

Angel Scholarship program benefits St. Thomas More School, families

STORY BY CAROL KOVACH | PHOTOS FROM ST. THOMAS MORE SCHOOL AND CAROL KOVACH

Summer vacation had barely begun when Sarah Schillo brought her three youngest children to morning Mass at St. Thomas More Church in Brooklyn. In their school uniforms, Jacob, an eighth grader, Benjamin, a sixth grader, and Charlotte, a third grader, met with the parish pastor, Father John Schneider, and Sarah Schultz, STM assistant principal, to talk about their school and how the Angel Scholarship Fund is helping their family.

Sarah Schillo and her husband Robert have five children. The older two attend Padua Franciscan High School in Parma and the three youngest are at STM, so the family's tuition costs are substantial each year. But it's worth the investment to have their children attending Catholic schools, she said. And ASF provides financial relief.

Sarah Schultz said STM Principal Meg Cosgriff, in her fourth year leading the school, encourages families to seek out and apply for all forms of tuition assistance. "The application process has been streamlined to make it easier for parents," she added.

"It definitely helps, with all of our kids in Catholic school," Sarah Schillo said of the ASF program.

ASF offers tuition assistance to K-12 students attending a Catholic school in the eight-county Diocese of Cleveland. Ohio taxpayers who contribute to the fund benefit from a 1:1 state tax credit. Donors receive a 100% state income tax credit of up to \$750 (\$1,500 for a married couple filing jointly) against their income tax liability. Funds can be earmarked for the school of the donor's choice or for the area of greatest need. The Catholic Community Foundation coordinates the program in the diocese.

Father John, who became St. Thomas More pastor in October 2024, is pleased by the growth in school enrollment. Last year, there were 200 children in grades K-8. They expect 217 students for the 2025-2026 school year.

Sarah Schultz credits word of mouth and testimonials from school families as their best marketing tools.

"We have tremendous morale at the school. The teachers are good and the students are well-behaved," Father John said. In addition, ASF helps the parish because it allows money to be allocated to areas of greatest need.

"ASF helps us to accomplish what we want to achieve rather than what we have to do to survive," he said. "I believe ASF is here to stay. We are grateful for those who support it."



Father John said the parish is working on a capital plan for the school, looking at long-range planning. "Our school is flourishing and ASF allows us to grow even more." He said the school is also helping to attract more people to the Catholic faith, noting three students from the school were baptized last year. "The engagement with the community is working," he added.

The Schillo children said they are grateful to attend St. Thomas More School and are enjoying their time there.

Jacob said he is thankful for his teachers. He enjoys learning about math and religion and was happy to be a member of the CYO championship basketball team. His brother Ben

enjoys gym class, CYO basketball, learning Spanish, art class and he was excited to participate in a class project to hatch baby chicks in an incubator. And Charlotte is thankful for being a Star of the Week. Her reward was caring for a special stuffed dog named Marshmallow for a weekend.

"It definitely takes a village to raise children and St. Thomas More has

a good village. Parents are willing to look out for all the children. It's also a big testament to St. Thomas More School if even non-Catholic families want to send their children here," said Sarah Schillo. "St. Thomas More teaches the students about God, giving them a foundation in their faith, which is needed today. God, prayer and the Church give them good roots as they grow up. What a wonderful benefit." †



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