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OUR MISSION

Embers Academy is a private, independent school, rooted in the Catholic faith, serving grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. Embers is committed to the pursuit of academic excellence and character formation and works in partnership with parents, who are the primary educators of their children. Embers sees each student as a child of God — a gift from God — and helps them to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and practice moral behavior.

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Sam Carter President



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Pedro Valencia

HEADMASTER WELCOME

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Dear Families, Faculty, and Friends of Embers Academy,

What an exciting time to be a member of the Embers Academy community!

When my wife Kristine and I took a leap of faith in moving our family to Chicagoland last summer, the key factor in our decision was the strong foundation clearly evident at Embers, and the potential to continue building on it. Little did we know the consistency with which the members of this community strive for excellence, both in the ordinary moments of their everyday lives and in the opportunities to give a heroic "yes!" to God's calling in extraordinary ways.



Christopher Goffos
Headmaster
Embers Academy

We begin every morning at Embers with the catchphrase: "Make it a great day, or not; the choice is yours!" And it shows every single day. A striving for greatness is found not only in the joyful, persevering way our students conduct themselves, but also in our faculty's response to new challenges, and in the way our parents respond to the call for greater generosity of time and resources.

In this first ever annual report on Embers, we're celebrating the successes we've witnessed this past year-from the sacrifices of our parents, to the diligence of our teachers, to the character growth of our students. We've expanded our programming in several important ways this past year, which we're proud of (and some of which you'll read about in the coming pages!). But what truly sets this school apart is the commitment of individuals, like you, to advancing our mission, not just in the abstract, but in the tangible ways you deepen the pursuit of faith, knowledge, and virtue in our Sparks.

Thank you for your personal sacrifices and prayers this year, and for your renewed commitment to making this school year even greater!

Christopher Goffos

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Headmaster









FACULTY FOCUS: MRS. SARA BLACK

For the past ten years, Third Grade teacher Mrs. Sara Black's secret to success has been her remarkable blend of consistent routines and high academic standards, delivered with great dedication. Within this environment, students are able to blossom.

Parent Julie Galluzzi said her son Rocco had an amazing year in Mrs. Black's class. "Rocco loved how organized she was and said she explained things differently than anyone else...She has such high expectations for her students, and they respond."

"Mrs. Black taught John Paul how to be organized, manage his time, and be independent, and I am forever grateful to her," said parent Luma Naim. "She also helped my daughter realize her strengths in helping other people and encouraged her to do so, and that increased Anne Marie's confidence in herself."

When Mrs. Black first started teaching, it became apparent to her that the courses she took to earn dual degrees in elementary and middle school education would have little value if she could not connect with students. After dedicating additional time to studying classroom management, she implemented new

strategies. "I aim to set up a class from day one with procedures that the kids understand, and we practice them consistently," she said. "If kids know what is expected, it is a lot easier to connect with them personally."

In 2016, Mrs. Black helped establish the virtue program that supports the pursuit of greatness in every aspect of the school day. "We talk about love in our virtue and religion curriculum. When you do things, for your friend as an example, it's because you love them, right? What does that mean? That means you want to get them to heaven. And I think, ultimately, that's my goal."

Focusing on routine and virtue helps cultivate an atmosphere of self-confidence. "I love when Mr. Goffos says at the beginning of the day, 'Make it a great day, or not; the choice is yours!" said Mrs. Black, "Because it really is true...the day might not go as you planned, but it's how you look at it and what you can learn from it these experiences are stepping stones to virtue."

SCHOOL YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- The boy's Cross Country team finished the season in first place and was crowned League Champions in the City Suburban Catholic Conference.
- ▲ Sparks began using the Bonus Room for lunch, allowing for unstructured social time.
- ▲ Fire Choir performed for Relevant Radio's Carols of Comfort and Joy, which was broadcast to 5 million listeners around the world.
- Mr. Rob Sadlowski received the Dedication to Youth Excellence Award, presented by the Niles Chamber of Commerce.
- "Little Sparks Music" debuted in January with a packed house, welcoming future Sparks and their families.
- Professor Habib hosted Immersive Science Day for our Sparks, demonstrating the "super powers" of handwashing, dry ice, chemical reactions, and more.
- ▲ Fire Choir performed Annie, their first fully-staged production in four years, adding a new Set Crew program for Sparks to explore.
- Embers band performed in the Niles 4th of July Parade as special guests of the Chamber of Commerce.
- Motor Lab debuted at Embers, featuring developmental support for students of all ages.











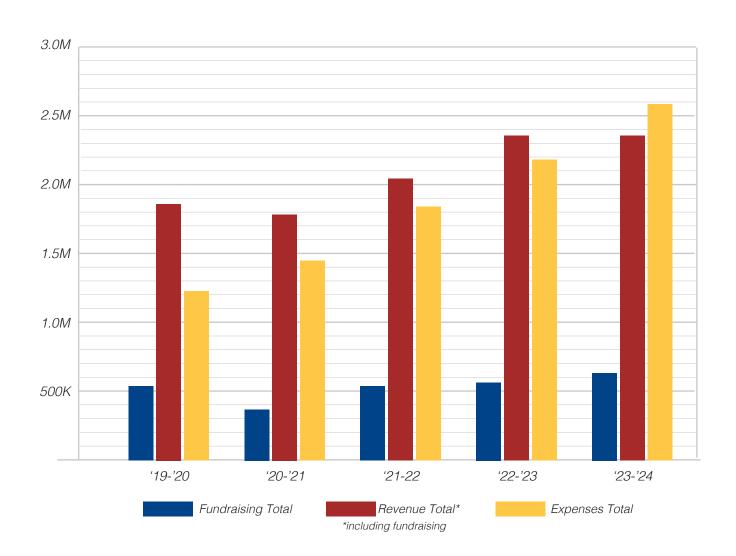




FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 OPERATING BUDGET

Revenue	
Tuition and Fees	\$1,614,138
Fundraising	\$621,025
Annual Fund (\$349,788)	
Extravaganza (\$271,237)	
Other	\$142,004
Total Revenue	\$2,377,168
Expenses	
Expenses Maintenance & Facilities	\$479,155
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LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Dear Embers Families,

Thank you for your generosity and the sacrifices you have made. Our annual budget relies not only on tuition and fees but also donations from our parents, staff, alumni, and friends of Embers.

Last year, we reached a milestone in our Annual Fund, achieving the highest participation percentage in the school's history. Also, the Extravaganza dinner was an unprecedented success, drawing more attendees than ever before. Your broad-based support not only provides crucial resources for our programs but also demonstrates the deep commitment of our families to the Embers' mission.

We have had to face financial challenges from inflationary costs over the last year. Like many institutions, we're experiencing rising payroll costs as we strive to attract and retain top-tier educators and staff. These increases reflect our commitment to maintaining the high quality education that defines Embers. We're also managing higher rent and maintenance costs for our facilities. These expenses are essential to providing a learning environment that fosters excellence in education and inspires our children.

To continue fostering our mission and growth, we have made several investments over the last three years. Below are a few of the notable investments:

Parents

- Hired dedicated staff to support parent formation, social, and hospitality initiatives
- · Sponsored Dad's Club, Mom's Club and various parent formation seminars and social events

Faculty

Expanded summer workshops for our teachers for their continued development and growth

Students

- Curriculum enhancements through Superkids Reading Program and Singapore Dimensions Math
- · Hired new faculty to support two sections of each grade level, keeping our student to teacher ratio low
- Invested in professional development and equipment from Ready Bodies, Learning Minds to implement the "Motor Lab"

Facility Improvements

- · New driveway, entrance, and front office
- · New light fixtures throughout the school
- Renovated bathrooms
- Updated flooring in North and South Wings
- · Expanded the school's footprint in the building to grow programming

I remain highly confident in Embers' financial health and future prospects. We have an excellent leadership team in place, with the vision and skills necessary to guide Embers through both opportunities and challenges. We're actively streamlining our operations and staffing to ensure we're using our resources as efficiently as possible.

My wife Pilar and I visited Embers five years ago before our son Joseph started at Embers. The vibrant learning environment, dedicated educators, and strong sense of community and faith continue to flourish since our first visit. We are very happy that we chose this exceptional institution to partner with us to educate our children.

Thank you again for your financial support and your dedication to bringing the Embers mission to life.

Sincerely,

George Holohan

Embers Board of Directors, Financial Committee Member

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PARENT FEATURES

The parents featured on these pages reflect the myriad ways in which parents impact our students and the broader community. Contributing their unique gifts and talents to the school, the Becks, DeCantos, Grays, Habibs, and Ostrowskis are great examples of the many families who have galvanized Embers with their involvement and initiative.

DECANTO & BECK FAMILIES

Embers moms Kate DeCanto and Kelly Beck are motivated by community and growth. "Connection is so important," says Kate. "And it's those connections that, in my mind, make Embers such a success."

Kate and Kelly initially teamed up to provide hospitality after the COVID shutdown, and have been creating welcoming environments at school-wide events ever since. They hope to provide newer families the same warm reception they received when they were new to Embers.



For faculty and staff, they have provided "Stock the Fridge" days, faculty breakfasts, and organized a team of volunteers for Teacher Appreciation Week.

Kelly and Kate approach their involvement as an extension of their most important work as mothers.

"We view it as our job," says Kelly. "We are at home to take care of our children, and if there's any way we can aid them even while they are away at school, we want to do this for the kids and for their friends."

THE GRAY FAMILY

When Michael and Beatriz Gray made the decision to transfer their children to Embers in 2017, they were drawn to long-time Embers families. "They say, pick friends that will help you go where you want to go," says Michael. "All these families here help make us better, and are people we want to emulate."

Michael began the Embers Dads Club three years ago after a brainstorming session with other parents. It has transformed into a vibrant group with a regular attendance of 30+men. "Many men show up early and it always goes late," says Michael. "Guys have a hunger for these connections and friendships."

This past year, guest speakers covered topics related to marriage, family, and character formation. Discussions have led to what Michael calls "Dads Club miracles," which he describes as transformations within families sparked by the talks and support the men offer each other.

Beatriz enjoys helping with Dads Club by preparing refreshments. "I know they are going to come home happier and with different insights because they went to a talk, and that is beneficial for their families," says Beatriz.



In addition to running Dads Club, Michael has been the Emcee at the Embers Extravaganza for the last three years, and an Annual Fund Class Captain. Beatriz has volunteered in a number of capacities, including Moms Club, the Extravaganza, and in the classroom.

THE HABIB FAMILY

"To send my kids to school for eight hours a day and feel so comfortable; having them there is the biggest blessing," says Tanya Habib. "We know that what they are taught aligns with our morals and values."

Tanya and her husband Nawaf's

gratitude for Embers spurs their volunteerism, guided by their professional and personal passions.

Nawaf, a pre-health / pre-med professor, and Tanya, who works for a medical supply company, planned an engaging Immersive Science Day for our students last Winter, showing students the power of science up close. "I was so glad to see that the students were so happy and curious. I loved it!" says Nawaf.

Nawaf became involved with Embers soccer by assisting Cathy Mullen's launch of Soccer Club in Spring 2022. That Fall, he and fellow coaches led the first Embers 3rd - 5th Grade soccer team to the semi-finals. The team has continued to flourish.

Two years ago, Tanya took on the role of Procurement Chair for the Extravaganza, securing attractive raffle and auction items for the Extravaganza.

"Embers has a good balance of playing, learning, and faith," says Tanya. "Our involvement with Embers is really because we love



Embers and all it offers. That's why we are motivated to give even more."

THE OSTROWSKI FAMILY

"The Embers philosophy of parents being the primary educators of our children and Embers being there to support us was appealing because that is the way we view it, too," says Karen Ostrowski. "That is why we get involved. Because it is a partnership and we have ownership over it."



Karen, a middle school science teacher, uses her three personal days a year to help at class parties and chaperone field trips. Before the the Solar Eclipse in April, Embers students watched an informative video Karen had made for the occasion. She also served as a Class Captain for the Annual Fund.

John Ostrowski enjoys being a guest reader in the classrooms and helping during teacher appreciation week. He also assists at Open Houses, sharing his children's experiences with prospective families. And for the past three years, John and Karen were Parent Ambassadors.

"The kids are always excited to go to school," says Karen. "Even the grandparents notice what a positive experience the kids are having. They are so impressed with the education the children are receiving."

Thank You!

Many thanks to our parent volunteers who have helped make this school year a success! Your dedication makes Embers shine.

PARENT AMBASSADORS:

Linda & Raymond Allen Anita & Alphi Elackattu Liz & Russell Fernandes Julie & John Galluzzi Kelly & Plinio Gayares Colleen & Bob Gilligan Pilar & George Holohan Jacqueline & Brian Lastovich Madeline & Pat McEwen* Karen & John Ostrowski* Maggie & Luis Rivas Rosi & Chuck Roth Beth & Steve Samikkannu Georgia Sampedro Alli & Colton Smith Buzz & Phil Theodoropoulos Kerry & Billy Whalen Christina & Josh Williams* *Coordinators

PARENT EVENTS:

Marta & Maciaj Mikula Connie & Michael Beckman Maria Marta & Howard Humber

CELEBRATING OUR SPARKS

Every year, Embers Academy honors two graduates at the Fifth Grade Farewell who exemplify what it means to be a Spark through their words and actions. Our recipients have served as great role models for their peers and reflect our ongoing commitment to character formation and growth in virtue.





POWER OF A SPARK AWARD: DANIELA DUFFY

The 2024 Power of a Spark Award was presented to Daniela Duffy, '24. This award honors a graduating Fifth Grade student who demonstrated the virtues of tenacity, determination, and perseverance in spite of difficulty. Mr. Boville, Dean of Faculty, describes Embers as a "training ground of virtue," where faculty, staff, and students see the ordinary moments of the school day as opportunities for greatness.

Daniela took full advantage of this "training ground," proactively seeking advice from teachers and taking it to heart while extending genuine kindness to everyone around her. Teachers praise Daniela for excelling in academics and organization. They describe Daniela as a respected, unifying force among her peers. Her trademark smile is contagious!

GLADYS DAVIS CHARACTER AWARD: JAMES WASSERMAN

This year, we were honored to have Mrs. Gladys Davis (Head of School 2003-2016) on hand at our Fifth Grade Farewell to present the Gladys Davis Character Award to James Wasserman, '24. This award was established at Mrs. Davis' retirement in 2016 to recognize a student from every graduating class who strives for greatness in the areas of scholarship, leadership, service, and faith.

Teachers describe James as considerate and empathetic, a leader who extends himself in service to others while also making strong contributions in the classroom. James is first to welcome a visitor in the hallway or help a younger student during recess. He made it his practice to greet his teachers every morning and thank them at the conclusion of class. These small yet meaningful gestures helped set the tone for the entire school.

ANNUAL FUND

Unprecedented participation made this year's Annual Fund the most successful to date, **exceeding our goal by more than \$50,000**. Together, our school community raised \$349,788. This fundraiser bridges the gap between tuition revenue and actual operating expenses, allowing Embers to retain high caliber faculty and invest in quality curriculum and programs. We are grateful for the generosity of all our donors!

THE POWER OF PARTICIPATION:

100%

Faculty & Staff

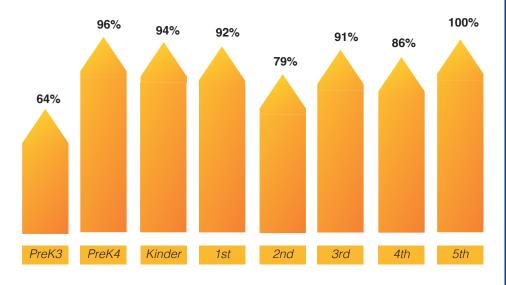
100%

Board Members

88%

Families

PARTICIPATION BY GRADE LEVEL:



CLASS CAPTAINS ANSWER THE CALL

For the first time, the Annual
Fund was assisted by a
group of parent callers:
our Class Captains. These
dedicated volunteers
helped Embers spread
awareness of the Fund
while connecting with fellow
school families.

Jessica Bartel (PK4)
Eva Radlinski (PK4)
Michael Gray (K)
Brian Masterson (K)
Karen Ostrowski (1st)
Kerry Whalen (1st)
Marzena Sipiora (2nd)
Jince Lukose (2nd)
Bob Gilligan (3rd)
Chris Richards (3rd)
Julene Barder (4th)
John Macfarlane (4th)
Elizabeth Simutis (5th)
Laura Castillo (5th)

FLOWER DAY: A NEW TRADITION

To kick off the Annual Fund, each family received a yellow carnation during morning drop-off. Thank you to our parent volunteers who helped make this new event a success:

Meredith Carpenter Laura Castillo Gabby Katsantones Aimee Kessem Javiera Ortega Ewelina Zacharewicz



ANNUAL FUND DONORS

GIFTS \$25,000+

The Bears Foundation Judy Carter Jason & Lori Elder Brian & Teresa Jenn Time Bank

GIFTS \$10,000+

Anonymous
Rosewood Foundation
Simms Family Foundation

GIFTS \$5,000+

Relevant Radio
Colton & Alli Smith

GIFTS \$2,000+

Shane & Mary Anastasi
Jason & Kelly Beck
Joseph & Laura Carter
Richards Family Foundation

GIFTS \$1,000+

Rosemary Caruthers
Daniel & Christine Costanzo
Nawaf & Tanya Habib
Cory & Caroline Jensen
Marla's Lunch
Tony & Jennifer Svanascini
Nawar & Maryem Telche
Philip & Bozena Theodoropoulos
Krzysztof & Ewelina Zacharewicz

GIFTS \$500+

Rod Bahjat & Luma Naim
Jacek & Sylwia Bohaczyk
DENNIS Uniform
Anthony & Hortensia Esquivel
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Joseph & Faye Foster
Plinio & Kelly Gayares
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Theresa Panzica
Permsak & Betty Kovathana
John & Volha Liston
Daniel & Laura McShane
Maciej & Marta Mikula
Jim & Beth Morgan
John & Karen Ostrowski
Anthony Panzica
Derek & Jamie Simon
TransMarket Operations LLC
Jacqueline Winn

GIFTS UP TO \$499

Anonymous (x9) Manuel & Lollie Acuna Kevin & Mary Adley Raymond & Linda Allen Hammad Asghar & Citlaly Carbajal Shane & Teresa Ayers Bob & Katie Baehl George & Malgorzata Balaban Noel & Juna Balbon Robert & Julene Barder Jeff & Jessica Bartel Ninos & Anna Bayzoo Michael & Connie Beckman Joseph Bello Marat Bilimbekov & Medina Irsalieva Madeline Black Robert & Sara Black The Blackbaud Giving Fund Pablo & Toni Boville James Bowman Christopher & Mary Therese Brown Sebastian & Catherine Brukalo Kevin & Linda Buggy Rory & Keara Burke Robert & Meredith Carpenter Samuel & Patsy Carter Daniel & Sylvia Casaletto

Emily Casaletto

Joaquin & Maria Castillo Samuel & Laura Castillo Alain & Theresa Cataniag Zenon & Ela Cebula Cyril & Ciji Chacko Samuel & Jennifer Choi Colonel II James N Pritzker Charitable Distribution Fund Kevin & MaryAnn Coyle John & Tammy Dabe Christopher & Kate DeCanto Ramon & Kristine del Rosario Natalie Donado Patrick & Julie Donovan Kieran & Kayla Driver Martin & Donna Duffy **Edward Jones** Sharon Edwards Claudia Fakovic Russell & Elizabeth Fernandes Carlos & Brenda Fernandez Joseph & Allison Ferrini James & Martha Fitzpatrick Benjamin & Kathleen Foster Christian & Elizabeth Gauna William & Alexandria Gianniotis Robert & Colleen Gilligan Christopher & Kristine Goffos Goldman Sachs Robert & Danielle Gorzelanny Victor & Tina Grandinetti Michael & Beatriz Gray Anthony & Laura Gualandri Kaushik Guha & Swetha Jalan John Hanretty Luke Hanretty Michael Hanretty Patrick & Lisa Hanretty Bob & Lelia Harig Kelly Hariq Scott & Jeanne Henschell Howard & Maria Humber

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Jeremy & Jennifer Potempa









Jacek & Elizabeth Predki Jeffrey & Sarah Ptacek Thad & Suzanne Quinley Peter & Eva Radlinski Janusz & Anna Rajska Karen Reardon Luis Rivas &

Magdalena Kolodziej Rivas Charlene Roland Charles & Rosamaria Roth Deanne Roy Robert Sadlowski Steve & Beth Samikkannu Georgia Sampedro Edmund & Maud San Juan Damon & Stacey Sather Daniel & Oksana Schak Thomas & Elizabeth Simutis **David Smith** Brian & Diana Silhan Greg & Marzena Sipiora Christian & Mona Stepansky Anthony & Michelle Strazzante Rafid & Luma Sukkar Edward & Emerita Thomas Jaroslaw & Cynthia Trojanowski Carl & Mary Turano Masao & Louise Uenuma Andrew & Suzy Ullman Pedro & Laura Valencia Alvaro Vargas & Amanda Casas James & Aura Vasquez David & Shannon Walasinski Daniel & Katherine Wasserman Dave & Denise Wasserman Timothy & Sarah Weiske William & Kerry Whalen William & Michele Whalen Wai Wong Joshua & Christina Williams Robert & Linda Yalda

EXTRAVAGANZA

YOUR GENEROSITY IN ACTION!



2021New Front Drive



2022New Front Lobby and Offices;
Updated Flooring & Lighting



2023Updated West Wing Bathrooms;
New Sound System



A record-breaking number of guests enjoyed a glamorous evening at the Extravaganza on March 23, 2024. Following touching testimonials by the Mikan and Simutis families, our generous donors raised their paddles for exciting initiatives, including a new school library, aesthetic improvements, parent formation events, and marketing.

Director of Development: Lisa Hanretty **Development Associate**: Jacqueline Lastovich

Emcee: Michael Gray
Extravaganza Committee:

Jessica Bartel: Paddle Raise
Mary Therese Brown: Procurement
Tanya Habib: Procurement

Event Day Volunteers:

Julene Barder Sylwia Bohaczyk Meredith Carpenter Sylvia Casaletto Natalie Donado Dan & Mary Goffos Daniel Goffos, Jr. John Hanretty Luke Hanretty Lelia Harig Jeanne Henschell Scott Henschell John Macfarlane Karyn Macfarlane Luma Naim Alexandra Paoletti Michelle Parada Karen Reardon Brian Silhan Diana Silhan



Event Sponsors

BLAZE - \$15,000

Time Bank

FLARE - \$10,000

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SPARK - \$6,000

Brian & Melinda Lukens

PARTNER - \$3,000

Rod Bahjat & Luma Naim Jason & Kelly Beck George & Pilar Holohan Northridge Prep Jim & Mary Paschall Derek & Jamie Simon Colton & Alli Smith Peter & Maura Spingola

FRIEND - \$1,000

Relevant Radio

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Brian & Mary Katherine Bland Jacek & Sylwia Bohaczyk

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Sebastian & Catherine Brukalo

Kevin & Linda Buggy Rory & Keara Burke Margaret Campbell

Robert & Meredith Carpenter Kenneth & Joan Carpenter

Daniel & Sylvia Casaletto

Emily Casaletto

Joaquin Castillo & Maria Ibero

Samuel & America Castillo Samuel & Laura Castillo

Alain & Theresa Cataniag

Isaias Chaves & Diana MacLean

Mary Childers

Joe & Andrea Corona Kevin & Maryann Coyle John & Tammy Dabe

Christopher & Kate DeCanto Ramon & Kristine del Rosario

Guillarma & Mariana Dillian

Guillermo & Mariana Dillion

Natalie Donado

Brian & Grettel Donahue

Patrick & Julie Donovan Kathleen Driscoll

Kieran & Kayla Driver Martin & Donna Duffy David & Julie Dylegowski Anthony & Hortensia Esquivel

Niall Fagan Peggy Feller

Russell & Elizabeth Fernandes

Javier Fernandez Kevin & Eileen Finlay Joe & Angela Flood John & Julie Galluzzi

Christian & Elizabeth Gauna

Plinio & Kelly Gayares

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Dan & Mary Goffos

Robert & Danielle Gorzelanny

Victor & Tina Grandinetti Michael & Beatriz Gray Anthony & Laura Gualandri

Nawaf & Tanya Habib

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Neda Naum

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Francisco & Michelle Parada

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Jeremy & Jennifer Potempa

Jacek & Elizabeth Predki

Jeffrey & Sarah Ptacek

Karen Reardon

Will Rey

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James Vasquez & Aura Nieva Maliwanag

Raul & Jaime Vasquez

David & Shannon Walasinski

Dave & Denise Wasserman

Timothy & Sarah Weiske

William & Kerry Whalen

William & Michele Whalen

Glenn Wilke

Joshua & Christina Williams

Save the Date!

Embers Extravaganza Saturday, April 5, 2025





847-518-1185 embersacademy.org 8340 N. Greenwood Ave Niles, IL 60714