THE HIVE

ALUMNI AND FAMILIES OF SAINT AMBROSE CATHOLIC SCHOOL



ARTS ISSUE: 'SHINE YOUR LIGHT'
SUMMER 2026





A FOND FAREWELL

It is with joy that I introduce this edition of The Hive to you—it will be my last as the leader of Saint Ambrose Catholic School. I recently accepted a new position with the Catholic Schools Center of Excellence, where I hope to continue to positively impact students in Catholic schools across Minnesota.

Saint Ambrose is a special place, and I have had the privilege of being in leadership here since the school's inception in 2000. It has been a gift to know every student who has attended here, to partner with families for a quarter of a century, and to witness God's mysterious and transcendent blessings in countless ways.

The strong identity of Saint Ambrose school is due to the good work of so many amazing staff members, including Mrs. Seidenkranz, who is finishing her time here as well. It is also the result of students like you who said "yes" to our routines, expectations, and sometimes wild ideas, contributing to a culture of joyful learning, service, and discipleship.

The next leader will be set up for success with an incredible team of teachers, committed families, and students who are engaged in learning and enthusiastic about their school community. I hope you can hearken back to a happy memory of your time here and know that Saint Ambrose is here for you. We want to know what you are doing and how God is working through you for the good. Please email Mrs. Woolsey at **kwoolsey@saintambroseschool.org** or use the QR code to reach out!

Know of my deep gratitude for the part you have all played as I lived my vocation at Saint Ambrose. My "yes" 26 years ago has led me to learn, to grow closer to God, and to meet wonderful people who have inspired me to be the educator I am today.

God bless you,
Betsy Osterhaus Hand
Principal

On these pages: Betsy Osterhaus Hand and Janet Seidenkranz each served Saint Ambrose Catholic School for 20 years or more. Photos courtesy of Hilda Birdie Photography. On the cover: Students perform a skit at the all-school assembly.

RECONNECT WITH US

Update contact info, share news, and see past issues at **school.saintambrosecatholic.org/alumni.**

HAPPY RETIREMENT!

Janet Seidenkranz is retiring after 20 incredible years of service. Janet has truly been the heart of our school, keeping everything running smoothly while also being a warm, welcoming, and caring presence for students, families, and staff.

During her time at Saint Ambrose, she has given countless band-aids, ice packs, lost lunch boxes, and hugs. Janet planned galas, led tours for prospective families, and cheerfully promoted our school and parish community with love.

We at Saint Ambrose are so happy that Janet will enjoy well-earned rest, travel, and time with her family in her retirement—and we will miss her!



Alumni remember our longtime staff members ...



MRS. SEIDENKRANZ
The absolute GOAT—always greeted me whenever she saw me, showed nothing but kindness, got me Canes, gave me the opportunity to do announcements ... I will miss you!

Made every person she talked to feel special in some way.

Congratulations on retirement! I will always remember your kindness. Wishing you well always!

Your love for every single person in the building amazes me! Every person that you meet or see feels seen by you! You are seriously a superhero with everything you do for the school! Happy retirement! Thank you!

Mrs. Seidenkranz embodies the virtue of prudence! She always seems to know what is needed at the right time. I appreciate her warmth, smile, and deep knowledge of everything and anything going on at Saint Ambrose.

MRS. HAND
You fostered the best learning environment where I genuinely always loved going to school. Thank you so much for your kindness and hard work!

Super kind to me all of my years; always made sure everyone was comfortable.

She always had a smile on her face and made sure to say hello.

To this day, Mrs. Hand is the best principal I've ever had. I have passed on her oft-given advice many times: "If you're struggling to put it in an email, pick up the phone." Her wise words have saved me and my colleagues many times! I admire her hardworking, committed, and honest approach. I truly respect Mrs. Hand and feel grateful that I got to work for her!



PERFORMANCE WITH PURPOSE

Arts and athletics helped alumna cultivate confidence

When Allison Stauffacher's family moved to Minnesota in 2006, she was entering fourth grade at a new school and projecting confidence she didn't always feel. She attended Saint Ambrose Catholic School through eighth grade, finding a supportive community and a passion to perform in activities including choir, cheerleading, and track and field. By the time she graduated eighth grade in 2011, she was hooked on athletics and the arts—participating in cheerleading, gymnastics, musical theater, and choir at Woodbury High and the teen choir at Saint Ambrose Catholic Church. She also traveled and performed with Partners in Praise, an all-girls choir from across the Twin Cities that toured internationally, including singing at the Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and attending an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican.

Allison attended University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire after high school, singing in the college choir and exploring new interests, including ultimate frisbee and rock climbing. Today, she works in customer support and sales for Décor Lighting Sales while coaching competitive gymnastics through South Washington County Schools Community Education, teaching dance and singing at Aspire Music Academy, and serving as a cantor for Saint Ambrose in her free time.

Enjoy more from Allison in her own words:

"I have always been naturally shy and introverted, which may be why I was drawn to performance-based activities. Performing gave me an opportunity to step outside myself—whether singing, acting, or cheering, I could focus on the performance rather than my nerves or self-doubt."

"What began as 'borrowed' confidence gradually became genuine confidence. The more I challenged myself to perform in front of others,





the more I learned to trust my abilities and embrace opportunities that pushed me beyond my comfort zone."

"Before moving to Minnesota, I had been involved in dance, and when Saint Ambrose offered cheerleading tryouts in fifth grade, it felt like the perfect way to keep performing and stay connected to a team. Having friends who were trying out made the decision much easier. Somewhere in that transition, I realized I had found my sport—the one that felt like home. Cheer became my world. It shaped my friendships and the way I grew."

"These experiences gave me confidence, lasting friendships, and a strong sense of belonging. They opened doors to opportunities I may not have otherwise experienced, including music ministry, leadership roles, and international travel. Many of the relationships I built remain important to me today, and the lessons I learned—stepping outside my comfort zone, trusting myself, and embracing new challenges—continue to shape who I am."

"Music, performance, and community feed my soul—bringing me joy, strengthening my faith, and connecting me to something larger than myself. One of the most important lessons I learned is the value of being part of a team. I find more joy in collective success than individual achievement. It is incredibly rewarding to work toward a shared goal and celebrate accomplishments together."

"At Aspire, I perform with the adult show choir, choreograph, assist with productions, and help behind the scenes with projects such as set-building and design. I was fortunate to have mentors, teachers, and coaches who invested in me throughout my childhood and young adulthood, and Aspire gives me the opportunity to pay that forward. There is nothing quite like watching a student discover confidence, develop a new skill, or accomplish something they once thought was impossible. Being part of that journey is incredibly rewarding."

"Serving as a cantor allows me to combine my love of music with my desire to serve the Church and more fully participate in worship. A cantor's role is much more than simply singing. We help to lead the congregation in prayer through music and create an atmosphere that encourages participation and reflection. Music has a unique ability to unite people and deepen the shared experience of worship in a way that words alone often cannot."

"Personally, cantoring provides a deep sense of purpose and connection. It strengthens my faith, allows me to use my gifts in service to others, and helps me to give back to a community that has played an important role in my life."

"Looking back on my time at Saint Ambrose Catholic School, I felt supported, challenged, and encouraged to try new things. Many of the opportunities I pursued later in life were built on foundations established during those years. I am grateful not only for the education, but also for the teachers, mentors, and friendships that helped shape who I am today."



Above, Allison Stauffacher performs with Aspire Music Academy, where she also teaches dance and singing. Photo courtesy of Michael Hamerlind Photography. On the facing page, Allison poses with her cheer team from Saint Ambrose Catholic School and enjoys a quiet moment today.

THE ARTS INSPIRE

Saint Ambrose teachers share the fruits of music and theater education



Mrs. Bertsch introduced me to improvisation in jazz band, and that turned out to be the biggest tool in my kit on stage with the Paul Esch Band. There's something special about finding a musical outlet, and I have Mrs. Bertsch to thank for that. I was very fortunate to have such a phenomenal saxophonist as my first band teacher!

MARK LEINBERGER, CLASS OF 2013

JOSIE BERTSCH, GRADES 5-8 BAND

My journey with music began in the fourth grade when my best friend encouraged me to join band. I was quite shy then and hesitant to participate, but I'm so grateful she persuaded me. Without her encouragement, I might never have discovered my passion. Music evolved into a powerful outlet for my emotions and feelings. It has the ability to influence moods even more profoundly than words and serves as a universal language, transcending cultural differences and enabling us to connect through shared experiences of joy, grief, celebration, comfort, and excitement.

I dedicated myself to achieving first chair positions in high school all-state bands and intercollegiate bands, then pursued graduate studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. More significant than these accomplishments are the incredible teachers, influential mentors, wonderful friends, and talented colleagues I met along the way. Many of these connections remain strong today.

Students who learn the skills of playing an instrument develop hand/eye coordination, memory, and the ability to read music notation—and trigger the visual, auditory, and motor skill pathways in the brain all at once, which increases cognitive function at any age. Playing in band teaches kids perseverance, patience, responsibility, time-management, teamwork, discipline, empathy, and so many more wonderful things!

Students, like all human beings, want to feel like they belong and that their presence matters. They also want to be a part of something they can feel proud of. I try to create an environment where students feel important and want to work together to make great music, make great friends, laugh, and be good people.

My passion for music and creativity has deepened my empathy, sharpened my emotional awareness, and made me more accepting of other people. While I haven't met anyone who regrets being in band, I frequently hear adults express regret over not learning an instrument or not continuing their participation in band.

I have been so blessed working with wonderful students over the years. It has brought me so much joy to see many of them continue to play in band and keep music in their hearts, souls, and lives. I know all of my students' appreciation for music is much greater having been in band. I'm so proud of all of them!

Josie Bertsch has taught band for grades 5-8 at Saint Ambrose Catholic School since 2007. Her career in band instruction spans 30 years.

SEAN JONES, GRADE 4

The first play I ever acted in was "Pirates of Penzance" when I was 12 years old. I loved the combination of artistry and teamwork. From there, I acted in other theater productions, helped write and perform plays for the Minnesota Children's Museum, and became a theater teacher at the Minnesota Institute for Talented Youth. I majored in theater with an emphasis in children's theater at Hamline University and earned my elementary education license as well. Teaching theater to children was foundational to becoming a classroom teacher.

The first thing students gain from theater is self-confidence. It is such a risk to create art in front of an audience! Secondly, theater is a collaborative art form. I enjoy watching our students bond other over creative ideas and a shared sense of purpose. Finally, students learn the creative process that is present in all walks of life. Exploring ideas, creating, evaluating, improving, and coming up with a finished product is not unlike what scientists and engineers do, and I hope students take what they've learned into whatever they do in the future.

Theater is experiential, and I like to make our curriculum experiential as well. While studying westward expansion, I turn student desks into covered wagons with hoops and canvas covers that the students sit in as we explore the unit. Students pretend they are on the Oregon Trail. It really brings this unit to life!

When we need a brain break in the classroom, I love to play quick theater games. They are also great for morning meetings, helping students to take risks with each other,



Above: Sean Jones introduces a skit during Catholic Schools Week. Facing page: Josie Bertsch conducts a band performance for students, staff, and parents. Photo courtesy of Hilda Birdie Photography.

express themselves creatively, and build a sense of community in the classroom.

When I taught fifth grade, our team started what has become a Saint Ambrose tradition—performing "A Charlie Brown Christmas" each December. It has become a rite of passage that students look forward to. I have had many former students tell me that the Charlie Brown play was their first experience in theater, and it encouraged them to pursue it in high school and beyond.

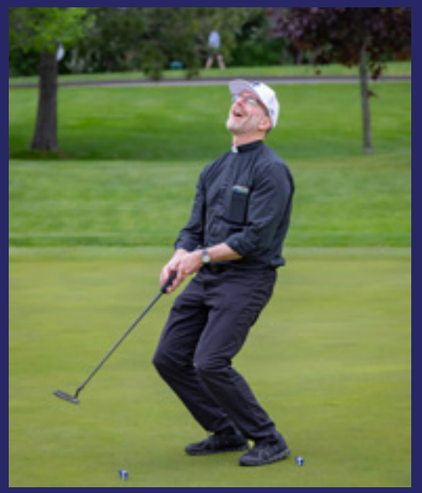
Sean Jones has taught at Saint Ambrose for 20 years, teaching fifth grade for eight years before switching to fourth. He also writes and directs skits and productions as part of all-school assemblies.

Join Us Next Spring for the Saint Ambrose Annual Golf Tournament!

Look for information about next year's event and how you can get involved in future editions of The Hive.



Photos courtesy of Hilda Birdie Photography



Saint Ambrose
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

4125 Woodbury Drive | Woodbury, MN 55129

school.saintambrosecatholic.org

651-768-3000

School Hours: 9:20 am-3:50 pm
Office Hours: 8:40 am-4:20 pm

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Twin Cities MN
Permit No. 5044

The Hive newsletter, content, and photos are created by Saint Ambrose Catholic Community and Archangel Stomp, LLC, unless otherwise noted.

© Saint Ambrose Catholic Community, 2026



See You at FALLFEST!

Hey, alumni: Stop by the Saint Ambrose Catholic School Alumni Tent at FALLFEST 2026! This year's event is September 25-26, with food, fellowship, and fun for everyone. **See you there!**

FALL FEST at Saint Ambrose