



OUR
Next Step
FORWARD

A Campaign for Aquinas Catholic Schools

Campaign Prayer

St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church and defender of truth. In your name God has blessed the Coulee Region with a school system dedicated to excellence in all that we do. We thank God for the administrators, teachers and staff who minister to our children daily and for parents and custodians who entrust them to God's care by their loving sacrifice.

We ask Jesus, through your intercession, to help us recognize God's limitless generosity in our lives. We pray for the trust to lean on God in carrying out His will. Empower us to step forward to share God's blessings with others.

In particular, we pray that by God's generosity working through us, more families will join the Aquinas Catholic School System so that their children may benefit from its mission to educate, challenge, and inspire in the Catholic tradition of faith, service and academic excellence. We ask this through Christ and His Immaculate Mother.

Amen



A Message from Leadership

Dear Aquinas Catholic Schools family:

We write this letter with a deep sense of gratitude to the families, teachers and staff who continue to carry forward a shared vision of hope for our young people. Using feedback from last year's planning study, and in accordance with our strategic plan, we have launched *Our Next Step Forward* Capital Campaign. Our goal is to raise \$5.6 million to position our schools for growth and continued excellence.

Few decisions are more important to parents than answering the question: "How can I best prepare my child for the future?" Since 1857, parents of Coulee Region families have made an investment in their children's future by opting to send them to a quality Catholic school. Today, the Aquinas Catholic School System continues its mission to educate, challenge and inspire students in the Catholic tradition of faith, service and academic excellence. The Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation supports this mission by making sure that high quality Catholic education is made affordable and accessible to all.

It is in this spirit of gratitude and hope that we invite you to support the important goals of *Our Next Step Forward* Capital Campaign. An explanation of the genesis and benefits of these important goals is provided herein. Your prayerful sacrifice to this capital campaign will ensure that the Aquinas Catholic Schools will continue to deliver the best education option possible and that more children in our region will benefit from the excellent preparation our schools provide.

Gratefully,

Ted Knutson

TED KNUTSON '80
President,
Aquinas Catholic Schools



Mark W. Hansen

MARK HANSEN
President,
Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation Board



For more than 150 years, children in the Coulee Region have been blessed with the opportunity to receive a strong Catholic education. Priests and religious sisters challenged students academically, cultivated their gifts and fostered a love of learning in a structured environment infused with moral values.

BACKGROUND

“We let children develop at their own speed, but we really desire children to leave having a good heart, being kind and sympathetic.”

SUE AMBLE,
Principal

“I want to make sure that kids are comfortable and confident in my classroom. I want them to love this classroom when they leave it. My motto is ‘comfortable . . . confident . . . fun.’”

CHRISTIE SMITH '93,
*Aquinas Middle School
Teacher*



This legacy was carried forward by parish-supported schools until the Catholic schools were consolidated due to changing demographics and decreasing numbers in La Crosse Deanery parishes. No longer could each parish support its own school. This consolidated system took the name of St. Thomas Aquinas, patron of Catholic schools, on July 1, 2009. The Aquinas Catholic Schools (ACS) System carries on the legacy of delivering a high-quality Catholic education to all families who desire it. Now, multiple parishes generously support a unified ACS System.

The ACS mission is “to educate, challenge, and inspire students in the Catholic tradition of faith, service and academic excellence.” The system’s achievements over the past seven and a half years highlight its tremendous success. Graduates of Aquinas Catholic schools proudly serve as leaders in our community, businesses, parishes and institutions within the Coulee Region and beyond.



Today, the ACS System is strong. It is debt free. Enrollment is stable, and it operates under a balanced budget. More importantly, the teachers and staff of the ACS System are highly qualified, committed professionals delivering a world-class education to our youth on a daily basis. Lay educators today, like the priests and sisters before them, carry forward this proven legacy. However, with rising educational costs, many families who believe in the value of an ACS education for their children cannot afford it. Ensuring access to a high quality Catholic education, while fairly compensating our dedicated staff, is the challenge towards which we endeavor to raise funds.

Timeline of Catholic School Development in La Crosse

Fr. Matthias Marco, pastor of congregation dedicated to St. Joseph, started building a new school at 6th Street, near Main.

1863

Dedication of Aquinas High School (AHS). Fr. Hilary Leuther was first principal.

1928

32 Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and several lay teachers taught 1,100-1,200 students as enrollment peaked at Aquinas High School.

early 1950's

New Cathedral School opened at 13th and Ferry Streets.

1969

\$3 million gift by D. B. and Marge Reinhart was announced to kick off \$7.3 million capital campaign for Bishop Burke Hall.

1996

St. Patrick in Onalaska offered K-6th grades.

2005



Aquinas High School named Blue Ribbon School.

2008

Aquinas Middle School named Blue Ribbon School.

2013

IMPACT received the Catholic Charities In Thy Name Award to recognize its charitable works.

2014

2015-2016

St. Patrick, Cathedral, Blessed Sacrament, AHS and AMS replaced PCs/monitors in student labs.

2013

Aquinas Robotics Team advanced to the World Robotics competition.



2010-11

First system-wide accreditation through AdvancEd; renewed in 2015-16.

2006

Blessed Sacrament composed of 3rd-6th graders and Cathedral school composed of K-2.

1997

Bishop Burke Hall was completed and dedicated thanks to generosity of more than 1,100 benefactors.

1992

Aquinas Middle School opened in the second floor hallways.

1962

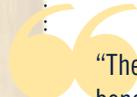
New Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman opened.

1929

First graduating class of four girls from AHS.

1868

Pope Pius IX established Diocese of La Crosse. Fr. Michael Heiss became first bishop.



"The greatest benefit to ACS families is that students see the gospel message lived out throughout their school day."



ANDREW BRUEGGEN, Aquinas High School Religion Teacher

"Through the years I have always been impressed by our "final product!" We have so many prominent, intelligent alumni who have lived humbly our faith and given back so much to make our world a better place! That is what Catholic education is all about!"

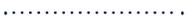


DENISE RING, Principal



“ACS students are getting a comprehensive education. Their minds will be developed, but also their compassion. We focus on the whole person. Each student’s character is developed.”

BRI EBENHOE '05,
*Aquinas High School
Science Teacher*



“The bridge to the family is the greatest benefit to ACS families. We are in this together; we are an extension of the family.”

KAY BERRA,
Principal



THE NEED

ACS leadership and the ACS Foundation strongly believe that now is the time to take the next step forward in preserving the financial health, affordability and accessibility of Catholic schools in the Coulee Region. The five schools of the ACS System operate most efficiently. The cost of educating a student in the ACS System is a fraction of the cost of educating a student in other schools of the Coulee Region, but there are important needs that require support beyond the cost of day-to-day operations.

Based on research and experience, ACS leaders know the main reason parents choose alternative education options is the price of tuition. Higher tuition costs make access to a high quality Catholic education more difficult, especially for those with fewer financial resources. Since the ACS System has the capacity to welcome more families, growing our enrollment is a top priority.

The Solution

By offering need-based scholarships to new families, enrollment in the ACS System will increase, providing wider access to families that strongly desire the best educational experience for their children. This will reinforce the financial health of the entire ACS System. By doing so, ACS will be in a position to offer more competitive compensation to its educators, ensuring that it continues to attract the most qualified teachers and staff for decades to come.

The Aquinas Catholic Schools need your help to make Catholic education available to more families, to continue to attract the best teaching talent and to provide the resources needed to continue to deliver a world-class education. For many generations, parents have sent their children to Catholic schools to receive superior academic preparation and faith formation in a safe and caring community where they are respected and are encouraged to excel. ACS teachers deliver these results in a nurturing, but disciplined, environment that prepares students to be leaders equipped to take on the challenges of a fast-changing world.

In a planning study conducted in the spring of 2016, participants identified employee compensation, tuition affordability, technology and building enhancements as the most important items requiring attention in the ACS System. Using the planning study results, ACS leadership has created a campaign where the Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation will raise money for need-based scholarships, a stronger technology framework to host up-to-date learning solutions, infrastructure improvements, security enhancements and long-term planning.



“My main goal is to teach kindness and faith in God and integrate that faith within academic areas, so students grow both academically and in faith.”

NICOLE SAUTER,
*Blessed Sacrament Elementary School
Teacher*

“I thank God that I love these children, and I can see through a child’s eye what is most important. We develop well-rounded students.”

BRIDGET DICKENSON,
*Cathedral Elementary School
Teacher*

CAMPAIGN GOALS



“There is such a huge variety of ways kids can serve in community. It’s unbelievable the amount of service opportunities students have to choose from. ACS families develop a unique permanent bond to Aquinas that lasts forever.”

PAM DONARSKI,
*Aquinas High School
Geometry Teacher*

“Students learn that we expect a lot from them. We teach students to accept responsibility for their actions. We instill the love of lifelong learning. We make sure everyone feels success.”

MARY REECK '78,
*Aquinas Middle School
7th Grade Teacher*



OVERALL CAMPAIGN GOAL:
\$5.6 MILLION

\$3 MILLION EMPOWERMENT

GOAL: Create a living legacy by funding need-based scholarships for elementary tuition relief. Tuition relief will attract new families, which will increase ACS revenue without significantly increasing costs. In time, increased revenue will enable ACS to address employee compensation in a sustainable and meaningful way.

Scholarships will be created in the following amounts and named for the donor or at the donor’s direction:

- Full scholarship funding all tuition for a single child from 4k-8 - \$120,000
- Half scholarship funding half of the tuition required for a child to attend 4k-8 - \$60,000
- Quarter scholarship funding a quarter of the tuition required for a child to attend 4k-8 - \$30,000

Since only investment returns will be used to fund these education scholarships, as students move through and graduate from the ACS System, scholarship money will be perpetually available to new families.



\$600,000 WISDOM GOAL: Raise \$600,000 to enhance our school-wide surveillance systems, move AHS building administrative offices to the first floor, and improve wireless infrastructure throughout all ACS sites. Funds raised for the Wisdom Goal will be spent in the short term to move ACS significantly towards its technology-based learning tool initiative already underway. All donors who elect to contribute to our Wisdom Goal will be recognized for their dedication to high-quality education and can elect to fund specific initiatives.

\$2 MILLION OPPORTUNITY GOAL: Enhance ACS System facilities as we continue to strategically position ourselves as the leading education system in the Coulee Region. Funds are needed to address building maintenance needs at each of our school campuses and to assist in planning for the long-term use of our facilities. These are some of the specified projects that are in need of funding:

- Replace roofing for Burke Hall
- Tuck-point brickwork on AHS building
- Improve HVAC and supply water heaters
- Resurface certain playground and parking lots
- Plan for long-term use of school facilities



“We build self-confident, independent young people who know their strengths and are confident enough to ask questions.”

PATTY GALLAGHER-KOSMATKA '79,
Principal

.....

“We encourage students to do their best. We build a community of respect so that they feel comfortable. This is a place to not be afraid, but to do those things that are needed to be successful.”

HEATHER HAAG,
*St. Patrick Elementary School
Teacher*





“ACS families come together to support one another and live their faith together.”

MARI ERICKSON
*Blessed Sacrament Elementary School
School Counselor*

“I wholeheartedly believe that Aquinas is the reason I am the happiest, best version of myself today. Aquinas Catholic Schools taught me a lot of things, from lessons in mathematics and theology, to how to handle people who are different from myself.”

GILLIAN SCHULTZ
Class of 2016

THE BENEFIT
Your prayers and financial help will ensure that the ACS System can continue to provide the highest level of academic and spiritual teachings to all children of the Coulee Region. Further, your investment in ACS will strengthen our community by creating greater access to a formational educational experience for families in need.

How You Can Help

Like our resourceful teachers, the ACS Foundation is taking a proactive step to provide better access for all Coulee Region families while preserving and sustaining the excellence of the ACS System. Your help is needed to fund these three important goals identified in the planning study.

We invite our entire ACS family and each person that believes in, or has benefited from, a high-quality Catholic school education to contribute to one of our strategic fundraising goals. The Aquinas Catholic Schools System is in a strong position to uniquely deliver a life-changing education. Together, parishes, parents, supporters of the ACS System and those that believe in the power of Catholic education can keep our Catholic schools strong, sustainable and a vital component to the fabric of the Coulee Region.

Methods of Giving

There are many options to help meet your needs while supporting the Aquinas Catholic School System in a meaningful way. Pledges are commitments made in good faith, but are not legally binding. You may want to consider stretching your pledge over a three-year period to maximize the total amount of your support. This commitment can be fulfilled through monthly, quarterly, semiannual or annual installments.



We encourage all donors to consider a 10-20 percent initial payment to begin your commitment.

Gifts made by cash or check are the most common and will allow the Aquinas Catholic School System to address its immediate needs. Checks should be made payable to **Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation**. However, while the needs of the *Our Next Step Forward* Capital Campaign are urgent, we will gratefully accept gifts in various forms, including those described here:

BUDGETING YOUR GIFT OVER THREE YEARS

Total Gift	Monthly	Quarterly	Semiannually	Annually
\$1,260	\$35	\$105	\$210	\$420
\$1,800	\$50	\$150	\$300	\$600
\$2,700	\$75	\$225	\$450	\$900
\$3,600	\$100	\$300	\$600	\$1,200
\$5,400	\$150	\$450	\$900	\$1,800
\$7,200	\$200	\$600	\$1,200	\$2,400
\$9,000	\$250	\$750	\$1,500	\$3,000
\$10,800	\$300	\$900	\$1,800	\$3,600
\$18,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$6,000
\$30,000	\$833	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$10,000
\$36,000	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$12,000
\$50,000	\$1,389	\$4,167	\$8,333	\$16,667
\$60,000	\$1,667	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
\$100,000	\$2,778	\$8,333	\$16,667	\$33,333
\$120,000	\$3,333	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$40,000

GIFTS OF SECURITIES – STOCKS, BONDS AND MUTUAL FUNDS

Charitable gifts of stocks, bonds or mutual funds that have been held for at least one year and have appreciated offer special tax advantages. You will receive a tax deduction for the full market value of the gift but you will not have to pay capital gains tax on the appreciated amount. If you sell depreciated stock and contribute the proceeds, you will receive both a tax deduction for the charitable gift and a deduction for the capital loss.

GIFTS OF REAL ESTATE

Donations of appreciated homes, and other real property, are entitled to an income tax deduction equal to the full value of the property and no tax on the capital gain. If debt-free property is donated, the gift is deductible at the property's appraised value. It may even be possible to make your gift of property now, but still maintain the right to use the property. By making this gift now, rather than in your will, you can realize an immediate income tax deduction.

GIFTS-IN-KIND

Tangible personal property can be given to support the Aquinas Catholic Schools. These gifts may be eligible for a deduction of the item's fair market value, if the gift is related to the "charitable purpose" of the school system. All personal property gifts must be approved by the Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation.

CORPORATE MATCHING GIFTS

A matching gift program provided through your employer or board membership may allow you to increase the value of your gift. Many companies match charitable gifts made by their employees, retirees or board members.

GIFTS OF RETIREMENT PLANS

Naming Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation as a primary or contingent beneficiary of a retirement plan [i.e. IRA, 401(k)] can benefit both the Aquinas Catholic Schools and your estate. Your retirement account's plan administrator can help you designate the Aquinas Catholic Schools Foundation as a beneficiary.

Note: This information is not intended as legal advice. You are advised to consult your own qualified professional advisor for specific recommendations.



Campaign Leadership

HONORARY CHAIRS

Mary Ann Gschwind, *fspa*
Dave & Mary Jo Reinders

PRESIDENTS

Mark Hansen,
ACS Foundation Board
Ted Knutson,
Aquinas Catholic Schools

GENERAL CHAIRS

Matt & Megan Binsfeld '96
Jerry O'Flaherty
Kevin & Helen Roop '80
Pat & Joanne Stephens

DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR

Brad Reinhart '00,
Aquinas Catholic Schools

315 South 11th Street
La Crosse, WI 54601
608-784-0707

