place** finish at 215 lbs — an incredible achievement for both athletes and our growing program. Competing in the Illinois High School Association State Finals is no small task; and these wins were built through disciplined practice structure, 6AM speed and strength sessions, Sunday clinics, balancing multiple sports, prioritizing academics, and choosing character over shortcuts. The standard has been set — and we're just getting started.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Congratulations to Ava Offerman and Jake Siena for both receiving the Illinois State Scholar Award! Selection is based on the students' ACT or SAT score and their overall GPA, among other academic criteria. Their involvement in school and community activities is also taken into consideration.



Congratulations to these deserving and outstanding Crusaders!

The 2026 John Ourth Award is a prestigious recognition given by the Starved Rock Region of the Illinois Principals Association (SRIPA) to outstanding students who demonstrate exceptional leadership, character, citizenship, and scholarship. MAHS seniors Ava Offermann and Serenity Guzman were honored as recipients, and we are incredibly proud of all they've accomplished!



Marquette Academy Recognized Among 2026 Best Schools in America!

Marquette Academy has been nationally recognized by Niche as one of the 2026 Best Schools in America, earning an **A overall grade** and ranking in the top 10% of schools nationwide.

We're the only high school in LaSalle County and one of just three grade schools in the county to receive an **A rating**, highlighting its strong commitment to academic excellence and student success. The ranking reflects outstanding performance in academics, extracurricular opportunities, and feedback from students, alumni, and parents, with data from the U.S. Department of Education and millions of reviews.

"This recognition is a testament to our teachers' passion, our students' commitment, and our families' support," said Brooke Rick, Principal at Marquette Academy. "We strive to provide strong academics rooted in values and faith that prepare students for life."



Don't miss out on our **\$25,000 Big Cash Raffle!** (With 5 other cash prizes available) Tickets cost \$100. The Early Bird drawing will be held on May 1 for \$1,000.

To purchase dinner or raffle tickets, become a sponsor, make a donation, preview auction items, or bid from near or far, visit our event website:

www.bidpal.net/mmm44.

Questions? We're happy to help! Call the office at 815-433-0125 ext. 1017.



This year's committee is as follows: (Back row) Matthew & Sarah Bullock, Nicole & Joe Killelea (Front row) Sandy & Jake Killelea (Honorary).

Save the date - Saturday, May 9 for Marquette May Merriment XLIV!

The literal meaning of "Catholic" comes from the Greek word *katholikos*, meaning "universal, inclusive and all encompassing, meant for everyone". This year at the 44th Marquette May Merriment, *Wanderlust - A Night Around the World* on May 9, 2026, we celebrate the universal mission of Catholic education—forming students who are grounded in faith and ready to make a difference anywhere in the world. We invite you to partner with us to help make this special evening a success.

In January we experienced significant damage to the Bader gym floor and cafeteria due to a broken pipe. With the uncertainty of when all the repairs will be completed, we made the decision to move May Merriment XLIV to a new location, the Rivers Edge Event Center. While the details may look a little different this year, the heart of MMM remains the same: a joyful evening of community, celebration, and support for our school. We look forward to celebrating with you on May 9, 2026 - passport ready - for a night of wanderlust, celebration and impact that reaches far beyond the evening.

ALUMNI LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP

As a Marquette alum, we invite you to join us in our **MMM44 Alumni Giving Challenge!** Last year, because of you, we succeeded in raising enough funds to pay for a high school student's full tuition! There are always deserving students who require financial help to make a Marquette education possible. Our goal is to raise enough to fund one full year of tuition through the Alumni Legacy Scholarship — and create a meaningful legacy for the next generation.

How It Works:

- **Challenge Dates:** April 1 to May 9, 2026
- **Goal:** Raise \$7,500 to use towards one lucky student's tuition
- **Your Contribution:** Whether large or small, *every gift counts*. (It only takes 150 alumni giving \$50 each to make this happen!)

Join the Challenge today!

- **Celebrate Your Alma Mater:** Give back to the institution that helped shape your future.
- **Engage with Your Class:** Contact fellow alumni to make a class gift.
- **Create Lasting Impact:** Your contribution will make a difference for students, just like you once were, creating opportunities for generations to come.

Make your donation at www.bidpal.net/mmm44 and be a part of this exciting opportunity to make a difference. You can also mail your donation to Marquette Academy, 1000 Paul Street, Ottawa, IL 61350 attn: Alumni Challenge

Together, we can ensure that Marquette continues to thrive and offer exceptional Catholic education to its students. Thank you!



Scan to donate:
www.bidpal.net/mmm44

Alumni Spotlight

JACOB WITTHUHN



Marquette alum Jacob Witthuhn ('23) is helping advance the future of space exploration as a member of a student design team at Oklahoma State University selected by NASA for the prestigious 2026 Microg Neutral Bourancy Experiment Design Team (MicroNExT) Challenge. This national program invites undergraduate teams to design and build equipment used in astronaut training and future missions.

Witthuhn, now a junior has maintained a 4.0 his entire college career as he studies towards a degree in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. He serves on the design team where they are developing a one-handed, fully mechanical tool dock that allows astronauts to safely stow and retrieve tools during spacewalks. Their new design improves ease of use while enhancing safety during extravehicular activities. Although their design will need further testing and evaluation it's exciting to see that this project has the potential to influence future space missions.

Jacob may be miles from home but he is never far from serving his community in Oklahoma. The values that he learned from his time here at Marquette has translated into volunteering his time by tutoring fellow students, serving on student council, and staying active in the Catholic community at OSU.



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We love staying connected with our alumni and hearing about the exciting milestones in your lives! Whether you've recently celebrated a marriage, engagement or anniversary, graduation, welcomed a new baby, received a sacrament, achieved a career or military accomplishment, or want to share reunion information or the news of a loved one's passing, we invite you to fill out our Alumni Life Updates form on our website. Your updates help us celebrate with you, support you, and keep our Marquette community close. **Visit our website under the About Tab.**



Alumni

Service Project

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER!

Marquette alumni recently came together to kick-off our very first service project! A small group gathered in recent months to plan, organize, and deliver a warm, friendly meal to our local Ottawa PADS shelter where they serve over 80 clients. It was a great way to live out the Marquette spirit of faith, compassion, and community while reconnecting with fellow Crusaders who share the same heart for service. We are grateful for the helping hands and those that sent in donations to help fund this project. Through the incredible generosity of our alumni, we have raised enough funds to provide an additional meal in the future—extending the impact of this project and continuing our mission to serve with faith and heart. If you are interested in being a part of our next effort, please contact **Alumni Coordinator, Kristal Nodland** at knodland@marquetteacademy.net or 815-433-0125 ext 1018.

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES 2026

This year's Marquette Hall of Fame inductees are listed below and will be honored at the Marquette Academy High School Graduation Ceremony held on Sunday, May 24, 2026. To read their full biographies visit:

www.marquetteacademy.net/about/alumni.cfm

- **Jeff Newbury ('79)** - Lifetime Marquette Supporter and Educator
- **Mary Mainz Fanning ('65)** - Influential Local Artist
- **Debra (DeThorne) Moritz ('81)** - Woman of Influence Honoree



CONGRATULATIONS COACH HOPKINS!

We are proud to announce that **Coach Todd Hopkins**, Head Baseball Coach at Marquette Academy, has been nominated for **Coach of the Year by the National High School Coaches Association!**

This prestigious nomination recognizes Coach Hopkins' dedication, leadership, and commitment to excellence both on and off the field. Our players, families, and entire Marquette community are lucky to have you leading the program. Well deserved!

"It is with great pleasure that the National High School Coaches Association announces the advancement of Todd Hopkins from Marquette Academy as a finalist for the 2026 National High School Athletic Coaches Association national coach of the year in the sport of BASEBALL. Eight finalists from across the nation will be honored during the National Coach of the Year Awards Banquet, which will take place at the National High School Athletic Coaches Association's national convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Conference Center in Coralville, IA, on the evening of July 1, 2026. The highlight of the banquet will be the naming of the NHSACA national coach of the year in. Nineteen recognized sports categories.

Coach Todd Hopkins was nominated for this national honor by Illinois High School Association. This selection was based on longevity, service to high school athletics, honors, championship years, and winning percentage. The nominees and finalists are evaluated by experts in the field of coaching using a sport-specified rubric to assign points in each category. The National High School Athletic Coaches Association is the oldest coaches association in the nations, formed by coaches, for coaches, and has been recognizing national coaches of the year since 1978."



Stay up to date with info and events online at www.marquetteacademy.net



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