



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

St. Angela Merici's Ambassadors educate parishioners on ASF benefits

On a recent Sunday morning, Connor Chambers spoke to fellow parishioners about the Angel Scholarship Fund during a Mass in St. Angela Merici Church. He is one of St. Angela's Ambassadors, a volunteer group that helps educate parishioners about the benefits of ASF.

The Chambers family has a long history with the parish. Connor is a St. Angela Merici School alumnus, his wife Bridgid is the gym teacher and their children attend St. Angela. As an Ambassador, Connor is helping to ensure that tuition remains within reach for families wanting to send their children to the school.



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Donate to the Angel Scholarship Fund by April 15 to be eligible for a 2025 tax credit. Scan the QR code to donate.

Visit catholiccommunity.org/angel for more information.



ASF contributions designated for St. Angela Merici School provide tuition assistance for its students, said Lisa Whelan (pictured above), the head of schools and Lower School principal. Donors receive a dollar-for-dollar Ohio income tax credit of up to \$750 — or \$1,500 for married couples filing jointly — against their state tax liability. ASF contributions can be directed to a specific school or to the area of greatest need, which will support applicants from across the diocese.

Through ASF, the state allows taxpayers to “spend” some of the state income taxes they pay to provide tuition assistance for students being educated in Catholic schools. Lisa and members of the Ambassadors call ASF “a win-win-win for taxpayer donors, scholarship recipients and the

Diocese of Cleveland.”

Linda Corcoran, another St. Angela Ambassador, said the group's work is reaping tangible benefits.

“In the 2023-2024 school year, \$62,000 was raised and awarded for 40 students at Angel Scholarships. In the 2024-2025 school year, the amount increased to \$122,000 which turned into 89 scholarships,” she said. The growth continued this school year, with \$158,000 raised and 130 scholarships awarded. The Ambassadors set a goal of raising \$200,000 for the 2026-2027 school year, and as of Feb. 15, \$137,000 has been raised, Linda said. Taxpayers can contribute through April 15, the deadline to file 2025 Ohio income tax.

Lisa is a longtime parishioner, a St. Angela Merici School alumna and her

children attended the school. Most of her education career has been at St. Angela as a teacher and, for the past nine years, as an administrator.

Lisa and Linda said there is a strong sense of community and pride at the parish, which marked its 100th anniversary in 2023. It serves families in Fairview Park and several other nearby cities. The school has 394 students in grades K-8 and another 60 in the preschool program.

The Ambassadors began with a core group of four: Lisa, Linda, Sue File and Jen Fitzpatrick. They gathered to strategize how to encourage participation in the ASF program, Lisa explained. The number of Ambassadors has grown to about 10. They also join calls with other diocesan schools to stay up to date on the program.

“We started slowly,” Lisa said, with volunteers posted at the church doors after Sunday Masses. They answered parishioners' questions and offered more information. As the program grew, they offered speakers at targeted Masses and curriculum nights in order to reach more school families. Next, they branched out into social media and brainstormed with families that participated in ASF and ASF recipients. There also is a page on the school website that guides families through the ASF process.

“Things really started to click, and we had a big jump in participation last year,” Lisa said. She and Father Rich Samide, parish administrator, are optimistic the Ambassadors' work will continue to benefit the school.

“Anything we can do to put a Catholic education within the reach of our parishioners is a worthy cause,” Father Rich said. “So many great people in this parish see the need and are willing to fill it with scholarships. It's paying off in dividends.” †