



ST. MICHAEL HIGH SCHOOL A CHESTERTON ACADEMY

St. Michael Celebrates an Exceptional 2025-26 School Year!

Graduates Largest Class; Grateful for Best-Ever Gala; Provides Financial Update

PETOSKEY – July 20, 2026 – St. Michael High School (SMHS), the only Classical high school in Northern Michigan, today expressed gratitude to its families, benefactors, and to God for another exceptional school year.



“We’ve been immensely blessed this past academic year and we are grateful,” stated SMHS Headmaster Kevin Weed. “Through the combined effort of our students, families, faculty, staff, and Board – as well as our growing team of faithful volunteers and financial supporters – we continue to ***Build Something Beautiful*** at St. Michael High School! Thank you!”

Our Class of '26: A Case Study in Perseverance

Mr. Weed continued, “We bid farewell to our twelve seniors, comprising the school’s tenth and largest-ever graduating class. Led by Hillsdale-bound Valedictorian Sloane Hayes, our *Class of '26*, more than any other class, bridged a period of great transition for St. Michael. They pressed forward through innumerable distractions, inconveniences, and hardships on their long pathway to graduation. They helped move the school to its current location, for example, and will they ever forget their era of ‘laundry basket lockers,’ among other improvisations, as they vigorously pursued the ***True, Good, and Beautiful*** at St. Michael? They are a testament to perseverance and will be fondly remembered.”

The Graduation ceremony was held at Holy Childhood of Jesus Parish Hall (recently renamed ***Bishop Baraga Hall***) in Harbor Springs, attended by St. Michael families along with several dozen supporters and benefactors. The evening featured remarks from Commencement speaker Michael Dewan, a Catholic education activist who was instrumental to St. Michael’s founding. The evening was capped off by a wonderful, celebratory reception, elegantly and deliciously catered by ***Crow’s Nest*** of Harbor Springs.



The Fifth Annual Gala: A Truly Blessed Night, Celebrating Our Students & Our Mission

The St. Michael *Celebration Gala* was again held at Holy Childhood this past spring and, just as the year before, all prior fundraising records were trounced!

“We’re grateful and humbled by this unprecedented outpouring of support,” gushed Executive Director Larry Rudnicki. “Thanks be to God and, of course, thanks also to our many generous donors. Our students and mission were celebrated by well over two hundred enthusiastic guests, including many first-time attendees, and we raised more than \$350,000.”



“Among our many distinguished guests,” continued Mr. Rudnicki, “were five of our holy diocesan priests, including Father Scott Lawler who brought with him an entourage all the way from Lewiston! We’re so blessed to have had everyone there with us.”

“Our students didn’t disappoint – far from it, in fact! They lit up the hall, serving, singing, and even dancing. Sophomore Mea Wesley gifted us with compelling testimony and Co-Salutatorian Margaret Mercer left us all choked up as we heard her deeply personal story of the profound, salvific impact St. Michael has had on her young life.”

The evening began with a spirited cocktail hour and opening comments, updates and ‘thank yous’ from the SMHS leadership team.

As Mr. Weed recognized our nation’s founding in advance

of *America 250*, the ‘Gala time machine’ whirled back into action, this time bringing him brusque interruption from no less than our nation’s second President, John Adams! (See photo to the right, as a scowling Adams warily scans the room for vulgar Papists!)

After a fabulous perch & brisket dinner, also from *Crow’s Nest*, Gala-goers were treated to a beautiful choir performance, followed by an energetic live auction which was once again an evening highlight! The items auctioned this year comprised an even bigger and better collection than last year. (See items auctioned at stmichaelchesterton.org/gala.)

Just as a year ago, a ‘Fund the Need’ paddle raise that followed was generously answered – and the ‘final basket’ bidding again provided chaotic live auction fun! The Gala program concluded with Fr. Mitchel Roman and St. Michael alumnus Barrett Moore (*Class of ’17*), both also Hillsdale alums, testifying to the benefits of Classical education and advocating for the St. Michael mission of Catholic formation.



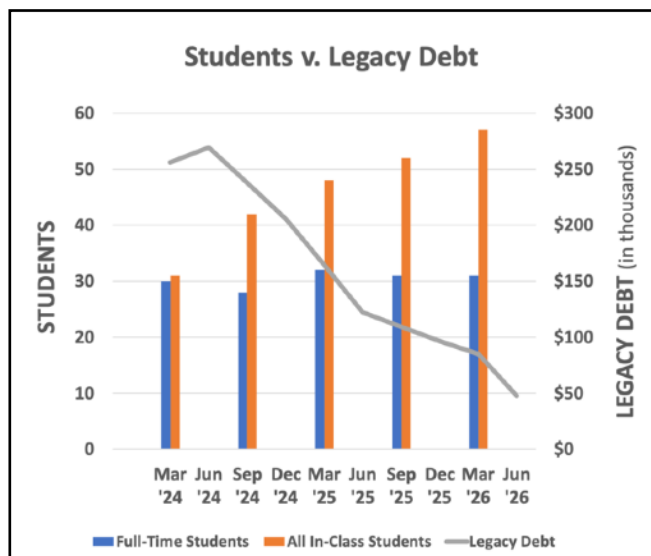
Mr. Weed continued, “We’re thankful for our Gala attendees, sponsors, and the donors of our prized auction items! As the testimony of our students (current and former) made clear, the impact made by our benefactors is life-changing for the young men and women pursuing excellence and holiness at St. Michael. It wouldn’t happen without you!”

“Thanks also to Carrie Cameron, Shelby Kolka, Annie Anderson – along with Holy Childhood Parish and Father Roman – and everyone who helped make our Gala a fantastic celebration!”



Financial Update: Massive Improvement, but Our Diligent Work Continues...

Bolstered by a joyful, well-run schoolhouse, and fueled by spectacular results from its last two Galas, the SMHS financial position has seen remarkable improvement over the past two years.



Mr. Rudnicki continued, “When I look at our financial statements, I’m filled with gratitude. Thanks to our generous benefactors, our St. Michael families and staff, and, of course, the Lord, our beloved school is back on track. Just a couple years ago, we were drowning in accumulated debt, but today it’s almost paid off, even while we’ve grown and improved the school.”

The graphic to the left depicts the student body, which is now the largest in school history (see blue & orange bars) against ‘legacy debts’ (see gray line). As shown in the graph key, the blue bars depict ‘full-time students’ while the orange bars also include (tuition-paying) ‘part-time students’, through which the school has grown. Total school debt today is roughly \$45,000, most of which is owed to the Diocese of Gaylord.

“Of course, our financial goal isn’t merely to be debt-free, but rather to be sufficiently unencumbered by our obligations so that we can more pro-actively focus on developing the school and its programs – to more intentionally and confidently ‘start playing offense,’ so to speak. The best of St. Michael is yet to come!”

To that end, the short-term (by calendar year-end) financial goals of SMHS include:

- ✦ Pay off all remaining debt.
- ✦ Announce the private funding of scholarships / financial aid to ***all students*** who desire a St. Michael education but whose families cannot afford to pay for it.
- ✦ Build ‘cash reserves’ sufficient for a full year of operating expenses. (*Our cash operating expenses for the '25-'26 school year were approximately \$632,000 – or about \$53,000 per month.*)

“Can you help us reach our goals?” Mr. Rudnicki asked in conclusion. “For more details on our financial position, and/or how you can help us, please contact me at info@stmichaelchesterton.org.”

Grateful for So Many Blessings in the Past Year... as We Look Ahead to '26-'27!

From our school retreat, to the annual rafting trip and *Michaelmas*, to *An Evening with Icons* and the *Polish Dinner*, to the Barn Dance and our first-ever sweep of Regional Cross Country titles... and from the *Festival of Carols* and our powerhouse production of *Anne of Green Gables*, to our return to Quiz Bowl glory, to our day at the Winter Sports Park... and from our first school-sponsored trips in years (to France & Utah), to the Gala, to the Spring Formal, to Graduation, and so much more... Whew! What a blessed year we had! Thanks be to God!

Let's do it again, starting this fall!



St. Michael High School is ***High School with a Higher Purpose*** and a proud member of the Chesterton Schools Network. Established in 2013, the St. Michael mission is to nurture and elevate a new generation of joyful leaders educated in the Classical tradition and truth of the Catholic faith. For more information, please visit our website at stmichaelchesterton.org or contact us at info@stmichaelchesterton.org.

