Dear Friends of Nativity,

It is with great pride and excitement that we present to you our Spring Newsletter with special emphasis on our Graduates. In this edition, you will find so many stimulating and inspiring stories highlighting our Nativity Academy Graduates as they overcome obstacles, receive accolades and achieve high levels of success.

As we conclude the celebration of fifteen years since our founding, we are grateful for so many things – students entrusted to our charge, parents who are fully involved in their student’s lives, over 100 sponsors who engage and support their students’ growth, over 200 active volunteers who give of their time and talent, 39 Board/Associate Board members who devote countless hours to guide the school with thoughtful decisions, 20 Faculty/Staff who inspire our students to be their best selves, and 3,500 donors who give selflessly to support this mission. Collectively they all make Nativity Academy flourish. We do this with the enduring support of each and every one of you!

I am often reminded that in the early years even the most ardent supporters felt there was no way this unique educational model could survive. Collectively we beat the odds, just like our students do each day, and the Academy is thriving as it moves to its next fifteen years.

I hope you enjoy learning of the exciting accomplishments our students are encountering in so many arenas. The Nativity Academy family is truly proud and hope you, our Nativity family, feel the same.

Blessings to all,

Carol A. Nord
Executive Director

Faculty Spotlight
Karen Woo

Nativity Academy is very fortunate to have Karen Woo whose talent in teaching ranges from Religion to Social Studies, Geography, World History and American History. During her 19 year teaching career in Archdiocese of Louisville schools, she has shared her talents at St. Rose, Holy Family, Mt. Carmel, St. Nicholas and St. Martha. Her strong educational background includes a BA and MAT in Secondary Education with a major in Psychology and a minor in Sociology from the University of Louisville.

“I met Carol Nord, current Executive Director of Nativity Academy when she hired me for a position at Mt. Carmel in 2003, and I also worked for her at St. Nicholas. After we both left St. Nicholas, I would occasionally see her out and about, and she would never fail to tell me about Nativity Academy. She is a true crusader for the Academy. I chose to apply for a job at Nativity Academy in 2016 because I believed in the mission of the Academy. I want to share my talent as a teacher with students who are often underserved. I believe that all students can learn. It’s my job to get these students to believe in themselves. With that being said, this is the hardest job I’ve ever had. For me, it is a calling that I’ve chosen to answer.”

-Karen Woo

We encourage all of our donors to visit Nativity Academy and see our faculty in action. Just give Carol Nord or Chip Keeling, Advancement Director, a call to set-up a time.
What better way to celebrate the first day of National Catholic Sisters Week and International Women’s Day than by blessing Paula’s Pantry, named for our beloved Sister Paula Kleine-Kracht.

Student leaders from Sacred Heart Model School (SHMS) and Nativity Academy gathered today to bless the completed pantry with school leaders, Sister Paula and Fr. Jeff Shooner, Pastor of St. Boniface. In speaking of the students’ decision to build the pantry and name it after her, Sister Paula stated, “the very reason we wanted to start Nativity and why SHMS exists was to show our concern for others, to bring our gifts to help people and to help them help themselves. This is the biggest honor I have ever had.” Before Father Jeff blessed the pantry, he reminded the students that their efforts to “feed the hungry are a reflection of God’s presence in this world.”

The Pantry will eventually be placed outside where any who need assistance will receive it, and all who can donate to the cause are able. Stay tuned for the next step in this amazing servant leadership experience.

Lisa Brents (pictured above third from right) Nativity Academy Director of Student Services & Community Engagement, and her Ignite Louisville team members, who delivered over $90,000 in value to the House of Hope and over 600 hours of service. They raised $8,400 from multiple fundraisers and applied for, and received, a $5,000 grant from the Gheens Foundation. Congrats to Lisa and her team for the important work they did for this very worthy nonprofit.

The 2019 Nativity Academy Auction recently completed was a tremendous success thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Cathy and David Durik, pictured left, this year’s Chairs of the event, provided outstanding leadership and commitment to bring this about.

Cathy & Dave, working along with a very talented group of individuals including Suzanne Glaser, Laura Pisacrita, Therese Reid & Jenny Reid (Decor / Theme), Sarah Ball (Silent Auction), Erin Lamon (Check In / Check Out), Pat Robison ($10,000 Raffle), Nativity Academy Associate Board members (Wheel of Chance & Spirit Wall) and Susan Johnson, Richard Rink, & Stephanie Duvall (Food & Beverage) made this year’s Nativity Academy Auction the best yet!

To everyone who supported the 2019 Nativity Academy Auction, THANK YOU!

Charity Navigator recently gave Nativity Academy a four-star rating, the highest rating a non-profit can achieve.
Special Edition – Graduate Support

97% of Nativity students graduate high school
82% of Nativity students go on to post-secondary education

Mayor’s Outstanding Students 2019

This year 49 high school seniors were recognized by Louisville Mayor Fischer, and two are graduates of Nativity Academy. Each student is nominated by their school principal or high school senior counselor. Students who are selected not only demonstrate outstanding academic accomplishments, but also represent those who have developed strong character through community service, medical or family challenges or those who have overcome language, immigration or physical obstacles in pursuit of excellence in education and in their community.

Ithzi Gonzalez - Hanover

Congratulations to Ithzi Gonzalez 2019 Nativity Academy graduate who has earned the Benjamin Templeton Scholarship to Hanover College! Hanover representatives surprised Ithzi with this full scholarship for all four years.

The Templeton Scholarship honors students with outstanding academic records who have worked to build strong high school communities by bridging gaps among economically, socially and racially diverse groups. Designed to identify and reward students who have made significant leadership and cultural contributions to their high school communities, this scholarship hopes to give those students the means to make a significant contribution within the Hanover community.

We are ecstatic for Ithzi as we have watched her grow and thrive at Assumption High School. We know that she will continue her integrity, excellence, compassion, and faith after graduation and we cannot wait to see the things she will do with her life!

Orion Rushin

Meet Orion Rushin, a Nativity Academy graduate, one of the Scholars Of Kentucky and a recipient of multiple scholarships from the Community Foundation of Louisville. Orion describes her goals and motivation below. Congratulations Orion! The Nativity Academy family is very proud of you.

“My goals include becoming a pediatrician and one day opening my private practice. I want to become a holistic doctor. I do not want my work to begin and end in the four corners of the office. I want to not only prescribe medicine to treat the symptoms, but provide the help to cure the sickness. By majoring in public health, this gives me the opportunity to explore all of the health issues that occur outside the office that contribute to the manifestation of sickness and disease. My family is my main motivation. They really support me and help me to push forward. Being the first doctor in my family means so much to me and it means a lot to them.”

Orion Rushin
DeSales High School

Orion has a wonderful talent for creative writing and art, and his poetry was included in a publication recognizing young writers. He is very active in his community, working at New Roots and the Youth Violence Prevention Research Center. He is also a member of the Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods’ Youth Implementation Team. Earlier this year, Nigel was honored to meet President Barack Obama. Nigel has overcome several obstacles and personal losses during his time at DeSales. With his unrelenting optimism and effort, he has served as a valuable role model to others. Nigel plans to attend college and get an education that allows him to continue working as a social advocate to better his community. Nigel is deeply committed to caring for the needs of others and using his energy, bright spirit, and perseverance to making great things happen.

Alexis Cammack
Presentation Academy

Alexis is a strong spokeswoman for her classmates, her school, and her community. Over the past few years, she has learned to use her voice to empower those around her and to unite communities, both in the school and in the greater Louisville area. Alexis is a member of National Honor Society, recipient of the Sophia Award (for earning A Honors each semester of high school), and recipient of the Bobbie Householder Scholarship. Additionally, she has published a book of poetry about the minority experience in our society. Alexis is the senior class president, a Recruitment Ambassador, WE Day Vice President, founder of the Diversity Club, and a Prezette. She is also involved in her church, serving as a Sunday school teacher and youth choir assistant director. Alexis earned a Porter Scholarship to U of L and would like to change the world through social justice activism.
Congratulations to this outstanding group of Nativity Academy students. The Kentucky United Nations Assembly (KUNA) is a 3-day experiential learning conference in which students participate directly in simulated international diplomacy. KUNA offers students the opportunity to experience the richness of cultures from around the world, develop empathy, and hone their critical thinking skills while engaging with a wide variety of perspectives and global issues.

Egypt and Mexico were the two countries selected for representation by Nativity Academy students. Nativity Academy had eighteen 7th & 8th grade students who participated in this recent event in Louisville. Pictured above is the Nativity Academy group, along with three University of Louisville students (forefront) who have worked with Nativity Academy students the entire year in preparing for the KUNA conference.

Congratulations at Trinity

Congratulations to Nativity Academy graduates Jamil Hardaway, pictured left to right, (2015) and Blake Ruffin (2017), student athletes at Trinity High School and members of the Trinity Shamrocks basketball team, and to Tyler Robertson, assistant coach and former faculty member at Nativity Academy. Congrats to Jamil, Blake and Coach Robertson for their contributions to this great accomplishment!

Nativity Academy 2019 Graduates Will Attend These High Schools and Academies:

- Assumption High School
- DeSales High School
- Holy Cross High School
- Mercy Academy
- Presentation Academy
- Sacred Heart Academy
- St. Xavier High School
- Ballard High School
- Butler High School
- Central High School

Graduate Support Program College Visits

Ten Nativity Academy graduates, now enrolled at Assumption, St. Francis, Western, St. Xavier, and Trinity high schools and Presentation Academy used their time over Spring Break to make college visits to Fisk University and Lipscomb University in Nashville, as well as the University of Cincinnati and Wright State University.

Nativity Academy’s Graduate Support Program is unique and not found in other middle schools in Louisville. It includes college visits, scholarship & financial aid assistance, academic tutoring, ACT prep classes, and most importantly, a support system that follows all Nativity Academy alumni in their post-secondary education endeavors. Thank you to the many Graduate Support Program volunteers who make a difference every day in the lives of Nativity Academy students.

Jer’Niya, 7th grader, received an Outstanding International Stage Performance award for her work with the Nativity Academy team representing Mexico.

Anyah, 8th grader, was recognized as an Outstanding Ambassador, for her individual work and contributions at the conference.

Congratulations to this outstanding group of Nativity Academy students.
Nativity Academy students had a special program to celebrate the many achievements of Black Americans during Black History Month in February.

The program included a video presentation, music by the students, a performance by the drama class students and concluded with a performance by the Nativity Academy students involved with the River City Drum Corps. It was a meaningful presentation, and the students did a great job of celebrating this very important event.

Thanks to the Nativity Academy faculty and our Extended Enrichment Program instructors for the leadership they provided to make this event a success.

Congressman Yarmuth meets the Nativity students to welcome them and acquaint them with the work of the federal government.

Nativity Academy 8th-grade students enjoyed the annual field trip in May to Washington D.C. Included in the 3-day trip were non-stop educational tours including the U.S. Capitol Building, a meeting with Congressman John Yarmuth, the Smithsonian Museum of African American History, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial and the National Mall.

We were very fortunate to have a group of high school juniors and seniors from Saint Thomas More School in Champaign, IL, with us. They constructed a closet and helped load the Premier and Silent Auction items for the Nativity Academy Auction event.

Thanks to Audrey Vandercar, Biology teacher at Saint Thomas More, for bringing her students to help us out as part of their Alternative Spring Break activity.

Thanks to Arts for Kosair Kids®, Louisville Ballet and Louisville Youth Choir provide weekly classes as part of the Nativity Academy Extended Enrichment Program (EEP).

Please take time to read the great blog post from Molly Kays, #LBSOutreach Coordinator.

Thank you to Fund for the Arts®/Arts for Kosair Kids® for making this exceptional cultural activity available for Nativity Students, and to Molly for a very insightful description of the impact of this program.

Congressman Yarmuth meets the Nativity students to welcome them and acquaint them with the work of the federal government.
Golf scramble sponsorship!
A wonderful way to promote your company and help Nativity Academy students.

Registration and Sponsorship now open online at
nativitylouisville.org/golf-scramble/

For information call: Jeri Johnson at 502-855-3315