

In July of 1874, eight Sisters arrived in Cleveland from Germany, including the foundress, Sister Magdalene Wolbring. **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS** For years, two hundred Sisters of Notre Dame came to the United States to teach the children of immigrants, mainly across northern Ohio and in the Covington area.

In 1887, the Sisters of Notre Dame started St. Francis School and it became a beacon of light in the city of Cleveland. St. Francis is the oldest school in the diocese started by the Sisters of Notre Dame. It has the same name and is run with the Sisters currently at the school.

The Sisters of Notre Dame is an international community serving many countries across the globe.

St. Francis School supports the Sisters of Notre Dame global mission, especially the Aloisia home in Arusha, Tanzania.

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New Fund A Dream donor eager to support Catholic education

STORY BY CAROL KOVACH | PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

St. Francis School in Cleveland was a big part of Hank Weiss' life for many years. He received a Catholic education from teachers who genuinely cared for and about him, leaving him with fond memories of his years there. He also got the support he needed to provide a foundation for his future career as a facilities engineer.

"I've seen the good that a Catholic education can do," said Hank. "It's important for children to be around teachers who care for them and want them to succeed."

That's why when he heard about the Fund A Dream program that offers scholarships of \$2,500 to students in need attending Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cleveland, he wanted to help. Hank connected with Fred Roberts from the Catholic Community Foundation, which oversees the program, and signed on as a donor. He even had a chance to visit his old elementary school.

"I'm very fortunate. I've been given so much in my life," said Hank. "I'm now in a position to help ... This program sounded like what God was asking me to do."

Hank said he sees Catholic schools like St. Francis as an anchor for the neighborhood. If the school does well and parents notice that, the community and neighborhood also do well.

His grandparents, who were immigrants, lived in the parish and learned to assimilate to their new country. "They learned English here," he said, along with many others. "My dad and my uncle went to school here. My dad was the first in his family to attend a Catholic high school, and the first and only one of his generation (in the family) to go to college."

Looking back on his own years at St. Francis School, Hank got emotional, noting that some of the happiest moments of his life were connected to the parish, his old neighborhood, family and friends.

"It's so important for children to have that good start, to be able to be around teachers who love them and care about them and want them to be good people, who want to make sure they really know their basic life skills like how to read well and how to do arithmetic, but also how to get along with people, how to be kind and how to be good," he added.

St. Francis has always been a center of diversity, Hank said, even when he was growing up there. It's important to embrace those differences, "Because Jesus didn't limit himself to just Catholics. He served everyone and that's what happens here ... Tolerance and love for one's neighbor and looking beyond just the appearance of things is something Catholic education teaches us. These schools and these communities serve everyone."

After a long career, Hank is now retired, giving him more time to reflect, which helped reconnect him with St. Francis. He also volunteers at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., where he lives.

"My hope is that the Fund A Dream program continues to grow and to flourish, to touch people's lives the same way it's touched mine. You know, I wish every young person could have the opportunity to learn about what Jesus said and to learn how much their teachers love them, want them to do well in life and want them to be good, happy people. I hope I can plant my little grain of sand so that these things continue," Hank said. †



LEARN MORE

Scan the QR code or contact Fred Roberts, froberts@catholiccommunity.org, 216.696.6525, Ext. 3310, for more information about Fund A Dream. To donate, visit catholiccommunity.org/fund-a-dream.



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