

GRACE Scholars makes Catholic education possible for Georgia youth

BY NICHOLE GOLDEN

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LILBURN—A lifelong Catholic, Elizabeth Reid now finds that her young daughters are teaching her new things about the faith.

The GRACE Scholars program makes it possible for Reid's daughters to attend St. John Neumann Regional School in Lilburn, an archdiocesan school.

Reid calls the Catholic school experience "incredibly valuable" for her daughters Scarlet and Penelope, who will be entering fourth and third grade in the fall.

"I look at it as a domino effect," she said.

Reid believes that her own Catholic education helped her when it was

time to leave home. "I was able to stay strong in the faith," she said.

In 2008, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, former Archbishop of Atlanta, and Bishop J. Kevin Boland of Savannah founded GRACE Scholars to take advantage of the student scholarship organization (SSO) tax credit legislation.

A taxpayer donating to GRACE Scholars receives a 100 percent credit on their Georgia income taxes for their contribution. More than 30 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta and the Diocese of Savannah accept GRACE scholarships. All students receiving GRACE awards receive money for their entire Catholic school matriculation if they show financial need.

In 2022, one in four GRACE

Scholar recipients came from families with annual incomes (AGI) of \$23,926 or less.

Archbishop Gregory Hartmayer, OFM Conv. of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and Bishop Stephen Parkes of the Diocese of Savannah currently serve as chair and vice chair of the GRACE Board of Directors and are supporters of the GRACE mission.

GRACE Scholars is a Georgia nonprofit corporation and tax-exempt charity (501-c-3 organization) and has met the requirements for designation as an SSO in Georgia.

Reid's son will also be enrolled in Catholic school when he is older and without this scholarship program, "I wouldn't be able to afford it," she said.

She encourages other parents to explore GRACE Scholars because of the great outcome. Reid said the process for applying is very easy with a quick response.

Scarlet has learned to love science, religion and art at school, says her mom. Penelope "likes to read and loves math."

"They keep it exciting," said Reid

about the teachers and staff of St. John Neumann.

Reid works outside the home and her daughters are also involved in extracurricular activities at school. She commended counselor Laura Ann Wingate for starting a cheer club at the school, an example of how staff responds to the interests of the children.

In the scholarship program's annual report, JoAnn McPherson, principal of St. Mary's Academy in Fayetteville, described how GRACE Scholars helps the school meet its mission.

"As the new and only PK-12 archdiocesan school in metro Atlanta, St. Mary's Academy is especially grateful for the GRACE Scholarship Program," said McPherson. "When SMA opened its doors in August 2022, we welcomed 33 GRACE Scholars in grades PK-8."

Noah Avery, who recently celebrated his eighth-grade graduation at St. Mary's School in Rome, said he most enjoyed the feeling of community at the school.

GRACE FACTS

■ There were 1,076 GRACE Scholars Award recipients in the 2022-23 school year. 46% of the youth receiving scholarships were minority students.

■ In 2022, there were 1,255 individual donors to the program.

■ In the 2022-23 school year, there was more than \$3.75 million dispersed.

Call 404-920-7900 with questions.

"Every morning I got out of the car excited to see my friends. I was equally excited about what I'd learn and to interact with my teachers. I don't think every middle school kid could say the same," he wrote in an email.

He said he will continue to strive for excellence in high school.

"My time at St. Mary's really

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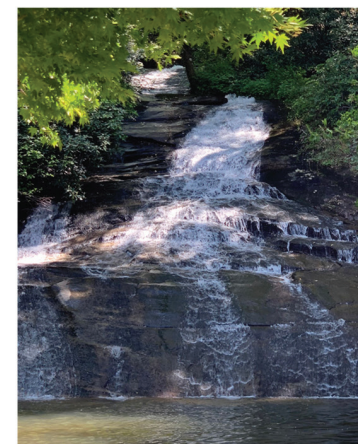


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