



St. Joseph's Indian School

We serve and teach, we receive and learn.

Chamberlain, SD 57326

(605) 234-3300 • www.stjo.org

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Danielle Kucera, St. Joseph's Indian School
605-234-3380

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St. Joseph's Indian School response to COVID-19

(Chamberlain, S.D.) –The campus at St. Joseph's Indian School has remained unusually quiet since March 6 when students returned home for Spring Break. Due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, the students were not able to return to campus when planned. President Mike Tyrell feels like this has been a strange and challenging time for the organization to have the students absent for over a month with no real definite date of return. "We greatly miss our student's energy that infuses this campus and motivates our work. We are following the South Dakota Department of Education guidelines on school closure and hopeful that school will resume in the near future," said Tyrell.

Operations areas of the organization are open and running but several safety precautions are taking place to adhere to the state recommendations and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Employees continue to carry on the day-to-day work of making our mission happen while practicing the guidelines to social distance, keep group sizes small, regularly clean and disinfect surfaces and no public Mass.

Here is what is going on across our campus:

- Our teachers and school support staff are actively preparing and mailing packets of homework to our students and are also exploring video formats to make connections with students and their families. Social media has allowed for some fun and interactive lessons from the teachers that hopefully will provide some comfort during these challenging times.

- Family service counselors and support staff communicate directly with students and families and provide assistance to families in need.
- Houseparents are on ‘stand-by’ so that the families can be sure we are ready to resume back to school when given the permission to do so on a state level. They spent hours packing and sending home belongings, noting the heartache at returning to empty homes to find things just as the students left them. They, too, are reaching out to students.
- Outreach services have made trips across South Dakota to donate items in communities in need including homeless shelters, women’s shelters, community programs and anyone else who may be in need of supplies.
- Nurses from the campus Health Center prepared and sent home medications and are working with the pharmacy to arrange for possible months ahead.
- Numerous staff members are participating in “zoom call” focus groups to continue the strategic planning process with a razor focus on coming out with an even stronger mission when this crisis is over.
- Fr. Anthony prays with us on the family Facebook page, using this Holy Week to lead us in the Stations of the Cross.

Operations areas of the organization are open and running, including Corporate Services, Facilities, Development and Donor Care. We will continue to use our emergency notification system to provide St. Joseph’s Indian School families with timely information via website, email, phone or text messages.

More Than 220 Native American students in first through twelfth grade find hope and opportunities through our educational, counseling and residential programs. St. Joseph’s Indian School transforms lives—mind, body, heart and spirit—every day. Learn more about us at www.stjo.org.

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