

# Fund A Dream helps make a Catholic education a reality for Elijah

STORY BY CAROL KOVACH  
PHOTO BY DENE HUMMON

Saint Rita School



**WHEN ASKED WHAT HE ENJOYED MOST ABOUT SCHOOL, ELIJAH QUICKLY ANSWERED, “GETTING SMARTER IN MATH. MATH IS MY FAVORITE SUBJECT.”**

The engaged fifth grader, who is enthusiastic to learn, has attended St. Rita School in Solon since first grade. He enjoys school, said his mom, Brooke.

Since he has academic needs, Elijah, who will be 11 in February, receives a Jon Peterson Scholarship that supports the needed support services. In his case, that’s tutoring for reading, based on his Individualized Education Program, also known as an IEP.

But that means the family is not eligible to receive EdChoice funds, which makes it difficult to meet the tuition costs at St. Rita. EdChoice, a statewide program, allows parents to choose the school their children attend and the funds follow the child.

Brooke said teachers began noticing that Elijah was having trouble with reading comprehension in second grade.

She discussed her concerns with his teacher and they arranged for a tutor.

In third grade, Elijah underwent a battery of tests. It was confirmed that he had difficulty with reading comprehension. “The teacher said eventually the problem would affect his other classes, too,” Brooke said. With the help of a tutor three times a week, Elijah began to improve.

But the family had to make a difficult decision. “We had to choose between Jon Peterson, which pays for his tutor, or EdChoice,” Brooke said. They discussed the funding options available to help defray the costs of the tutor and Elijah’s tuition at St. Rita. The family opted to apply for a Jon Peterson scholarship to continue his tutoring. They were accepted both last year and this school year.

That’s where Fund A

Dream enters the picture. The innovative program, which provides \$2,500 to selected participating students, helps finance the cost of a Catholic education. It is coordinated by the Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Cleveland. The foundation supports the mission of the diocese to provide for the spiritual, educational and charitable needs of people throughout Northeast Ohio.

Since Fund A Dream’s inception in 2020, more than 750 students have received tuition assistance, including 237 students from 60 schools who received Fund A Dream scholarships for the current school year. Elijah is among them. Any student in grades K-12 can apply for a Fund A Dream scholarship.

Those who donate \$2,500 are paired with a student and efforts are made to honor a

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Scan the QR code or contact Fred Roberts, [froberts@catholiccommunity.org](mailto:froberts@catholiccommunity.org), 216.696.6525, Ext. 3310, or Kaitlyn Novicky, [knovicky@catholiccommunity.org](mailto:knovicky@catholiccommunity.org), 216.696.6525, Ext. 1680, for more information about Fund A Dream.



To donate, visit [catholiccommunity.org/fund-a-dream](http://catholiccommunity.org/fund-a-dream).

Applications for Fund A Dream scholarships for the 2025-2026 school year will be accepted starting in January. Contact your child’s school.

donor match with a specific school. However, if that is not possible, the donor is paired with a student at another school. Some donors prefer to remain anonymous while others develop a relationship with the student(s) they sponsor.

Mary Jo Boehnlein, Elijah’s sponsor, said she received a Catholic education from elementary school through college. “I benefited from quality instruction not only academically, but most importantly, I was provided a foundation and ongoing knowledge of our faith. My Catholic education has been the backbone of my life. I am forever grateful for being afforded this opportunity,” Mary Jo said.

“I support the Fund A Dream program because I hope a student will receive a good academic and spiritual education. I also hope the funding will assist Elijah’s family in meeting the financial concerns of providing a quality, faith-based education,” she added.

“We are blessed. We would love to thank Mary Jo for this opportunity. We are so grateful,” Brooke said. †