



THE AIM HIGHER FOUNDATION

2022-2023 Annual Report



A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CHAIR

Dear Friends,

We want to express our gratitude as we share the Aim Higher Foundation's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2022-23. Our continued momentum this past year was exemplified by outstanding acts of generosity and a growing number of supporters to our mission. As a result, and with your help, we provided 2,152 children with scholarships to attend a Catholic school—our most ever in our ongoing effort to make Catholic schools accessible to all children!

This past year also marks a notable expansion of our activities and reach. We launched several new initiatives, including the Check Delivery Marathon, Patrons Circle, and Building the Movement events. We built on our tried-and-true Cocktails for a Cause, Corporate Partners gathering, and the record-breaking Night of Light Celebration. Furthermore, we added new, accomplished members to our team, enhancing our ability to ensure we create an enduring impact on the lives of the children we serve. Importantly, we did all this with a minimal increase to our administrative expense ratio and an increased impact on the children and schools we serve.

As we celebrate our recent successes and look to the future, you can be assured that our commitment to our “one thing”—providing need-based scholarships to families in Catholic schools serving K-8—remains as focused as ever. So many families continue to seek the benefits of a Catholic education for their children, yet don't have the means to pay for tuition. We won't rest until we help every one of them.

Catholic schools are powerful catalysts, unlocking the potential within every child they serve, and we know they spark multiplying transformative benefits for generations to come. That is, our scholarships are not just about covering tuition; they're about uncovering promise.

At the Aim Higher Foundation, we can imagine a world where children, beneficiaries of the highest quality education, grow into adults who strengthen and transform the world around them. Similar to how the Aim Higher Foundation's focus has grounded and strengthened our efforts, Catholic schools help ground the children they serve, giving them deep roots into understanding who they're called to be and how they can reach their fullest potential. We hope this annual report bears witness to that potential and to our immense joy and commitment to serving the children, families, and schools impacted by our scholarships. The numbers, for us, go beyond statistics—they are a testament to our positive impact on individual lives. With your unwavering support, we forge ahead. Thanks to you, our donors and friends, we continue onward to help even more children.

In service,

Ricky Austin
President

Don Mulligan
Chair of the Board





WHO WE ARE

The Aim Higher Foundation seeks to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, can access the life-changing benefits of a Catholic education.

WHAT WE DO

The Aim Higher Foundation provides \$1,000 scholarships to students from families with a demonstrated financial need who seek a K-8 Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. This scholarship continues each year, until the student reaches high school.



BEYOND THE BOOKS

Why a Catholic Education Matters

Interest in Catholic schools remains strong across the Twin Cities metro area. Families continue to seek their academically rigorous, faith-filled curricula uniquely designed for individual success. It is no secret that the power of a Catholic education goes beyond the pages of a textbook, helping to develop each student's God-given gifts. This emphasis on cultivating well-rounded individuals is one of the many facets that sets Catholic school graduates up for lifelong achievement.

Research shows that Catholic school students are more prepared for high school and college, with 99% graduating from high school in four years¹. Additionally, a minority child is 42% percent more likely to graduate from high school and 2.5 times more likely to graduate from college if he or she attends a Catholic school².

Despite the proven benefits of Catholic education, the cost of tuition remains a significant barrier for many families. In today's world, with increasing daily expenses, numerous families struggle to afford the quality education they desire for their children. It is crucial, now more than ever, to acknowledge the financial difficulties faced by these families and provide the necessary assistance to ensure every child can access the education they deserve. Breaking down the financial barrier between families and quality education is the reason the Aim Higher Foundation exists.

It is the goal of the Aim Higher Foundation to ensure that all children can access the life-changing benefits of a Catholic school. Two-thirds of the families that receive aid from the Aim Higher Foundation say they would not be able to attend a Catholic school without the support of this \$1,000 scholarship. Fortunately, once awarded, the Aim Higher Scholarship follows students from kindergarten through 8th grade. Students can rely on the Aim Higher Foundation's support until they begin high school, and thus enjoy the many tools Catholic schools give students to **aim higher**.

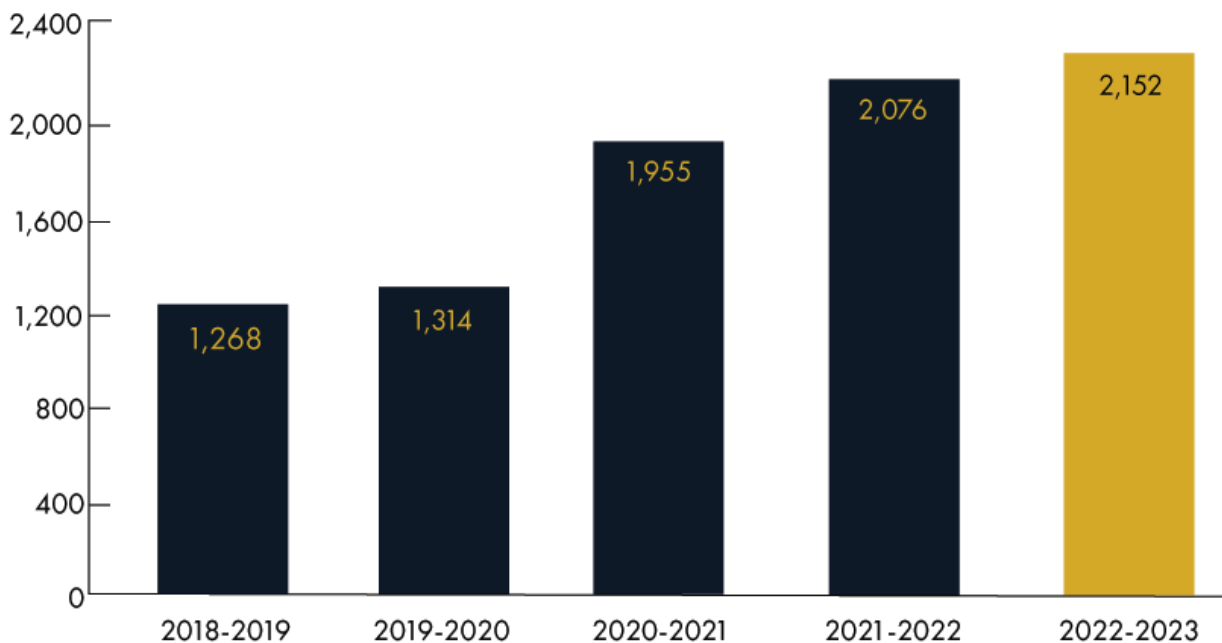
¹OMCE Catholic Schools Annual Report 2022-23

²Neal, Derek. "The Effects of Catholic Secondary Schooling on Educational Achievement." Journal of Labor Economics.

SERVING MORE STUDENTS

In the 2022-23 school year, the Aim Higher Foundation awarded 2,152 need-based scholarships to students across every Catholic school serving grades K-8 in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis—a **70% increase over the past five years!**

The Foundation's increasing impact is made possible through the continued support of a growing number of generous donors and friends.





OWEN'S STORY

The Inspiring Upward Trajectory of an Aim Higher Scholar

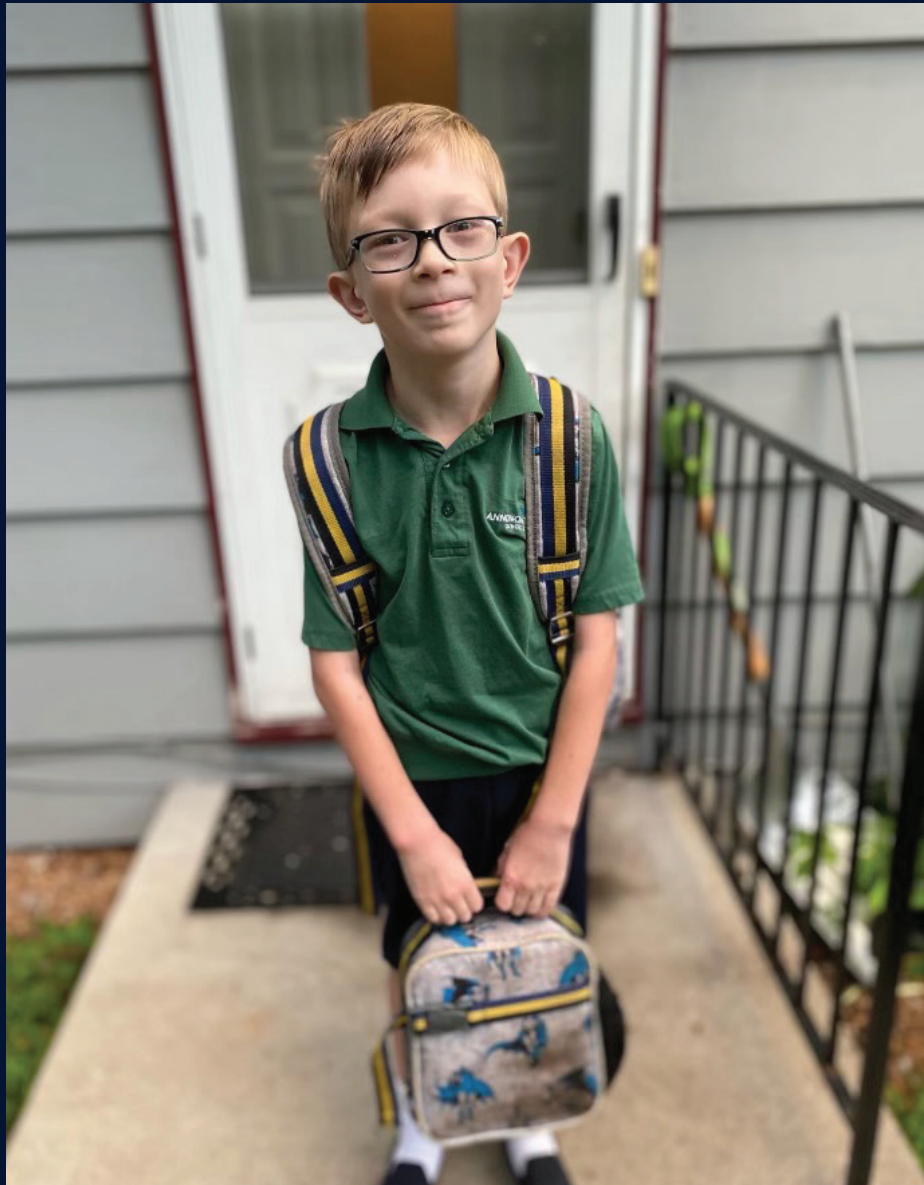
Darcie Mullinax of Annunciation Catholic School smiles as she reflects on her third-grade student, Owen. “Owen is like a sponge for knowledge, always looking for information . . . eagerly absorbing everything you give him,” she says.

Another Annunciation teacher, Anne Stickney, concurs: “Owen is just one of those kids everybody likes.”

Three years ago, Owen faced challenges that could have severely sidetracked his academic journey. The pandemic forced him into online kindergarten, and upon returning to Annunciation for first grade, he encountered obstacles in his emotional, behavioral, and academic growth. Owen’s mother explains, “After the shutdown, Owen was anxious and had trouble focusing in class, which he blamed on himself.” His parents appreciated Annunciation’s immediate intervention while they went through the extensive testing process. Thanks to the small class sizes and expert educators at Annunciation, Owen did not have to wait for an official learning plan to receive the services he needed—a departure from the typical months-long stress of awaiting formal diagnoses.

“His teacher stepped in immediately and worked with him to find strategies to understand and manage his feelings, and to help him feel successful in class,” says Owen’s mother. “She saw his talents and gifts, and helped him with tools to manage his struggles, well before we had a formal learning plan.” Owen’s first grade teacher, Beth Sable, partnered with his family and utilized the school’s sensory room to give Owen what he needed. “Sometimes what’s going on in a little six-year-old’s body is more important than test scores,” she says.

Owen’s parents credit the Aim Higher Foundation for his access to Annunciation School. “[His] Aim Higher Scholarship meant he was in a school that could meet his needs and value him fully, even in challenging circumstances,” they say. “When we chose his school, we were impressed with the sense of community and caring, but we couldn’t have known how critical that would be in his story.” Because the Aim Higher Foundation opened the door, Owen thrived, and today, his teacher insists, “He lights up the room. He’s just a great kid.”





ENDURING IMPACT

Illuminated through an Aim Higher Graduate

Andrea Urzua’s remarkable journey stands as a testament to the transformative power of the Aim Higher Scholarship. At this year’s Night of Light Gala, Andrea shared, “You all, by supporting the Aim Higher Foundation, helped me.”

Andrea’s pivotal moment came in fourth grade when she and her parents, grappling with the physical and mental toll of persistent bullying at Andrea’s neighborhood school, found hope in the prospect of a Catholic education. Desperate for change, her parents turned to their parish community when they realized that Catholic school tuition was not possible for their hard-working immigrant family. That is when they discovered Aim Higher.

An Aim Higher Scholarship was a crucial lifeline that enabled Andrea to enroll at Shakopee Area Catholic School (SACS), which ultimately became the linchpin in reshaping her life. She acknowledges, “If I had not gone to SACS, I don’t think I would be the same person I am today.”

Reflecting on her time at SACS, Andrea emphasizes the profound impact her Catholic school had on her character formation. “[It] showed me friendships, it showed me faith, and it also taught me how to pray in English—something I really wanted to learn!” she says. The experience also resonates with her belief in the enduring impact of Catholic education: “My education journey hasn’t ended yet because Catholic schools teach you to be a lifelong learner.”

Andrea is now a junior at the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management, double majoring in accounting and finance, but her story is far from over. She is proud to report that she has signed a job offer at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as a full-time employee in 2025. Andrea’s success story—propelled by the Aim Higher Foundation’s support—exemplifies the transformative influence of this community’s generosity, and provides a beacon of hope and opportunity for even more students like her.

PASSION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION INSPIRES GIVING

Gix Ubel and Father John Ubel

Education was paramount in the family of Dr. Frank and Gix Ubel, as evidenced by lively dinner table discussions reviewing the school days of each of their four children. Catholic schools played a prominent role in those conversations, as the Ubels made the necessary sacrifices to provide a first-rate Catholic education for their four children from kindergarten through high school. Residing for more than 50 years in their Berkeley Avenue home in St. Paul, the Ubel family made their memories at Nativity of our Lord School, Visitation School, and Saint Thomas Academy.

For her part, Gix's belief in education and service inspired her to tutor neighborhood children in reading, utilizing the phonics method for more than 15 years. She also assisted an immigrant Hmong mother who settled with her large family in St. Paul in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam War. She believes strongly in the mission of the Aim Higher Foundation and is proud to support its efforts with an annual gift.

The youngest of the Ubel family, Fr. John Ubel has a deep passion for Catholic education, which has played a significant role in his ministry as a priest in the Archdiocese. In his personal philanthropy, he has found great joy in giving, and especially enjoys the Night of Light celebration each fall. Fr. Ubel was honored to serve on the Aim Higher board for six years.



GIX UBEL AND FR. JOHN UBEL IN 2019

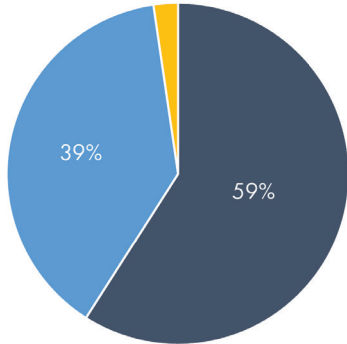
Dear A'm Higher,

I am so glad that I get to tell you thank you. My parents are not from this country, and they went to good Catholic schools back in our home country of Liberia. We all wanted to come to St. Raphael's. We kept hearing what a great school it was. But, we didn't have enough money to come here. Because of you, I can come to St. Raphael's. I love it here. Even though I'm new at this school, the other kids make me feel like I'm family. The school is really nice to my parents too, even though they're from another country. I want to go to college. I'm a little behind, because this school is a little ahead, but my teacher is helping me catch up. I will use your money to do my very best. Thank you! Faith S., -3rd Grade
St. Raphael Catholic School

FINANCIAL POSITION

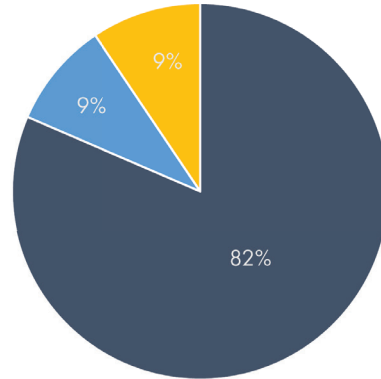
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2023

Total Income
\$3.2M



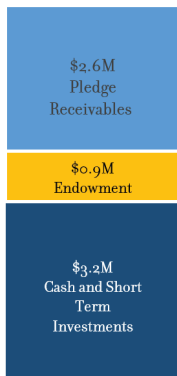
- Collection of Campaign Pledges
- Annual and Foundation Giving
- Other Income

Total Expenses
\$2.9M



- Scholarship Programs
- Fundraising Expenses
- Administrative Expenses

Total Assets
\$6.7M



Future Scholarships
\$9.7M



Footnote 1:

Reflects funds committed to scholars in grades K-8 in the current 2023-24 school year.

Footnote 2:

Reflects funds intended to be spent in future years to support those same scholars as they progress through 8th grade.

The results reported are non-GAAP. Aim Higher Foundation uses a modified cash basis of accounting to represent the cash received and paid during the year. Audited statements are available by emailing info@aimhigherfoundation.org.

THE SECRET TO AIMING HIGHER

Our One Thing

The Aim Higher Foundation does one thing. We provide \$1000 need-based scholarships directly to students to help them access one of the Catholic schools serving grades K-8 within the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Once awarded, this scholarship follows the student each year, through 8th grade, as long as the yearly financial aid application continues to show need. To meet the varied needs of the families we support, the Aim Higher Foundation delivers scholarships through five different programs, made possible by our donors and friends.

In a special way, we extend our gratitude to the supporters of:

The Aim Higher Foundation Scholarship: Supported by our primary fundraising initiatives, more than 1,500 students received this scholarship this past year.

Catholic Services Appeal Foundation (CSAF) / Aim Higher Scholarship: Funded by CSAF and administered by the Aim Higher Foundation, this scholarship supports 400 students each year.

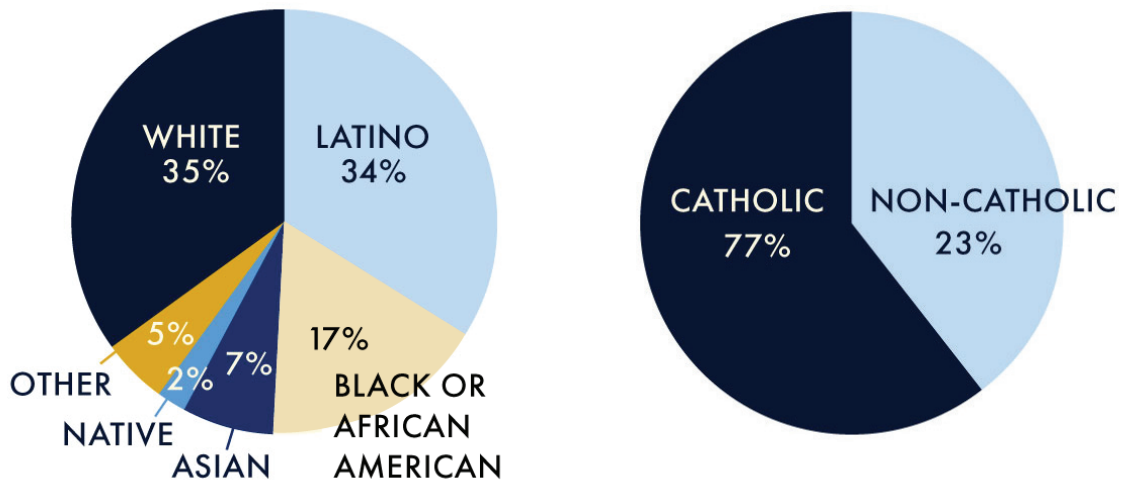
The Drexel Mission Schools Scholarship: In support of the Church's calling to serve the poor by strengthening Catholic schools designated as "Drexel Mission Schools," this fund provides an additional round of scholarships to students at those 10 schools.

The John M. Nasseff Scholarship: Founded by the family and friends of Mr. Nasseff, this scholarship honors Mr. Nasseff's distinguished lifetime of service and philanthropy by supporting 20 students.

The Reserve Fund Scholarship is provided to families experiencing sudden and unexpected financial hardships during the school year. This scholarship ensures students can remain enrolled in a Catholic school while their families deal with crises at hand.



WHO WE SERVE



\$34,711

IS THE AVERAGE INCOME OF
A NEW SCHOLAR FAMILY OF FOUR

91%

OF LAST YEAR'S SCHOLARS RETURNED
TO A CATHOLIC SCHOOL THIS YEAR!

60%

OF GRADUATING 8TH GRADE
AIM HIGHER SCHOLARS
ATTENDED A CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN 23-24



MEET OUR TEAM



RICKY AUSTIN

Ricky assumed the role of President of the Aim Higher Foundation in August 2022. Joining the foundation in 2017 as Director of Programs and Communications and later as Vice President of Advancement and Operations, Ricky has played a key role in expanding the organization's mission to transform children's lives through access to quality K-8 Catholic education.



CHRISTY EBERHARDT

As Operations Manager, Christy is responsible for the management of the foundation's systems and processes, as well as the integrity of finance, scholarships, and advancement capabilities. She coordinates the budgeting, annual forecasting, and internal controls of the financial operations, leads the foundation's alumni-tracking project, and directly supports the President in implementation of the strategic plan.



CLAIRE BUETHE

As Director of Advancement, Donor Engagement, Claire advances the Aim Higher Foundation mission by leading major-gifts and donor-focused fundraising initiatives. Claire works closely with the President, Patrons Circle, corporate partners, and key supporters and friends. She manages the Night of Light Gala and other community outreach events.



LAURA HESTER

As part-time Special Projects Coordinator, Laura orchestrates and oversees various special initiatives. Working closely with staff and committees, she enhances the efficiency and impact of the foundation's operations, ensuring seamless execution of key projects and contributing to the overall success of the organization.



CAMILLE KIOLBASA

As Director of Advancement, Fundraising Strategy, Camille supports the Aim Higher Foundation’s advancement efforts and guides marketing and communication. Partnering with key internal and external leadership, she identifies strategic fundraising opportunities and leads grant writing initiatives.



SELENA RODRIGUEZ

As Office Manager and Executive Assistant, Selena provides comprehensive support to the President, serves as Liaison to the Board of Directors, oversees office operations, and assists essential advancement and scholarship initiatives. Selena facilitates day-to-day operations for the team, external contractors, internal records, and calendars.



MIKE O’KEEFE

As Director of Scholarships Programs, Mike manages and operates the foundation’s five scholarship programs. Partnering with schools and families, he ensures accessibility to the foundation’s scholarship opportunities, often addressing language, cultural, and technology-access barriers.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Don L. Mulligan, chair 2022-2023
Mary E. Schaffner, chair 2024-2025
Jeff Cachat
Fr. Christopher Collins
Jacquelyn Daylor
Joseph P. Donnelly
Paul Herro
Barry Lieske
Margaret Requet
Aida Schaefer
Sarah Schumacher
Rev. John L. Ubel (*term completed December 2023*)

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Ricky Austin, ex officio

Joined 2024
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Julie Hurley

Former Directors

Kathy Dougherty
Yen Fasano
Peter Laird
John McMahon
Doug Milroy
Michael O'Connell
Philip J. Paquette
Christopher Policinski
Karen M. Rauenhorst
Mark Rauenhorst
Sam Salas

Committee Members

Angela Dimler, Development
Tom Margarit, Finance
Jane McDonald Black, Scholarships
Emily Howald Sefton, Development
Steve Sefton, Finance

Joined 2024
Daniel Alimo, Scholarships

OUR MOMENTUM CONTINUED

Through the 2023 Night of Light Celebration

On October 27, 2023, the Aim Higher Foundation held its 11th annual Night of Light Celebration.

Proceeds from this annual fundraising event directly support the Aim Higher Foundation's mission to provide tuition-assistance scholarships to deserving children across the Twin Cities.

This year's record-breaking event lifts the mission to new heights:

640 registered guests and more than \$850,000 raised in support of Aim Higher Scholars!

This monumental step forward would not have been possible without the support of our event sponsors.

Diamond Sponsors

Jane and Archie Black
Don and Diane Mulligan
Doug and Sandy Milroy
Anonymous

Gold Sponsors

Tom and Julie Hurley
Dan and Sarah Schumacher
Anonymous

Silver Sponsors

Reiling Family Foundation
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Saint Mary's University
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Student Choir Sponsor
NowMicro

Print Sponsors
Tradition Capital Bank and
Tradition Wealth Management

Post-Event Celebration Sponsor
Mary Schaffner and Bob Lee

Scholar Video Sponsor
Phoenix School Counseling

Thank you to our sponsors for making our 2023 event a success.
Please be sure to save the date for our 2024 Night of Light Celebration.



SAVE THE DATE!

2024 Night of Light Celebration
Saturday, October 12, 2024
Returning to The Depot in Minneapolis

The Aim Higher Foundation supports all 81 Catholic schools serving grades K-8 in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.



Aim Higher Foundation
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Saint Paul, MN 55114
info@aimhigherfoundation.org | 612-819-6711

SCAN THE QR CODE
AND DONATE
TO THE AIM HIGHER
FOUNDATION TODAY!

