

The St. Thomas More Halo Club: Trading Towards a Heavenly Goal

By Samantha Nachtwey, GRACE Director of Marketing and Communications

At GRACE St. Thomas More, students have always been collectors at heart. From Pokémon cards and Hot Wheels to viral figurines, the culture of gathering and trading is a constant in the life of young people. Rudy Hernandez, the campus minister for sixth through eighth grade, noticed this passion immediately and wondered how that excitement could be directed toward our Catholic faith. The result is the Halo Club, a student led initiative that blends creativity and evangelization into a custom designed trading card series.

A WILD IDEA TAKES FLIGHT

The project began as a "wild" concept from Mr. Hernandez, who wanted to create faith-based cards. The mission found its true spark when a committee of motivated middle schoolers took the lead. These students built the brand from the ground up, studying their own card collections to determine the best structure for the game.

After much debate, the group chose the name *Halo* as a reminder that everyone is called to holiness. For the branding, they opted for a vibrant, bubbly logo over formal script to ensure the project felt accessible and fun for their peers.

INSIDE THE DECK: SKETCHES, SAINTS, AND RARITIES

The collection is a massive undertaking, featuring 152 unique cards across eleven categories, such as the Life of Jesus, Mary's Apparitions, and the Sacraments. Half are sketch cards based on original student drawings, while the others are illustrated base cards. To mirror the excitement of popular hobbies, the club introduced levels of rarity and special rewards including free dress passes or lunch with the principal, which keeps the experience high energy and engaging.

THE SECRET INGREDIENT: BLESSED AND SACRAMENTAL TOOLS

These are not merely toys; they are intentionally crafted as sacramental tools. Before any packs are released, they are blessed and then prayed over by the club members. The goal is for these cards to serve as instruments of grace. By praying over each pack, the students ask that the



Halo Club Founders and Club Leaders

stories within inspire whoever receives them to connect more deeply with God and foster a genuine desire for heaven.

PLAYING BY THE RULES: THE RELIGION CLASS TRADING FLOOR

To maintain an educational focus, the cards are integrated strictly into the religion curriculum. Students purchase packs for \$2 to cover production costs and open them together in class, allowing teachers to use the cards as "teachable moments" regarding the lives of the saints. To prevent distractions, each student uses a folder to keep their collection organized, and trading is permitted only during designated times.

THE FINAL SCORE: A SOLD-OUT MISSION FOR THE SOUL

The impact was immediate, with the first run of 600 packs selling out in less than six days. However, the true success is the cultural shift within the school. By infusing a childhood pastime with a higher purpose, Mr. Hernandez and his students have created a "common language" in the hallways. Today, the lives of the saints are discussed with the same enthusiasm as any modern hobby, proving that when faith is shared with creativity, it becomes something students truly want to hold onto.



The Heart of the Classroom: A Talent Spotlight on Mrs. Kelly Gossen



At GRACE St. Thomas More, Kindergarten and 1st grade teacher Mrs. Kelly Gossen has spent the past eleven years serving the GRACE community through a journey that reflects both a lifelong passion for teaching and a deep commitment to Catholic education. For Mrs. Gossen, the

classroom is far more than just a workplace; it is a sacred space where academic growth and spiritual formation walk hand in hand. She views her role as a vocation—a daily opportunity to mold the next generation of faithful leaders.

Her love for the classroom began long before her professional career ever officially started. As a child, she famously transformed her family basement into a dedicated learning space, complete with organized "students" and structured lessons. While other children were saving their allowance for toys, she was busy purchasing real teaching supplies, posters, and grade books, treating her make-believe lessons with the same meticulous care she shows her students today. One lesson she distinctly remembers teaching her "students" was the biblical story of the widow who gave her last penny to the church. Even then, that story reflected the core values of faith, sacrifice, and generosity that continue to guide her professional journey today.

For Mrs. Gossen, teaching in a Catholic school is a specific calling that integrates her professional skills with her personal beliefs. This commitment to excellence led her to complete the GRACE Master's Path Program, a significant

milestone that deepened both her pedagogical techniques and her personal relationship with God. She found that the program didn't just make her a better instructor; it provided a sense of peace and purpose that she carries into her classroom every morning. Supported by the steady leadership of Dr. Tyrrell and the daily collaboration of dedicated colleagues like Mrs. Ruby Hernandez, she feels truly empowered to lead and teach like Jesus.

Her connection to Catholic education is lifelong and deeply personal. Having attended St. John the Baptist as a child, she understands firsthand the lasting impact of a faith-based foundation. Today, she remains an active, vibrant member of St. John the Baptist Parish, keeping her roots firmly planted in the community that raised her. As she looks forward to eventually sending her own daughter to St. Thomas More, she continues to build a classroom environment grounded in the same foundation of faith that has shaped her life, educating young minds and shaping young hearts for the future.



More Information: lvansambeck@gracesystem.org 920-499-7330 ext. 1015



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The Power of Unseen Seeds

Kimberly A. Desotell, GRACE Schools President

I've been reflecting on the ways our GRACE community continues to grow stronger in our quest to propel our mission. This time of year naturally invites us to look back on the moments that sustained us through the colder months and as we look toward the warmth of summer, and one in particular remains especially meaningful.

During Advent and Christmas, we experienced a powerful expression of generosity and faith. An anonymous benefactor made a remarkable and very substantial donation to support our employees, requesting for us to provide a substantial Christmas bonus to every teacher, administrator, and staff member across our school system, with the request that their identity remain unknown.

In many ways, this gift reflects the humility at the heart of the Gospel. Offered without recognition or expectation, it carried not only financial support but also a meaningful affirmation of the dedication and care our faculty, staff and administrators bring to their work each day. It was a reminder that their efforts are seen and deeply valued by the community they serve.

When the news was shared, the response across our GRACE schools was

heartfelt. A majority of our employees wrote letters of thanks, sharing what this gesture meant to them both personally and professionally. Their reflections spoke to the encouragement it provided and the commitment they bring to their vocation in service to our students.

At a time of year that can be both joyful and demanding, this gift offered encouragement and a sense of support that extends beyond the workplace and into homes and families.

As we move forward, I am reminded that our true strength is forged not just in our visible harvest of achievements in our schools like a winning score or a strong report card, but in the unseen seeds of prayer, quiet care and generosity planted behind the scenes.

To our anonymous benefactor, thank you for your generosity and for the spirit in which it was given.

To our staff and families, thank you for the dedication and faith you bring to our mission each day. It is a privilege to serve alongside you.

In Christ,

Kimberly A. Desotell
President, GRACE Schools



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Principal: Mr. Francis Dempsey
920-432-5223 (Elementary)
920-336-3230 (Middle)
fatheralloeuzschool.org

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs. Kari Peterson
920-468-0625
holycrossfamily.org

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Interim Principal: Dr. Jamie Tyrrell
920-494-1931
holyfamiygreenbay.com

NOTRE DAME OF DE PERE

Principal: Mrs. Molly Mares
920-337-1115
notredameofdepere.com

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mr. Jeff Young
920-336-3091
lourdesschooldepere.org

ST. BERNARD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mr. David Gusloff
920-468-5026
saintbernardgb.com

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs. Gerene Thom
920-434-3822
sjbhschool.org

ST. JOHN PAUL II CLASSICAL SCHOOL/ CHESTERTON ACADEMY

Headmaster: Dr. Eric Schreiber
920-617-9542
sjpclassicalschoolgreenbay.org/

ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Dr. Jamie Tyrrell
920-432-8242
stmorgb.com



2025-26 Annual Appeal

Thanks to the generosity of GRACE families, staff, and friends, the GRACE Annual Appeal has officially hit \$230,000. We are deeply grateful for this incredible commitment to excellence in our schools.

While we celebrate reaching our stretch goal, the Appeal remains open through June 30 for those who wish to further support this important effort. Any additional gifts will only increase our impact across all nine schools. Thank you for your continued partnership, ensuring our students have the resources they need to thrive in mind, body, and spirit



Bridging Worlds: The Bilingual Journey at St. Thomas More

By Samatha Nachtwey, GRACE Director of Marketing and Communications

HELLO

HOLA

At GRACE St. Thomas More, the halls echo with the sounds of a dual language future. Led by Principal Dr. Jamie Tyrrell, the bilingual program began in 2021 and now empowers every student from Preschool through 5th grade to become biliterate.

The journey begins with a 90/10 model, where 90 percent of the day is immersed in Spanish. As students grow, the balance shifts to 60/40 in Kindergarten and reaches a 50/50 split for grades 1 through 5. Dr. Tyrrell explains, "This is not just about vocabulary; it is about strategic integration." Students tackle Science in Spanish and Social Studies in English, mastering academic concepts in both languages.

Dr. Tyrrell is a fierce advocate for multilingual learners.

By coordinating specialized coaching, she supports a team of educators who work in linguistic pairs from Kindergarten/1st grade to the 4th/5th grade duo. Together, they ensure Spanish and English are woven into the fiber of the school's daily life.

This commitment extends to every family. Every concert, parent meeting, and prayer is bilingual. In December, the community honors Our Lady of Guadalupe, where students present roses to the Virgin, blending Catholic faith with Hispanic tradition.

Dr. Tyrrell believes being bilingual is a lifelong gift. At STM, that gift is being unwrapped every day, preparing students to lead, succeed, and serve in our diverse world.

Experiencing the Olympic Spirit at Our Lady of Lourdes

Although almost 4,500 miles separate Milan, Italy with DePere, the Olympic spirit was burning bright within Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School during the 2026 Winter Olympics this February. With the celebration of the Olympiad within the school, it was obvious that both students and staff alike enjoyed all of the concepts of culture, teamwork, and competition found in the winter fun.



As each homeroom represented a different country, the OLOL Winter Games began with their own parade of nations, promoting unity and cultural awareness to kick off the Games. Keeping within the coziness of the school building, students and staff took part in their own slate of improvised STEM-generated winter "games," including moguls, curling, speed skating, and bobsledding.

Students of all ages and from all "countries" took part in competitions for gold, silver, and bronze medals. On their final day, students carried flags of their homeroom country into an assembly, cheered on by everyone, as everyone became a winner when the true spirit of the 2026 Olympics was shared.

What's next for the students of Our Lady of Lourdes? The Summer Games in 2028, of course!



Why Summer Reading Matters

By Dr. Stephanie Shedrow, GRACE Executive Director of Learning

Summer is right around the corner. While summer is a time for fun and family, it is also important for children to maintain the learning and skills they developed throughout the school year. Research shows that children can lose one to three months of academic progress over the summer if they are not regularly engaged in learning.



Encouraging your child to read every day can make a meaningful difference and is a simple yet effective way to prevent learning loss. Regular reading not only supports skill retention but also helps students return to school in the fall feeling confident and ready to learn. Additionally, reading strengthens comprehension, builds vocabulary, and supports focus and critical thinking.

KEEPING SUMMER READING ENJOYABLE

Reading at home should feel enjoyable, not like extra schoolwork. With a few simple strategies, families can help make reading a positive and engaging part of the summer routine.

- **Let children choose what they read.** When students have a choice, they are more likely to stay engaged. Graphic novels, joke books, sports stories, and magazines all support reading development.
- **Talk about reading together.** Ask your child about what they are reading. Look at pictures together, discuss characters, and talk about what is happening in the story.

- **Include audiobooks.** Audiobooks are a great option for travel or family time. Listening to audiobooks still builds valuable vocabulary and comprehension skills.
- **Make it interactive.** Create a simple reading challenge or bingo board with fun ideas such as reading outside, building a reading fort, or trying a new genre. You might even include reading a recipe and cooking together.
- **Make the Bible part of your routine.** Read and reflect on Scripture together as a family. Sharing these moments helps model your values while strengthening both faith and connection.

By making reading a regular and enjoyable part of summer, you are helping your child stay engaged, build confidence, and ensure a strong start to the next school year.



GRACE Schools Participate in Catholic Schools Week

The annual celebration of Catholic Education in our country is known as Catholic Schools Week (CSW), held this year from January 25 through 31. The 2026 theme, "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community," was a connecting thread found among all of our GRACE schools. While each school community celebrated with Masses, assemblies, service projects, dress-up days, and special events, the character of each school was evident in how they celebrated in their own individual way.

Holy Cross: Fun with a Purpose

Holy Cross Catholic School allowed each class to choose the theme for their dress up day, including cartoon characters, pop culture, pajamas, and zoo animals. A big hit was "Dress Like Your Favorite Food Day" to correspond with a school-wide collection of canned goods for Paul's Pantry. In a special project, alumni shared some of their fondest memories from school.



Our Lady of Lourdes: Sharing Talents, Serving Neighbors

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School focused on their surrounding community in several

ways. A student group visited the Rennes Home to make Valentine's Day cards with residents; another class served as food packers at Paul's Pantry; others worked as helpers at Saint Vincent De Paul, and one more class group made special treats for parishioners in nursing homes and the homebound. Two main school events were the annual talent show and spelling bee.

St. Bernard: The Great Teacher Swap

There was a teacher swap at St. Bernard Catholic School, where classroom teachers were randomly matched up with someone else's class for a fun change of instruction. Staff members also enjoyed special treats as a finale to the week.



St. John Paul II/Chesterton Academy: Stories, Service, and Seniors

Students at St. John Paul II Classical School were challenged to an essay contest during the week. There were also dress-up days in which students portrayed characters from the books they were currently reading. Their community project was a collection of goods for Paul's Pantry, as it was for the high school students at Chesterton Academy of St. John Paul II Classical School. The main focus of their week was the tradition of the Senior Capstone Presentations.



Notre Dame of De Pere: Future Vocations

Notre Dame of De Pere Catholic School kicked off their CSW with Sunday mass and a grilled cheese and bingo event. A highlight of the week was the school talent show, as well as a dress like your Future Vocation Day, and a dress-up swap between students and teachers, where they dressed like each other. One project was making and sending Valentine's Day cards to U.S. veterans.

St. John the Baptist: Blanket Making

At the St. John the Baptist Catholic School, students and families participated in a Grandparents and Friends Day. Teachers made blankets to be donated, students explored vocations, and the science fair was held.



St. Thomas More: Cultural Dances and Movie Day

St. Thomas More Catholic School held a faith-filled pep rally. In a thrilling all-school assembly, they were treated to a performance by the cultural dance group called Danza San Felipe. Also, the upper grades were treated to a movie at the De Pere Cinema, while the younger grades saw the Magic and Mischief Show. On a dress-up day, they celebrated by portraying saints.





Father Allouez: CP Center Carnival

Father Allouez Catholic School celebrated giving thanks, service, and joy throughout its week. One highlight was a presentation by CP Center staff and CP Center Carnival, a tradition of over thirty years. Classes kicked off a read-a-thon. The big Family Fun Night included bingo and a dodgeball competition.



Holy Family: Field Trips, Fun, and Chili

Holy Family Catholic School held a special adoration assembly. Dress-up days included neon day and "Dress as your Favorite Teacher Day." Field trips were taken to The Green Bay Children's Museum, Tri-County Gymnastics, and the YMCA, for tons of fun for all. The week was topped by the eighth grade chili dinner.

Next year's Catholic Schools Week will be held from January 31 through February 6, 2027.

A Gift That Comes Full Circle: Laurie Kryzanek Legacy of Faith and Education

By Nate Tackaberry, GRACE Executive Director of Advancement

For Laurie Kryzanek, Catholic education has never been just about academics. It has been about faith, foundation, and the quiet confidence that grows when a child knows they are loved by God and supported by a community that believes in them. That belief began generations ago with her grandparents, who made her Catholic education possible by paying tuition and reinforcing the importance of faith, service, and learning rooted in Christ.

Laurie is a proud graduate of St. Matthew School, where she attended 2nd through 8th grade, graduating in 1979. "My grandparents believed deeply in Catholic education," Laurie recalls, "and because of them, my brother and I had the opportunities we may not have otherwise" Today, Laurie has chosen to honor that gift by naming St. Matthew School and Parish as a beneficiary of her life insurance policy. This decision is her way of giving future children the same opportunity she received.

"My hope for my gift," Laurie shares, "is that children receiving a Catholic education will know they can do anything and be anything with God's grace and help." Laurie still remembers her years at St. Matthew vividly, every classroom, every teacher, and the people who helped shape her faith. She recalls Sister MaryAnn Jacobs, who assigned her an impactful 8th-grade report on Mother Teresa, planting early seeds of service and compassion. She remembers Fr. Roy Geenan,



Laurie with Fr. Kabat



Laurie's 8th grade graduation picture from 1979

Fr. Bill Hoffman, and Sister Concepta as educators who made faith come alive in the classroom.

Though she admits she didn't always have strong self-confidence growing up, her time at St. Matthew school instilled something lasting: a belief that she mattered and that God had a purpose for her life. This thread of service led her to NWTC, earning certification as a nursing assistant. This work led her to care for newborn babies, a role she still speaks about with joy, later reflecting in a career of nannying for much of her life. Those who know Laurie describe her faith as steady and inspiring, grounded in gratitude and trust in God's plan.

By naming the school, now known as GRACE Father Allouez Catholic School, and the St. Matthew's Parish as beneficiaries, Laurie is ensuring that the gift her grandparents once gave will continue forming students academically and spiritually for generations to come. Her life has been defined by this spirit of giving; for sixteen years, she served as a nanny, forming bonds that lasted decades. "It feels like everything is coming full circle," she says. "If my gift can help another child believe in themselves and grow in faith, then it's worth it." Through her legacy, Laurie is extending God's grace forward, one child at a time.

For information on Planned Giving, please contact the GRACE Advancement Office at 920-499-7330.



Recognizing Our Teachers of Distinction

We are proud to announce three GRACE educators honored by the Greater Green Bay Chamber Golden Apple Awards:

- Annie Stewart
Father Allouez Catholic School
- Andrea Barington
Holy Family Catholic School
- Kelly Gossen
St. Thomas More School



We celebrate your dedication to excellence and the lasting impact you make in our classrooms every day!



From Left to Right: Annie Stewart (FACS), Andrea Barington (HF), and Kelly Gossen (STM).

2026 Graduation Dates

SCHOOL	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School	May 28, 2026	6:30 P.M.	Our Lady of Lourdes Church
St. Bernard Catholic School	May 29, 2026	4:30 P.M.	St. Bernard Parish
Chesterton Academy of St. John Paul II	May 29, 2026	5:00 P.M.	Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Parish
Father Allouez Catholic School	June 2, 2026	5:00 P.M.	Resurrection Catholic Church
St. John Paul II Classical School	June 2, 2026	5:00 P.M.	Shrine of Our Lady of Champion
Holy Family Catholic School	June 2, 2026	5:00 P.M.	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
St. Thomas More Catholic School	June 2, 2026	5:00 P.M.	Ss. Peter & Paul Parish
Notre Dame of De Pere Catholic School	June 2, 2026	5:30 P.M.	St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church
Holy Cross Catholic School	June 2, 2026	6:00 P.M.	Holy Cross Catholic Church
St. John the Baptist Catholic School	June 2, 2026	6:30 P.M.	St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

LET US HELP YOU

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