

# 'Cereal-ously' Generous: Notre Dame students let boxes fall in name of service

EAST STROUDSBURG – Notre Dame Elementary School marked a memorable Catholic Schools Week 2025 with a powerful display of generosity.

Throughout the week, students, families, and teachers collected hundreds of cereal boxes, which were meticulously organized into an impressive domino display inside the school gymnasium.

“We feel that it is an exciting, fun thing for the kids to do, as well as teaching them about giving to other people, and taking care of the needy,” principal Sister Dorothy Kibler, I.H.M., explained.

On Jan. 30, the entire school gathered to watch – and loudly cheer – as the boxes toppled over onto one another in a grand spectacle.



**Hundreds of cereal boxes donated by students from Notre Dame Elementary School are lined up in a domino display inside the school gym on Jan. 30, 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

“I love it. It’s probably the best week so far,” sixth grader Anastazja Nowak said.

All the cereal boxes used in the domino chain were donated to

the food pantry at Saint Matthew Parish, where they will help feed people in need. The event was part of Notre Dame Elementary’s ongoing efforts to foster a sense

of community service in their students.

“I try to give back as much as I can to my community, be as nice as I can, the best person I really can be,” sixth grader Arthur Gonzales explained.

When she heard students preparing for the big event on their weekly podcast – using the word ‘domino’ very intentionally – she began thinking about how important Catholic education can be in creating a ‘domino’ effect of serving others in the spirit of Christ.

“Our Catholic education will hopefully have a domino effect in our world, a domino effect on how we treat our friends, how we are with our families, and how we go out into our world,” the long-time educator and principal explained.

Founded on strong Catholic values, Notre Dame Elementary has long been known for its dedication to student success and academic excellence. The school prides itself on its nurturing environment, where each child’s intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met.

“It really prepares them for everything,” parent Jessica Corcoran stated.

“They use a very student-centered teaching style, and they provide individualized instruction,” parent Peng Zhang added. “They use all sorts of activities to train the students and educate them and make sure that they develop good behaviors ... most importantly, they teach love.”

# Students shine in ‘furry friends’ parade at All Saints Academy

SCRANTON – Dressed in colorful costumes and proudly pulling carefully created floats, the youngest students at All Saints Academy took center stage during a special event to mark Catholic Schools Week 2025.

On Jan. 29, pre-K and kindergarten students at the Scranton-based elementary school paraded around their gym, participating in a ‘furry friends’ parade.

“Pre-school and kindergarten students had the opportunity to build a float for one of their stuffed animals, their furry friends,” principal Brittany Haynos-Krupski explained. “You saw Ghostbuster floats, birthday floats, you saw Irish step dancing floats, Mario, every possibility.”

In addition to the floats, many of the students dressed up to match the theme of their float – filling the gym with little firefighters, princesses, and many other characters.

“I heard so many parents and



**Kindergarten and pre-K students from All Saints Academy in Scranton participate in the ‘furry friends’ parade as part of Catholic Schools Week 2025. (Photo/Dan Gallagher)**

teachers say it was such a great morning, just to see the excitement in the students’ eyes was priceless,” Haynos-Krupski said.

The event captured the essence of Catholic schools as more than just places of learning, but as close-knit families where every student, no matter their age, is celebrated.

The rest of the student body

filled the gymnasium bleachers and loudly cheered as each student and float took their turn in the spotlight.

“When you walk into our building, you feel that sense of family. I have heard from parents, I’ve heard it from people touring our school, I’ve heard faculty and staff. It is that idea of community,” Haynos-Krupski added.

All Saints Academy administrators decided to bring back the ‘furry friends’ parade during Catholic Schools Week this year for the first time since 2020.

Teachers say the event – and all the activities held during Catholic Schools Week 2025 – celebrate the heart of what Catholic schools are all about.

“In a Catholic school, you have the opportunity to teach a child’s spirit as well as their academics,” Amanda Valletta said. “We teach the students to grow in their faith, to become leaders, and that helps them in the real world when they graduate.”

As the parade wrapped up, many of the pre-K and kindergarten students were beaming with pride as their parents and grandparents snapped pictures on their cell phones. For many, it will be a day they remember, and a reminder of the deep sense of love and support that makes All Saints Academy a true family.

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# Community spirit soars at Saint Jude School's pep rally

MOUNTAIN TOP – During Catholic Schools Week 2025, eighth grade students at Saint Jude School created memories that will last a lifetime.

Among the week's most anticipated events was the spirited and fun-filled pep rally where eighth grade students face off in a basketball game against their coaches – a tradition that has become a favorite for the whole school.

"It is so much fun. I love Catholic Schools Week because as an eighth grader we get to do all the fun stuff," student Leah Smith said.

Catholic Schools Week is a time for students, faculty, and families to come together to celebrate the values and educational opportunities that Catholic schools provide.

At Saint Jude School, administrators stress it is not just about academics, but also about

building strong relationships and a sense of community. The pep rally and basketball game, which are held in the school gym, perfectly highlighted that philosophy.

"We had all our students here in the stands cheering and we had our cheerleaders come out to do their routines. It made for a fun day," parent Frank Carone said.

Carone is the father of two students at Saint Jude School. He says the competitive basketball match is all about school spirit, camaraderie, and the bond between students, staff, and parents.

"The atmosphere in this gym was just incredible. Kids cheering and yelling, cheering for the eighth graders against the dads, it makes for such a great time, a great atmosphere," he added.

Sister Ellen Fischer, principal, says the pep rally is something the kids look forward



**Eighth grade students from Saint Jude School in Mountain Top face off in a basketball game against their coaches as part of a pep rally for Catholic Schools Week 2025. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

to every year. She agrees it is much more than just a game – it's a celebration of the Saint Jude School family – emphasizing the significant role that parents play in their children's education.

"It gives us a chance to focus on the great things that are happening here at Saint

Jude School and it's time for our children to enjoy the week," Sister Ellen stated.

Saint Jude School's commitment to creating a family-like atmosphere is evident in everything they do, especially during events like the pep rally. Throughout the entirety

of Catholic Schools Week, the Luzerne County-based school held many other activities to celebrate the school's values of faith, knowledge, and community, all of which were focused on togetherness.

Students, teachers, staff, and families all shared in the fun, creating lasting bonds and reinforcing the importance of supporting one another, both in and out of the classroom.

"We are a family, from before school starts to after school is over, and every minute in between," teacher and parent Carrie Grandzol said.

Being able to celebrate each other's accomplishments is what sets Saint Jude School apart.

"You see this in how our teachers and our administration react to our students and you see how our students react to one another as well," Grandzol added.

## Student ambassadors lead tours, provide warm welcome at open house

CLARKS GREEN – Our Lady of Peace School launched Catholic Schools Week 2025 with excitement and energy, hosting an open house on the first day of the annual celebration.

The open house gave prospective students and their families a chance to explore the school, meet its dedicated teachers, and learn more about the diverse programs that set the school apart – everything from faith-based education to hands-on STREAM experiences.

The open house is special because of the unique role that the school's 7th and 8th grade students get to play. The student ambassadors got to lead prospective families on tours, offering a firsthand look at what makes Our Lady of Peace School so special.

"It is so much fun," eighth grader Eloise Giroux said. "They get to meet the teachers, look at



**Eloise Giroux, student council president for Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green, helps to lead prospective families on tours during an open house held as part of Catholic Schools Week. (Photo/Dan Piazza)**

the curriculum ... Our Lady of Peace is really a great school. It is such a family."

Giroux has attended the Lackawanna County elementary school for the last eight years and is currently serving as student council president.

"We have so many

fun programs, basketball, cheerleading, OLP Players, the theater program," she explained. "It's really a great school academically, spiritually, and socially. You learn so many things."

Leah Steinberg, another eighth-grade student, also served

as a student ambassador. She transferred to Our Lady of Peace School in seventh grade, and said the school quickly helped her grow more confident in her faith.

"It is the foundation to our education. I always believe in putting God first and trying to glorify him in anything I can do," Steinberg said. "It is amazing that I had the opportunity to come here to learn so much about my faith and more about academics."

Ann D'Arienzo, who has served as principal at Our Lady of Peace School for the last seven years, says students not only practice their faith by praying together, celebrating Mass regularly and having religion classes – but points to service projects that help to build student character and a desire to give back.

"We start as early as pre-school to explain to our students, and to model for our children,

how important it is to give back to our community," the long-time educator said. "Whether it is through coat drives, pajama drives, we put together toiletry kits for those that have been displaced due to weather disasters, they are able to recognize how fortunate they are."

Members of the 'Falcon Family Alliance,' the parent organization that helps to plan activities at the school, were also on hand for the open house.

The group's co-chair, Mary Ann Morgan, said the open house isn't just a chance to "show off" to the community, but is important for members of the school community to feel pride in everything they have accomplished.

"I hope parents can feel the school is alive. It's growing and we're a community that works together to support each other," Morgan said.



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Students at **Saint Clare/Saint Paul School in Scranton** enjoyed “Game Day” during Catholic Schools Week, matching wits and showing off their skills with their classmates.



On “Favorite Jersey Day,” students at **Saint John Neumann Elementary School in Williamsport** proudly stand in front of the Saint Francis of Assisi classroom door so everyone knows it won the “Favorite Saint Door Contest” during the school’s Catholic Schools Week celebration.



Congratulations to Izabella Merrick, a sixth grade student at **Saint Nicholas/Saint Mary School in Wilkes-Barre**, for winning the school’s annual Spelling Bee. She survived 25 rounds and won on the word “steeped.”



As part of their Catholic Schools Week activities, the students and faculty from **La Salle Academy in Jessup** participated in a special liturgy by Diocese of Scranton Secretary of Clergy Formation, Father Alex Roche, and Father Timothy Kennedy, Parochial Vicar of the Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in Jessup.



The Individualized Instruction students at **Good Shepherd Academy in Kingston** recently celebrated an Autism Awareness Liturgy with Father Brian Van Fossen, pastor of Saint Faustina/Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parishes. The students led the Mass’ readings, petitions, and offertory procession.



Finn Naughton and Jediah Bioh, ninth graders at **Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School in East Stroudsburg**, are all smiles on “Twin Accessory Day” during Catholic Schools Week.



The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, celebrated Mass with the students at **Our Lady of Peace School in Clarks Green**. After hearing the Loaves & Fishes Gospel, the Bishop reminded the students of one of the most important elements to the story: Jesus wanted His apostles to help Him with the miracle of feeding the 5,000 people, even though He could have done it Himself. At the conclusion of Mass, the students presented the Bishop with a painting they all helped create for Mother Teresa’s Haven in Wilkes-Barre, a men’s shelter that just recently moved into its permanent location.





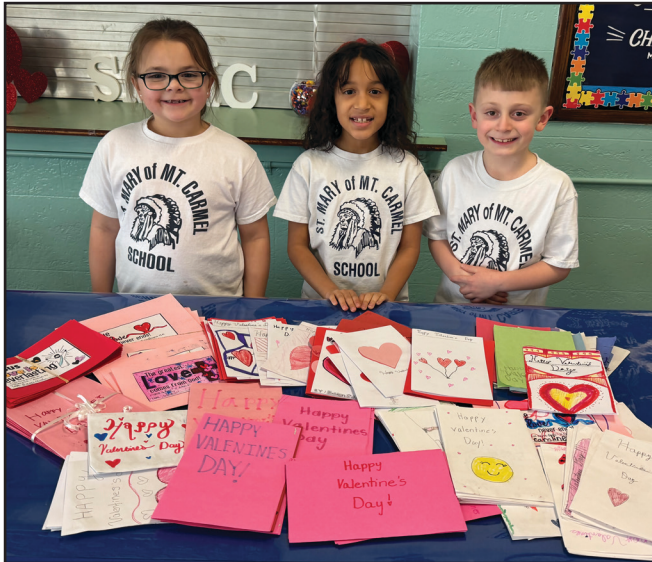
Father Jose Kuriappilly, pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Towanda, celebrated the Feast of Saint Blaise by blessing the throats of students and faculty at **Saint Agnes School in Towanda**.



Students in Grades K, 1 & 2 from **Wyoming Area Catholic School in Exeter** meet weekly for "Cougar Cubs," which teaches them basketball skills in preparation for joining the CYO in Grade 3 and beyond.



Although a snow day cancelled the original plans for The Brain Show during Catholic Schools Week at **Holy Cross High School in Dunmore**, students were ready to answer trivia questions and dance their way to become champions on the rescheduled date.



Students at **Saint Mary of Mount Carmel School in Dunmore** made Valentine's Day cards for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters as part of their Catholic Schools Week celebrations.



Father Michael Bryant, pastor of Nativity of Our Lord Parish, Duryea, treated the students at **Holy Rosary School in Duryea** to ice cream sundaes during Catholic Schools Week.



Third grade students at **Saint Jude School in Mountain Top** proudly showcase their homemade inventions using simple machines at the school's annual "Invention Convention."



Students at **All Saints Academy in Scranton** were ready to go for the school's annual Family Dodgeball tournament during Catholic Schools Week.



Members of the Key Club at **Saint John Neumann Jr./Sr. High School in Williamsport** delivered cans of soup to St. Joseph the Worker's Soup Kitchen as part of the school's "Souper Bowl" collection drive.