



# Mitákuyepi



Mitákuyepi is a publication for employees of St. Joseph's Indian School like **Cassandra Harmon**, health center receptionist, recognized for her positive, can-do attitude when assisting those in need of care.

This employee newsletter is named Mitákuyepi because it speaks the mission of St. Joseph's Indian School. Mitákuyepi is a Lakota word used to say, "my relatives." Also, it is the address to an audience that means, "I have something to say." This is the voice of our thiyóspaye.

Its masthead has a backdrop of sacred sage to remind us that our work is Wakhán.



## SACRED SIGHTINGS

Sacred Sightings is a pictorial celebration of God's presence and signs of hope at St. Joseph's Indian School.



St. Joseph's Indian School  
We serve and teach, we receive and learn.

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WINTER 2023

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## Scholarship Recipients Show Promise



Administration career while taking a class from Mrs. West at Chamberlain High School. Sports Administration is a dynamic, growing industry that covers a range of behind-the-scenes opportunities that promote and enhance the business side of sports. "It's full of fun and possibility," said life-long sports enthusiast Herron. He played linebacker for Fort Lewis College.

Herron's advice to high school graduates: "Go your pace. Life's not a race." His wisdom came from his own experience when the pressure to immediately succeed on a four-year-degree track backfired on him. After his first two years, he took two off. He feels the time off greatly benefited him when he returned to the classroom to sprint to the finish line. "I know more about life stuff and school stuff now," he said, "And it has really helped."

After graduation, Herron hopes to begin his career in the Durango area. "I was born in Montana, so I am naturally a snow person." He hikes in the local mountains when he isn't attending school or working one of two jobs. Herron especially enjoys discovering what is hidden around the bend – a meadow, a waterfall or some other surprise.

Other alumni on track to complete courses of study in May or June include: **Andrew Amiotte** – Network Administration; **Paul Davis** – Certified Pharmacy Technician; **Ashley Estes** – Cosmetology; **Melissa Johnson** – Human Services; **Charity Merritt** – Early Childhood; **Trinity Sazue** – Building Trades; **Danielle Two Two** – Licensed Practical Nurse.

The scholarship is made possible through the generosity of the school's donors. Financial need and academic performance are the basis for determining the awards. Applications are due each fall and spring and are awarded based on proof of tribal enrollment, the number of applicants and available funds. Also considered are returning scholars who are continuing their education journey.



If you are looking for a Sports Administrator, look no further than this St. Joseph's Indian School alum. Jeremy Herron will graduate in May of this year from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo., with a degree in Sports Administration. He is ready to take on the future. A 2016 graduate of St. Joseph's Indian School's High School Program, Herron is a nine-time recipient of the school's scholarship program, which was started in 1985 to support Native Americans pursuing higher education.

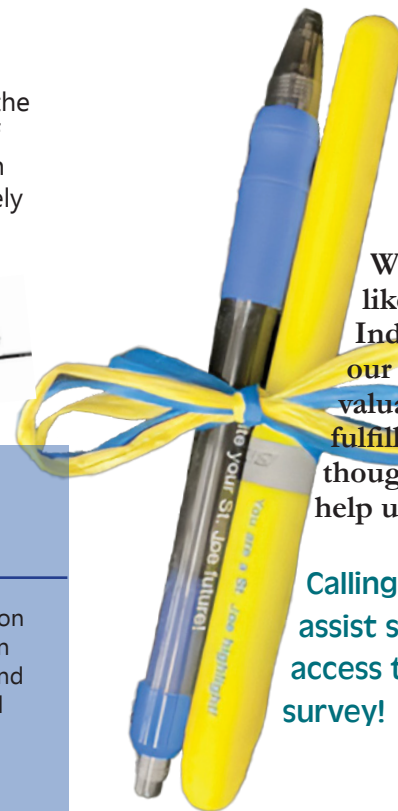
Herron is one of 67 Native American scholars nationwide receiving a total of \$95,000 in spring-semester funding. The awards bring the total for the school year to a record \$213,970. This spring, the school granted awards to 16 St. Joseph's alums, nine alum family members and 42 other scholars enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and pursuing higher education.

An enrolled member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Herron first set his heart on a Sports

## Write Your St. Joe Future: Employee Engagement 2023

What's on your mind? We'd like to know. At St. Joseph's Indian School, we know that our employees are our most valuable asset when it comes to fulfilling our mission. Your thoughts, ideas and aspirations help us shape the future.

Calling all supervisors: Please assist staff with limited computer access to be able to take the survey!



## MESSAGE FROM MIKE

### The Unique but Rhythmic Life of St. Joe's

March 1 came and went this year, as it does each year. For me, it signals spring is close.

Each school year has its uniqueness, whether it is a fall that begins with more new students and staff or winter's snowy and cold weather. At the same time, a familiar pattern follows each year at St. Joseph's Indian School.

I remember March 1, many years ago, when the school's administration brought in all the houseparents. The theme of the meeting was "Way to go. You made it to March 1." It was recognized that good weather was around the corner, and all the efforts of the first two-thirds of the

year would be rewarded with a great close to the last third. And it was.

I mention this because when you look at the history of St. Joseph's Indian School, you see clusters of years characterized in specific ways. Some characterizations are societal labels (i.e., Depression Years, War Years, etc.), and some are based on models of care in place. The students who attended during a specific period often categorize the legacy of the times differently. Yet, within those times was the familiar rhythm of each particular school year.

Today, our efforts across St. Joseph's Indian School are still impacted by the same history. All efforts to serve

the mission show a continuous effort to improve the services delivered. This commitment to improvement is easy to see when our history is reviewed. It comes from our belief that the organization must always strive to do a better job when partnering with our students and their families.

So I challenge everyone to take some time over the last third of the year and celebrate the rhythm of the seasons at St. Joseph's Indian School. It's been a long cold lonely winter, but here comes the sun!



Mike Tyrell  
President  
St. Joseph's Indian School

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Mitákuyepi is PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL. ITS PURPOSE IS TO COMMUNICATE ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE SCHOOL, TO SHARE IDEAS AND INFORMATION USEFUL IN PERFORMING THE MISSION, TO ASSIST IN FOSTERING A COMMON CULTURE AND TO REINFORCE THE MISSION AND CORE VALUES OF ST. JOSEPH'S INDIAN SCHOOL.

### QUESTIONS?

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www.sjskids.org or  
www.stjo.org



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New this survey: In past surveys, the word "leader" designated all persons in leadership roles in the organization. This year, to provide feedback to supervisors, questions that apply to the person who gives direct feedback on your performances use the term "supervisor." General leadership questions are worded with the term "leader."

Write your Future



# Getting to Know the Programmers



Before he interviewed for the software development manager job at St. Joseph's, **Kiley Naro** wondered, "Why is a school hiring programmers?" "I quickly learned that by maintaining and improving the software applications used daily by staff on campus and in Sioux Falls, our team of talented, tech-savvy individuals plays a crucial role in advancing our school's work," explains Naro.

Child Services staff are familiar with Launch-Pad programs like the Home and School Logs and the Medication Administration Report. The Development side has the Marketing Schedule and Donor Selects for mailings. Mission Advocacy staff knows the software team for their work on Donor Search and Studio Enterprise, fixing bugs and adding new features to help them accomplish their goals efficiently and effectively. The programmers also work with the Help Desk to set up new workstations and replace broken keyboards.

In Chamberlain at the Nagel Business Office, **Balinda Schmiedt**, senior SQL programmer and marketing analyst, works closely with leadership and Marketing to ensure profitable and effective mailings. **Mark Saxton**, programmer analyst, handles donor-acquisition and change-of-address processes. He also maintains integral data configurations in Studio Enterprise.

The Sioux Falls team includes **Jordan Jaqua**, **Myles Lo**, **Drew Bach** and **Connor Hanisch**. Jaqua takes the lead on mission-critical POSH and St. Joe's mailings and production-related tasks. She also handles data integrations with outside vendors and organizations. Lo and Bach are full-time software developers. "We love our ones and zeroes," quips Lo. Hanisch, who did a summer internship, works part-time while finishing his degree.

Naro leads and mentors the group he calls "a highly intelligent and capable team." "I am blessed with the honor and privilege to work with such wonderful people to bring to pass our mission of partnership with Native American children and families," he says.



(Left to Right), Kiley Naro, Drew Bach, Myles Lo and Jordan Jaqua.



### School Earns Re-accreditation

A recent announcement by Social Current confirmed that St. Joseph's Indian School is re-accredited through a process conducted this past fall by the Council on Accreditation (COA). St. Joseph's has achieved accreditation since 1995. The new four-year accreditation extends through February 28, 2027.

During an on-site visit, COA conducts interviews with staff, trustees and clients and researches to confirm adherence to the COA standards. Areas scrutinized during the process include ethical practice; financial management; governance, administration and management; human resources; performance and quality improvement; and risk prevention and management.



### Catholic Schools Week Celebrated

St. Joseph's Indian School students joined nationwide Catholic Schools Week. Beginning January 30, the school and observed Catholic education's value through themes of faith, service and excellence.

Visiting artist Michele David Mechling conducted classes on "the versatility of printmaking" for first- to fourth-grade students. The children "carved" printmaking plates with their pencils, learned how to roll and apply ink and transferred dream-catcher images onto canvas shopping bags.

The St. Joe Archery Challenge capped the week on Saturday. Fourth- through sixth-grade boys placing in the competition were **Tyree Day** – First, **Shawn King** – Second, and **Kyler Honomichi** – Third. Winning fourth- through sixth-grade girls were **Tristine Larvie** – First, **Deveah Stracqualursi** – Second, and **Aleighya LaRoche** – Third. Winning high school competitors included **Swede Lind** – First, **Juliana LaRoche** – Second, and **Leslie Hanson** – Third.

### St. Joseph's Indian School Goes Platinum with Candid/GuideStar

Candid, a leading assessor of nonprofit organizations, recently announced that St. Joseph's Indian School achieved the Platinum GuideStar Seal of Transparency for providing comprehensive information about the school's programs, success measures and services.

Platinum is the highest possible rating for a non-

profit organization. For the past three years, the organization earned the Silver GuideStar Seal of Transparency.



### When the Grinch Tried to Steal Christmas

When the Grinch tried to steal Christmas from St. Joseph's Indian School, he met his match and more.

Teaming up with Mother Nature, he caused road closures and made travel for out-of-town and some local staff impossible. Beginning December 14, the school endured 96 hours of closure, requiring previously unscheduled staffing.

Semester-weary houseparents, awaiting a well-earned break, were the first to stand up to the Grinch's attempt. Demonstrating "superhero-strength powers" of understanding and willingness, staff worked up to as many as 81 hours of overtime to meet coverage needs.

December 16 was planned as student-transport day. Residential staff became expert storm trackers, scheduling and rescheduling the transportation that involved nine staff who crisscrossed the state to bring students safely home for the holidays. What could have been a scheduling and communication nightmare ran as "smooth as ice" with assistance from the Counseling Services Department, which reached out to parents and families throughout the storm to keep them apprised.

Recoiling at his failed attempts to destroy the holidays, Mr. Grinch took out a fire sprinkler in one of the campus residences, flooding the kitchen. He doubled his efforts on Christmas Day, rupturing a pipe in the school's basement, filling it with thousands of gallons of water and leaving many areas under three inches. Facilities staff and volunteers found the source of the leak, fixed it, moved materials to dry locations and vacuumed up the mess. And to the Grinch's dismay – all on Christmas Day with smiles and without complaint.

St. Joe's staff, students and families endured the storm with characteristic strength and teamwork. Until next year, Mr. Grinch, or do you realize you have met your match?



### Mark Your Calendar

April 13, 2023, is slated as the day for the groundbreaking of the new Rec Center Project. Exact time and other details will become available. Be a good sport and make plans to be there.



**Andrew Bach**, software developer, enjoys rock music and lasagna. Unsurprisingly, he used to make his own games and websites when he was younger. For him, St. Joe's is a way to pursue his career in an impactful meaningful way. He says he'll know when he's done when he makes his kids proud.



**Robert Brown**, senior press operator, says the best kind of music is the type that moves you. His favorite food is anything shared with family. He sees failure as "a lesson learned" and success as "earned." He says working at St. Joe's is rewarding, and he advises, "Nothing is out of reach if you are willing to keep pushing."



**Heather Lopez**, custodian and alum, loves a variety of interesting cuisine including Arabic, Spanish, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Ethiopian. A childhood stargazer, she likes country and Spanish music and says "Failure is a lesson, not failure. Keep your head up and keep doing it until you get some where."



**Desiree and Gabriel Perez** join the staff as houseparents. Interestingly, she wanted to be an author when she was younger, and her future husband was into books and reading. She is a mac and cheese lady who enjoys acoustic music. On the other hand, he will take a pizza and some rock any day. The two call working at St. Joe's and adventure and the experience of a lifetime.



**Calvin Peterson** is a new mission advocate. His musical preferences include Christian, oldies, country and pop. He says working at St. Joe's is awesome and shares his mom's rule as "best advice": First things first.



**Alexa Pierce, RN**, is a new health center staff nurse. She advises, "Be weird! Normal is too boring." A childhood soccer player, she loves brownies and country music. She looks forward to growing and learning along with the kids for whom she'll care.



## Students Have a "Capitol" Experience

Crow Creek Sioux Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek, in his January 12, 2023, State of the Tribes Address called the experience a "humbling opportunity." His words likewise summed up the feelings of St. Joseph's Indian School students who participated in the day.

Four student representatives from the school, **Jay Eagle, Jr.**, Junior Miss St. Joe's **Aleighya La Roche**, **Caden Lopez** and Eagle Staff Bearer **Romeo Roubideaux**, took part. They were accompanied by the school's Lakota Studies Lead LaRayne Woster and Belinda Jo Rencountre, an educator from Crow Creek whose students could not attend because of a closure.

Their morning began in the Capitol rotunda, where they sang a song and introduced themselves in Lakota. The rotunda gathering also allowed students to meet and converse with state representatives. "It felt good to meet some famous people to my culture," acknowledged fifth-grader Roubideaux.

Next, Roubideaux participated in escorting Lengkeek to the podium. He stood at humble attention throughout Lengkeek's speech. The students led the Lakota flag song after the opening prayers. LaRoche commented that singing for her ancestors, her family and her culture was good.



*There's  
Nothing  
Like  
Progress!*

School Principal Sharmel Olson shares milestones from the grade school that have transpired since the past fall. Many teachers lent their voices to make this report possible. Enjoy!

"One girl has shown success not only academically but also socially. She is more vocal in the classroom, answering questions. She socializes positively with her peers."

"This year, we participated in Hour of Code and chose to do the Star Quilt Module that Code.org created. It was fun to see the kids talk about their culture and tell me things they thought I did not know. One of the things we spoke about was that this module is available for all the kids around the world and that they would be learning about the Lakota culture and traditions. To see the spark of pride and awe that others would be learning about them or even that they would be interested in it was especially rewarding."

"One boy went from not knowing his letter names and sounds to blending sounds to make words and read stories."

"My success story involves a young woman who has hit her stride in English Language Arts. She has progressed in her self-confidence and level of comfort in the classroom. She is still timid and a little unsure of herself when speaking. Still, she has demonstrated her ability to apply instructional skills to passages and text we read in and out of class ... She has shown a willingness to apply higher-level thinking skills and a motivation to improve her reading comprehension skills. It has been good to see her self-esteem grow and have an impact on her social interactions."

"I have two young ladies who were quite shy and reserved at the beginning of the school year. They didn't want to put themselves out there to answer many questions. These same two girls will now ask questions and answer without hesitation when called upon. They have become more comfortable in class and have acquired the confidence to participate."

"My successful student started the year out struggling in math and didn't like it at all. Now, she has mastered her multiplication and division facts, works independently and is doing extremely well. Her attitude in math is completely the opposite of what it was."

"This girl has worked hard over the years to improve her reading and math skills. She never gives up, even when it is a struggle. She always does her best on the work assigned. In math this year she has been covering two grade levels of standards. When she is gone or missing an assignment, she takes the time to complete the work as soon as possible. Through her hard work and persistence, she is gaining skills that she needs to be successful in high school and beyond."