



High School principal Matthew Collins is pictured with Michael and Erin O'Brien, Jack's parents and sister. (Courtesy of St. Mary High School)

## Smile Like Jack Memorial Fund, anonymous donor contribute to new van for St. Mary High School

St. Mary High School in Westfield received \$20,000 in donations, including \$10,000 from the **Smile Like Jack Memorial Fund**, to purchase a 12-passenger van last December.

The Smile Like Jack Memorial Fund, based in Otis, was established in honor of Jack William O'Brien, who died March 3, 2022 in a snowmobile accident at age 20. To honor his memory and his legacy of being hard, loving the outdoors and doing all things with a smile, Michael Star and Michael O'Brien, and his family created this fund to spread smiles throughout the community.

Jack O'Brien attended St. Mary Elementary School and many members of his family attended St. Mary's schools, making it a natural fit to honor Jack in Jack's memory. The van is used for various transportation needs, mainly for athletics. The fund has a three-fold approach: 1. provide scholarship money to individuals so that they can pursue their education in the trades; 2. establish education and recreation opportunities for youth and young adult outdoor activities; 3. work to provide opportunities to different communities in need.

"When we found out there was a need for a second van for students at St. Mary's, we decided it was a way that we could help," said Michael O'Brien. "We are very happy to share Jack's legacy with St. Mary's, which has meant a lot to my family."

School principal Matthew J. Collins said the Smile Like Jack gift, which combined with an anonymous donation to purchase the van, is a gift for the school and students.

"Our supporters are so generous and we could not be more grateful," said Collins. "We will proudly drive this van throughout the community in Jack's memory. Although he only lived 20 years, he lived a lot of living and inspires us all to live life to the fullest and the best."

This is the second gift of a van the school received in the past year. In 2018, Sarat Ford gifted the school a van when brothers Scott, and Jeff – all alumni of the school – heard that the school's buses were at the end of use.

## LOCAL NEWS



Pictured are AOH President Paula Paoli; 2024 Woman of the Year, Patricia A. Clayton; Polish National Credit Union CEO, James P. Kelly, Christian Charity Award winner; 2024 Hibernian Man of the Year, John M. Gaughan; and AOH President Joe O'Connor. (Photo by Peter Hogan)

## Local Hibernians announce 2024 award winners

The Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), James A. Curran, Division One and the Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH) of Hampden/Hampshire Counties announced their award winners for 2024 at J.P.'s Restaurant in Holyoke. The award winners will march in the Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade with the Hibernian contingent on March 17, 2024.

The Hibernian Woman of the Year 2024 Award and the Hibernian Man of the Year 2024 Award were given at the Irish Night in Holyoke at The Log Cabin on Feb. 24, 2024. The awards are bestowed on "that member who truly lives by the Hibernian Motto of Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity."

**Patricia A. Clayton** of Holyoke was named the Hibernian Woman of the Year 2024; and **John M. Gaughan** of Holyoke was named Hibernian Man of the Year 2024.

The recipient of the Hibernian Christian Charity Award will be Polish National Credit Union CEO **James P. Kelly**. This award will be given at the Wyckoff Country Club in Holyoke at the Annual Communion Breakfast March 10, 2024. The Christian Charity Award is given to a person "who seeks to improve the lives of the people of Hampden/Hampshire Counties."

For more information, contact Hibernian President Joe O'Connor at 413-627-7148 or Ladies Hibernian President Paula Paoli at 413-210-6031.

## In memoriam

**Sister of St. Joseph Claire Belforti** (formerly Sister Grace Edward), 94, died in Framingham, Mass., on Nov. 24, 2023. A native of Milford, Mass., she was in the 73rd year of her religious life.

**Sister of St. Joseph Margaret McNaughton** (formerly Sister Dorothy James), 92, died on Dec. 26, 2023. A native of Pittsfield, she was in the 74th year of her religious life.

**Sister of St. Joseph Mary Lou Brennan** (formerly Sister Francis Elizabeth), 85, died on Jan. 1 in Holyoke. A native of Worcester, Mass., she was in the 69th year of her religious life.

Complete obituaries can be found at [iobserve.org](http://iobserve.org).