

SPRING 2020

THE FRANCES XAVIER WARDE SCHOOL

# CHARISM

MAGAZINE



CELEBRATING  
30 YEARS

The Frances Xavier Warde School is an independent, Catholic elementary school in downtown Chicago that provides an academically excellent, values-oriented education to students of all ethnic, religious, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds in a child-centered urban environment.

At FXW, we are guided by our four Charisms. We partner with our families to nurture faith development for our Catholic students and engage all of our students to learn about and respect other faith traditions. FXW focuses on educating the whole child, including social-emotional development, a comprehensive arts program, and a rigorous curriculum aimed at developing critical thinkers who are prepared to live as global citizens in the world. As a keystone of our diverse community, we provide need-based scholarships to children throughout the Chicago area.

Our Charisms serve as a roadmap for shaping and teaching our children. We create an individualized educational experience that recognizes each child as unique. Our Charisms are the gifts that FXW gives to its families and to its students.

## Charism Defined:

Any good gift that flows from God's love to humans.

## The FXW Charisms

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A Community that is purposefully diverse and intentionally inclusive

### FAITH

A Community of faith that welcomes and embraces all faith traditions

### ACADEMICS

A Community that is preparing thinkers and leaders in an academically enriched environment

### SERVICE

A Community that is motivated by faith to serve others

## Board of Trustees

The Frances Xavier Warde School is governed by our Board of Trustees. As an independent school, we maintain our Catholic identity with oversight from The Association of Christian Faithful to ensure our commitment to spirituality.

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# Letter from the Head of School

Dear FXW Community,

Over the last several weeks, our School, our city, and our world have experienced disruption. Amidst all the chaos and uncertainty the present crisis has caused, the strength of The Frances Xavier Warde School (FXW) community has become abundantly clear. I have been humbled to witness the kind-hearted passion of our faculty and staff, the unwavering support of our parents, and the true grit of our students as we navigate these extraordinary circumstances together.

I must admit, however, that the resilience I've observed within our community over the last few weeks is nothing new. It's baked into the foundation of our great School—and has been since our founding 30 years ago. Our founders made this a part of the FXW culture.

This fall, we came together as a School community—current and alumni families, current and former faculty and staff, alumni, supporters, and friends—to celebrate our milestone 30th Anniversary. This issue of *Charism* magazine is a continuation of that celebration and a recognition of all we have accomplished in partnership over the last three decades. In its pages, you will hear the voices of our students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni expressing their sincere gratitude for our School and for their FXW experiences. They bring our Charisms to life through their thoughtful words and illustrate just how important our School's mission is today—and every day.

While things remain uncertain in our world, I hope you will find solace in the pages that follow. I have confidence that the strength of our community will carry us through this challenge—and the many challenges I am sure we will face in the future. That seems to be the FXW way.

Happy reading,



Michael Kennedy

*Head of School Michael Kennedy is pictured left with FXW founders Mary Ellen Caron and Father Jack Wall at the School's 30th Anniversary Event in November.*

# WHAT FXW MEANS TO ME

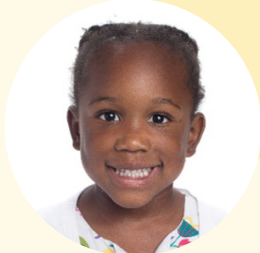
As FXW celebrates its 30th Anniversary throughout this year, students reflected on why they love FXW and what makes the School so unique. Their heartfelt responses below remind FXW parents, teachers, supporters, and friends alike why the School's mission is so important and how it is lived out every day by the youngest Preschoolers to the oldest Grade 8 students—and everyone in between.

## PRESCHOOL



"I love FXW because I get to play here and see my friends."

—Emil Z.



"I love FXW because we can play in the Imagination Station."

—Emery C.

## KINDERGARTEN



"I love FXW because I get to see my teachers every day and give them a big hug!"

—Olivia B.



"I love FXW because I can do literacy every day and learn to read!"

—Ian K.

## GRADE 1



"What I love about FXW is it is not just a Catholic school. There are people who get to celebrate all traditions."

—Lingli S.



"There's a lot of things I love about FXW...I like that it has a good education and that we can go to Mass."

—Johnny M.

## GRADE 2



"I love FXW because the teachers are very nice, I make a lot of friends, and I learn a lot every day."

—Brady P.



"FXW is a place where everyone is welcome."

—Matilda A.

## GRADE 3



"I love FXW because I always have a good time learning math, science, and reading. The teachers make learning fun! FXW is a place where I always feel safe."

—Ana S.



"I love FXW because the school offers a lot of different extracurricular activities like basketball and chess."

—Tyson R.



# WHAT FXW MEANS TO ME

## GRADE 4



"FXW means a lot to me because my friends are here and I learn at least one new thing every day. When we do something fun like an experiment, I always go home excited to tell my family what we did."

—Fini M.



"I love FXW because it shows me hope, kindness, discovery, and adventure."

—Shaan S.

## GRADE 7



"FXW is a place for growth, a place where kids grow into awesome human beings."

—Rimona G.



"FXW is a place where you can be yourself."

—Connor E.

## GRADE 8



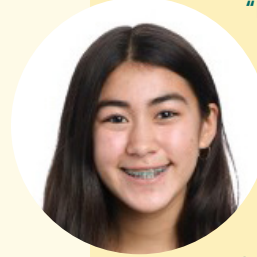
"One reason I love FXW is that my teachers have not only prepared me academically, but in a way to succeed as a good person. While learning algebra or American history may be important, FXW's main mission is to prepare us to go and do good in the world. I am grateful for the opportunity my parents gave me by sending me here."

—Charlie S.



"At FXW, I can think outside of the box to excel in academics and feel compassion to help those in need. I can also embrace my faith and welcome everyone into the school, no matter who they are or where they come from. I had never found it so easy to make friends before coming to FXW."

—Mary K.



"FXW taught me to speak up, use my voice, and not let my age, gender, or anything limit my potential. When I walk out of FXW's doors on the last day of school, I will be the best, most confident version of myself thanks to what this school has fostered me to be."

— Tai W.

## GRADE 5



"I love FXW because it's inclusive and everyone is welcome."

—Jack W.



"What I love about FXW is that everyone is kind to their classmates and every day people are doing stuff for others and helping them."

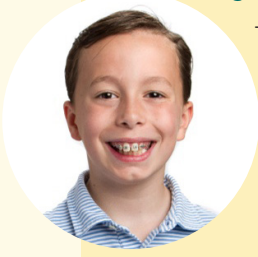
—Lyla M.

## GRADE 6



"In grade school we all have our ups and downs, but by being with my friends and the people who are in FXW's community I don't really feel those downs—I get lifted up."

—Marin T.



"I love FXW because it is a place where everyone is important and no matter what, I feel included."

—Colin M.

## A NIGHT TO REMEMBER



**Members of The Frances Xavier Warde School community came in droves to celebrate the School's 30th Anniversary milestone.**

In 1989, The Frances Xavier Warde School (FXW) began with a bold mission: to provide an academically-rich education to students from all religious, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds within a faith-based, service-minded environment. When the School opened its doors in Presidential Towers that year, 30 trailblazing students and their families, along with the School's founders Father Jack Wall, Mary Ellen Caron, and the late Maggie Daley, began putting that mission into action inside and outside of the classroom.

Thirty years later, nearly 1,000 students from 56 different zip codes walk the halls of FXW's two campuses, following in the footsteps of hundreds of students who came before them. While FXW has grown exponentially over the last three decades, the passionate belief in and fervent dedication to the School's mission has remained unwavering.

On November 1, 2019, more than 500 current and alumni parents, alumni, current and former faculty and staff members, current and former board members, the School's founders, supporters, and friends gathered at The Four Seasons to celebrate that mission at the School's sold-out 30th Anniversary Event. The event, which carried the theme "Cheers to 30 Years," included food, drinks, and the rare opportunity for members of the FXW community from near and far to reconnect and reminisce on all the School has accomplished during the last 30 years.

Attendees were transported back to the year the School was founded in the decked-out 1989 Lounge, which included posters from iconic 80s movies—like *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *The Goonies*—as well as nods to 80s singers, TV shows, and nostalgic toys like Rubik's Cubes, Trolls, and the original

Nintendo Game Boy. Guests reveled in the old photos displayed prominently throughout the Alumni Lounge and video presentations. The slideshow of graduation photos from every FXW graduating class caught the attention of alumni and current families alike, and the floor-to-ceiling scrim of the School's founders paid tribute to their hard work and commitment to FXW over the years. A raffle, wine pull, and "Spin the Wheel" game gave attendees fun, interactive ways to show their appreciation for the School, and all who participated were incredibly generous. All donations from the "Spin the Wheel" game benefited the Holy Name Cathedral campus's new Learning Lab, a new space where students can explore and create in new and innovative ways.

The event's décor, provided by The Flower Firm, was eye-catching, and the activities were entertaining, but the most noteworthy and memorable part of the evening was the people—a diverse group of supporters and friends who came together to share countless smiles, laughs, stories, and an overwhelming admiration for FXW. The collective love for the School was palpable from the minute you walked into the event, and the kindness of those who attended reinforced how special the FXW community truly is.

The Frances Xavier Warde School has a mission worth celebrating, and the 30th Anniversary Event gave the FXW community the opportunity to do just that. Cheers to 30 years!



**"What a night! The event was the perfect opportunity for all of us to reconnect with alumni parents, past and present faculty and staff, and our alumni. It was truly a very proud time for me to reminisce about our early days, when our hopes and dreams were just that—hopes and dreams with lots of prayers sprinkled in! Witnessing the fruits of our labors all gathered together to celebrate our 30th Anniversary was just awesome. Our very first FXW anniversary celebration was a great success with the promise of many more to come."**

*—Rose Ann Anschuetz, CATC Board Member, FXW Founder, and Alumni Parent*



"Clarence Francis once said, 'You cannot buy loyalty; you cannot buy the devotion of hearts, minds, and souls. You have to earn those these things.'

Five hundred people celebrating 30 years of an elementary school—that's loyalty at its best. FXW, you've earned it. So very proud to be a part of it."

—Susan Sperling, Former Long-Time FXW Faculty Member



"We were honored to support FXW's 30th Anniversary event. It was a successful celebration for a significant milestone. Luck was on our side that evening, as we won the Hamilton Experience in the raffle! Our daughter, Lily, had an amazing time, culminating with meeting Hamilton himself, Miguel Cervantes. He is truly a class act. We were drawn to FXW by the four Charisms of faith, academics, diversity, and service. We cherish the supportive community and the continuous drive for improvement. FXW is not stagnant but reflective of its past and thoughtful about its future. Our school has strong foundations with the flexibility to develop in an ever-changing world. We are proud to be members of our FXW community."

—The Nayak Family, Current FXW Family

## At the 30th Anniversary Event, we had...

32

Faculty and Staff

45

Alumni

116

Alumni Parents

22

Former Faculty and Staff

19

Current and Former FXW and CATC Board Members

222

Current Parents

28

Supporters and Friends





# 30 YEARS



"Even with an additional 11 years of school after FXW and seven years of work beyond that, the school still feels like the foundation for so many of things I am proudest about in my life. The way I learn, the way I approach challenges, and the way I meet and talk with people all seem to stem from my years at FXW. My wife and I jumped at the opportunity to see some of my past teachers, hang out with old friends, and meet new people at an FXW event. Every time we attend one, we enjoy ourselves, feel included, and walk away with some benefit. This ended up being no different. We liked best watching the slideshow of the graduating classes over the years. I couldn't help but text old classmates pictures of our graduation year."

—Bruno Marasso, FXW Class of 2000



"My family and I have made lifelong friendships at FXW. The 30th Anniversary celebration was a great way to connect with our friends and recognize the power of community in raising our children. My family's relationship with the school, students, families, and staff adds to the quality and fullness of our lives. As parents, we are role models for our children; by supporting our community, we show firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how good it feels to help other people and affect change. Events like the 30th Anniversary enable us to connect with the greater FXW community and contribute to making it a great place."

—Cheron Zei, Current FXW Parent and FXW Kindergarten Teacher



## HOMEcoming WEEKEND 2019

As part of FXW's 30th Anniversary celebration this year, the School hosted its first-ever Homecoming Weekend! Students and parents alike were especially excited to show their Jaguar pride during this milestone anniversary year.

The weekend kicked off at FXW alumni parents ('08, '10, '16) Pam Farley and Andreas Antoniou's Old Town Pub, where parents and alumni gathered to watch the Chicago Bears take on the Green Bay Packers. Next, in honor of the School's 30th Anniversary, the City of Chicago named September 6 "FXW Day," so the community gathered to celebrate this distinction at the annual Back-to-School Mass.

It wouldn't be a Homecoming Weekend without some sporting events! Jaguar fans donned their foam paw prints and green-and-white pom-poms on Friday night to cheer on the Grade 8 Girls Volleyball Team take on St. Jerome. The team played hard but ultimately lost in the end. Then, on Saturday morning, fans watched the Grade 8 Boys Flag Football Team win 20-0 against Our Lady of Mount Carmel. FXW alumni from the Class of 2019 (pictured bottom left) even came "home" to support their fellow Jaguars! The weekend concluded on Sunday with a "Pack the Pews" Mass at Old St. Patrick's Church.

The first-ever FXW Homecoming Weekend was such a roaring success that the School plans to continue the tradition in the future. Go Jaguars!





# THEN AND NOW

## **FXW's longest tenured employees share how the School has changed over the last 30 years—and how it hasn't.**

Over the last three decades, FXW has been blessed to have hundreds of intelligent, compassionate, and hard-working educators, administrators, and support staff call the School home. Day in and day out, these dedicated individuals have worked tirelessly to help build FXW into the school it is today.

Ten of FXW's current faculty and staff members—Sharon Allen, Beth Amatangelo, Brigid Cashman, Georgia Hawkins, Erin Horne, Kerri Johnson, Carroyl Jones, Marvin McCurry, Andre Norwood, and Sue Smeaton—have been at the School since the early days. This group of FXW veterans have dedicated their lives—and for some their entire careers—to furthering FXW's mission. In the School's milestone 30th Anniversary year, these long time colleagues and friends gathered to discuss the ways in which FXW has grown and changed—and what has kept them coming back year after year.

## **The FXW community is so fortunate to have such incredible educators like you working inside and outside its classrooms. What has kept you at the FXW for so many years?**

**Sharon Allen (SA):** One reason I have stayed at FXW for so long is because it's a faith-based community. There's prayer, and kids are learning about different cultures, and I'm learning too. We don't stop learning just because we're the teachers. I learn a lot from the students and from their parents and families.

**Carroyl Jones (CJ):** At FXW, there's always something new to learn. I'm always learning, too! After a few years, I started feeling like this is my calling. God has me planted where he wants me to be. I've realized as an educator that this isn't a job; this is my vocation. I have grown personally in my faith, outside of school, and the beautiful part about FXW is that I can come to work and still grow in my faith. I don't have to leave my faith at the door.

**Brigid Cashman (BC):** The faith piece for me is so important as well. When I was five or six years in, a friend of mine said, "Why don't you come work for me?" He was working in public education and doing great things. He said, "FXW doesn't need you anymore." I bristled at that and thought, "Why am I committed to staying?" And I realized that my own faith had deepened by learning about the faiths of my students. And the inclusive way we experience our faith, based on the FXW mission, was really so beneficial to me and how I was evangelizing the kids. I thought that if we're going to really live out our mission, the faith piece is so important. I didn't realize that at the time, but that's why I stayed.

**Sue Smeaton (SS):** I've stayed because of the families—the whole community really. The parents have always been very dedicated. I think of those early years how small the school was in comparison to now. Families took a chance on FXW; they brought their little ones into a place where there were no big kids yet. There was a start-up energy and start-up spirit that the families and the teachers had, and there was a lot of camaraderie around

building a successful program. That energy was exciting at the time. I've stayed because of that continuing spirit and the commitment to the students and the overall mission of the school.

**Georgia Hawkins (GH):** For me, it's absolutely been the mission. As soon as I started working at FXW, I knew that this place was different, and I knew I would stay. I remember telling my husband, "We will stay in the city, we will have our children here, and we will send our children here. This will be our family. This will be our community."

**Erin Horne (EH):** A huge part in why I've stayed is the unbelievable support I've received that has allowed me to do it all—be a mom and also work. And then once my kids were here, I couldn't even imagine being somewhere else.

## **Collectively, you all have nearly two centuries worth of knowledge about FXW. How has the school changed during your tenure?**

**Marvin McCurry (MM):** I've seen a lot of changes, but what comes to mind first is the changes in the neighborhood around OSP. This neighborhood used to be bare. I can show you the many buildings that have gone up in the neighborhood.

**Beth Amatangelo (BA):** Size is the first thing that comes to my mind. The School is much, much bigger on every level.

**Kerri Johnson (KJ):** The size, yes, and with that our ability to accommodate a lot more kids at different levels. It's been really nice to see the growth and expansion in the types of services the School is able to offer to meet the different needs of kids. In the beginning, we had one person, and she did everything. If the child needed any type of support—academic, social-emotional, something going on with their family outside of school, anything—there was only one person to help. The School has grown a lot in their support of the teachers, students, families, and the broader community. And with size, of course, obviously the facilities have changed quite a bit, too, for the better.





## Three Words to Describe Your FXW Experience?

**"Fun, inspiring, and challenging."**

—Sharon Allen (pictured left)

**"Joyful, gratitude, and milestones."**

—Beth Amatangelo

**"Profound, intentional, and gospel-driven."**

—Brigid Cashman

**"Growth, community, and love."**

—Georgia Hawkins

**"Dynamic, faith-filling, and committed relationships."**

—Erin Horne

**"Community, service, and faith."**

—Kerri Johnson

**"Truly a blessing."**

—Carrolyl Jones

**"Love, growth, and success."**

—Marvin McCurry

**"Fun, longevity, and family."**

—Andre Norwood

**"Purpose, community, and inspiring."**

—Sue Smeaton





*Georgia Hawkins, pictured above; Brigid Cashman, pictured top right; Carroly Jones, pictured middle right; Marvin McCurry, pictured bottom right.*

**Andre Norwood (AN):** Yeah, I was here when this new [OSP] building was built [in 2004]. The old OSP building was right where the courtyard is now—in between the school and where the cafeteria is now. It was four flights. Back then, we didn't have a lunch room. I used to do the lunches and would have to bring in food from the church hall on a little cart. And the gym was a big tent with a portable heater.

**MM:** When they were putting in the new building, we had the opportunity to sign the beams before they finished up the walls. All of the staff and teachers came over and signed the beams. So somewhere here at OSP in the walls on those beams are our signatures. That was really cool.

**BA:** I did love the old building, though. It was more intimate.

**SS:** There were just four rooms per floor.

**BC:** I don't know if you can imagine a school with no hallways, but it had no hallways. It was a landing with four classrooms and then stairwells on either end.

**KJ:** It was almost like being in a dormitory.

**BA:** You could yell across to other classrooms—I would yell across to Erin or Kerri because we were all teaching third grade at one point.

**EH:** You were so close with your colleagues. There were no specials classrooms besides the art room, so all the specials teachers would come into your rooms as well. I remember the first year in the new building everyone thought it was so weird because the hallways were so long. Everyone had their space, so you never saw anybody. You went from being with each other all the time to never seeing anybody. It was such an adjustment.

**SA:** Yes, and in the beginning of the year all the teachers used to have a retreat before school started. We'd do things like the outdoor education type of thing. It was always spiritual no matter what. Those retreats were fun, and also brought us closer together as a teaching community.

## **Besides the physical size of the school and the number of students, what else has changed?**

**GH:** One thing that Mary Ellen Caron [the School's first principal] felt very strongly about and I always really loved was we used to start our classrooms at the beginning of the year without any prep—intentionally. We would start with all of the furniture in the center of the room and all of the wall spaces bare. And in the first several days of the school year the children would help arrange the furniture and decorate the classroom. Part of it was choosing the class name, but they would also do all the bulletin boards, arrange all the furniture, roll out the carpets, do all the labeling, and all of those kinds of things. Everything was made by the children, which was lovely because of the ownership the kids felt.

**CJ:** I have always loved the tradition of choosing a class name. Which we still do today! But one thing that has changed is when we started, our foreign language was Japanese! Everyone learned Japanese for several years. We wanted to make sure our students were more global-minded and ready for the next century.



**SA:** Yes, we had a really good Japanese teacher back then. I don't think they could find someone that taught as well as she did after she left. We later switched from Chinese to Spanish.

**CJ:** Also I think for about the first five years or so we didn't have any sports, either. The classes weren't big enough. As a new school, I don't think we thought sports mattered.

**AN:** In the beginning, we were all doing more work, but we were closer. We saved everything. For example, if we had an extra chair, we'd never think of getting rid of it. We'd ask around, "Does anyone need a chair?" We don't do that as much anymore. We had a lot more say in what went on—there wasn't a board. We were the board. Everybody had a say in what went on. And everybody did 15 jobs.

**EH:** Oh yes, it was such a different place then. We all stayed after school. We were all on committees. There were committee meetings four days a week. Anything that had to get planned was on us as teachers. In some ways, it was such a simpler time.

**SS:** There was certainly a lot of roll-up-your-sleeves to do a lot of different things in the beginning. It was a smaller community that was dependent upon everybody pitching in to have things work out.

**KJ:** Yes, we were doing so many other things besides teaching back then. For example, when third grade swimming started, third grade teachers and Marvin, in bathing suits, had to get into the water and teach the kids how to swim.

**MM:** At Sheridan Park!

**BA:** That's definitely not something that would happen today. Another thing that has changed was when I was teaching Preschool at the Holy Name Cathedral Campus (they used to offer Preschool and Kindergarten at both campuses to accommodate parents), I used to take the whole class with one other teacher and my aid and walk down to Oak Street Beach—with no parents or other chaperones. With 20 three and four year olds!

**KJ:** That reminds me of when we used to have Field Day at Grant Park! We used to walk straight through the Loop.

**BA:** Yes, during lunch time! We'd be weaving in and out of the people. We just took that little rope, and off we went!

**While a lot has changed over the last three decades, I'm sure there are things that haven't changed. What has remained consistent throughout the years?**

**EH:** Definitely our mission has stayed consistent. Even though our sheer numbers are larger, our core is still our core. We knew who we were as a school, and we still are that same school.

**CJ:** I definitely agree. I was on the committee in the early years when we had to draft our mission statement. Yes, it has been tweaked a bit over the years for wording, but the heart of the mission has stayed the same—even the commitment to providing 30% of students with need-based scholarships, which is a key part to our dedication to diversity.

**GH:** I would like to echo what you both have said. I really appreciate that our mission has stayed consistent, and I think it is really important that we have parsed out our mission into the four Charisms. Our Charisms are the four things that won't get lost, the values we are going to stand for always—no matter how big we get or how we grow and change.

**MM:** We have always been such a great community where we are able to work together to teach the students and see them grow. I love that there have always been so many different faith-based families, and everyone is welcome.

**CJ:** I agree. Since the beginning we've had Moonbeams and Shooting Stars. I think we have always done an extraordinary job of being a welcoming and loving space for every person, no matter what your faith tradition is.

**BA:** Service has also always been part of the foundation of the school. I remember working with Misericordia from the beginning. As the School has grown, the need for service has also grown. And it's a demand from the parents! There are over 60 service events a year and they max out at capacity. This desire for service is obviously mission driven, but it's also parent driven as well. Service has always been so important to our community.





# FACULTY



*Erin Horne, pictured above left; Beth Amatangelo, pictured above right.*

**CJ:** Through our mission, we are giving our students tools for life—just learning how to respect all people. Not to brag, but we honestly do such a beautiful job of raising good, decent, human beings.

**KJ:** I completely agree. It's really incredible to see that my own kids are successful because of their FXW experience. I think we are really putting good kids out into the world. We're giving them not only a really good education, but tools and a good chance to be successful later on.

## **What have been your favorite FXW traditions from over the years?**

**SS:** I love the third grade Clap Out. I think the kids see the transition from one campus to the other as a rite of passage. And where it can be logistically harder on the grownups to switch campuses, I think there's something renewing for the kids to say "This is the same school, but I'm in this new space." In some cases, I think it helps them recharge. I think it's a really cool and exciting tradition.

**BA:** Yes, the Clap Out is one of my favorites. The old building was so narrow and tall, so it used to be so loud and echoey.

**CJ:** Oh yes, I love the Clap Out, too. It's hard not to cry, especially when everyone is clapping and screaming. It's just so beautiful. I have also always loved the Mother's Day Tea, which we used to do in both Kindergarten and third grade. I still have the teapots that my first three children made for me for the Tea framed and hanging on my wall at home.

**AN:** I like the Clap Out, too, and also the Fun Fest we used to do before school started. All the little celebrations and traditions we do here are nice.

**SA:** We used to do an all-school picnic at the end of the year which was a lot of fun. The bigger kids would be there, and everyone had a good time! But the school is much too big for something like that now.

**GH:** Yes, we used to do the picnic at Daley Bicentennial Park. We used to have greased watermelon and fun little games. And everyone used to go! We were still small enough back then for the entire school to fit in that little park.

**MM:** I have always loved the holiday program, which, like the end of year picnic, used to involve the whole school! We used to do Preschool through eighth grade in one night. The music teachers would coordinate all the kids to know the same song for the finale. It was so beautiful. You really couldn't do that now; you couldn't fit everyone.

**EH:** A favorite tradition for me has always been our sacramental preparation. It is so thoughtful, so thorough, so engaging of the children and their parents. When I was a third grade teacher, even I was learning as we would prepare for First Reconciliation. Likewise, for Confirmation, we do such a good job of preparing the eighth graders, and I think the kids really understand what they're committing to as young Catholics in the church.

**BA:** I agree. I'm not even Catholic, but I love the First Communion—it's just really well done.

**BC:** Yes, Confirmation and sacramental preparation is very powerful for me, and I love teaching it. It is a very, very special experience for me to work with all the students. In addition to that, I have always loved the Scholarship Dinner, which we've had since the very beginning. I love it because it really focuses on our mission, and now since we have an alum speaker, I typically get to work with them on their speech. So that's also really special for me.

**KJ:** The tradition I have always loved is the Ceremony of Recognition. Outside of recognizing the eighth graders, I think it's really important for the younger students to see and celebrate and to know where they're going. I love that the younger kids get to be part of it.

**BC:** Oh yes, the Ceremony of Recognition and also Graduation have always been important traditions. From the very beginning, the kids have had a hand in planning Graduation—writing the prayers of the faithful, deciding the music, and participating if they want. I think it's really important that they're involved, and it's always such a memorable event for the students and their families.



**FXW has come a long way in 30 years.  
Where do you see the School going in the  
next 30 years?**

**AN:** I believe a bigger campus is coming. I think they're probably going to get rid of both of the buildings and get a whole huge campus. I don't know where they're going to put it, though, because it has to stay convenient. Somewhere in the middle of the city—with parking.

**SA:** Oh yes, I'm sure FXW is going to grow bigger than these campuses.

**EH:** I hope in sooner than 30 years we have more space! We're forced now to create an educational program based on our space, so it would be nice for that to be flipped a little. I always think how dynamic things could be if we had more space.

**BC:** Beyond space, my hope is that we become even more inclusive. We will have teachers with more backgrounds and religions, and I hope we can reach more kids who wouldn't have the opportunity to attend a school like FXW.

**CJ:** I think we will always keep getting better while staying true to our mission. We do a lot of year-long self studies, and we take action from those. We take great issues within the school, and we gather all the research and trends that go along with that issue. We use what we've found to help us grow as a school. I think in the next 30 years, we will keep getting stronger in everything we do now and will continue to carry out our mission.

**GH:** This is a lovely and beautiful place, but it's not a perfect place. We still have work to do. I think we need to keep working and keep striving to be innovative in our teaching practices, to be developmentally appropriate, to implement best practices, to meet the needs of our kids as human beings first, and to make connections with our families—as whole families—first. If we all continue to work together and love and care for one another, that is key, no matter how we grow and change in the future.

**BA:** I really do feel like the Charisms are always going to be the foundation of the School no matter how we grow and change in the future. The School has stayed true to our values all these years, and the Charisms will continue to guide FXW throughout the next 30 years and beyond.



**Sharon Allen,**  
*Preschool Teacher*  
Hired at FXW in 1997



**Kerri Johnson,**  
*Preschool Teacher*  
Hired at FXW in 1997



**Beth Amatangelo,**  
*Preschool Teacher  
and Living the Legacy  
Service Program  
Coordinator*  
Hired at FXW in 1994



**Carroyl Jones,**  
*OSP Literacy Teacher*  
Hired at FXW in 1990



**Brigid Cashman,**  
*High School Guidance  
Chair and Religion/  
Liturgy Coordinator*  
Hired at FXW in 1992



**Marvin McCurry,**  
*Preschool Physical  
Education Teacher*  
Hired at FXW in 1994



**Georgia Hawkins,**  
*Preschool Teacher*  
Hired at FXW in 1994



**Andre Norwood,**  
*OSP Facilities and  
Maintenance*  
Hired at FXW in 1996



**Erin Horne,**  
*Director of Education/  
Principal Preschool and  
Kindergarten*  
Hired at FXW in 1999



**Sue Smeaton,**  
*Director of Admission  
and Financial Aid*  
Hired at FXW in 1993

30  
YEARS

# EVER AT HEART

## FXW alumni and soon-to-be graduates reflect on how FXW's Charisms prepared them to be successful—inside and outside the classroom.

Academics. Faith. Service. Diversity and Inclusion. These four pillars are the foundation upon which The Frances Xavier Warde School (FXW) was created 30 years ago. Over the last three decades, these pillars—which over time have developed into the School's four Charisms—have guided every lesson, field trip, celebration, after-school activity, and decision made by the School.

In short, these Charisms are more than just words in a mission statement; they define the FXW experience and are forever woven into the hearts and minds of FXW students and their families. Three FXW alumni and two Grade 8 students (soon-to-be alumni!) share below how FXW's Charisms shaped them not only as learners but as people.



### Joseph C. '20

I have been at FXW since Preschool, and it has always felt like home to me. Over the years, I have made friends who are unique individuals with different opinions, racial backgrounds, and personalities. I have spent so much time at FXW that I began to take for granted the diversity at our school. As I explored several different high schools, I started to understand the importance of having a varied group of friends who may not think or look like me. I also discovered that not every school has these characteristics. **As the end of my Grade 8 year approaches, I recognize that diversity is nonnegotiable for me when choosing my high school.**

At FXW, I have learned how to develop and challenge myself to get better at the things I find difficult by listening to and respecting other people's opinions, even when they are different from my own. Being open to new ideas helps me build lasting relationships with friends and trust with my teachers, coaches, and other staff; it also helps me be more comfortable in myself.

Over the last two years, for my service hours, I have served at My Brothers Kitchen, where I help cook and prepare meals for people living in the North Lawndale community in Chicago. I began serving there in 2018, and over the last two years I have developed relationships with the people I was serving. **Through these relationships I have learned about different backgrounds and different communities within my city.** Often times we assume things about people based on where they live or how they look but getting to know the people at My Brothers Kitchen changed my way of thinking. Service taught me that no two people are the same, and at the end of the day we are all just people who have needs, wants, and personal challenges. We can all grow and mature by sharing our perspectives and experiences with one another.

Going to a school like FXW has helped me learn and appreciate the differences between people. I know that being successful requires people to embrace each other's differences. For example, although FXW is a Catholic school, we have an abundance of students who are not Catholic. I am proud to have had the opportunity to learn about several different religions through research projects, guest speakers, and simply by interacting with people whose faith is not the same as mine.

**Service taught me that no two people are the same, and at the end of the day we are all just people who have needs, wants, and personal challenges.**



As I take my next steps toward high school, college, and beyond, I hope to use several of these diverse experiences in order to help people see the good in each other's differences, to bring people closer together, and to create a world that feels more like my FXW home.





## Nora W. '20

While change can be intimidating, I found it a blessing. After I transferred to FXW in Grade 6, I learned that all my worries would soon vanish when I entered the very doors to my new school. Every day after that has been filled with the FXW Charisms, which have undoubtedly prepared me in every respect to be the Grade 8 student I am today—not only in school, but out of school as well.

When I first transitioned to FXW in Grade 6, I was very nervous. The school I attended prior to FXW was completely different in that it was a language immersion school. Walking into the school, however, I instantly felt welcome, almost as if I had been going to the school for

**Every day at FXW, I am reminded of how fortunate and privileged I am to attend a school such as this one.**

years. **FXW's Charism of diversity and inclusion was evident within a couple of minutes of walking into my first homeroom class, as I made many friends who**

**have supported me throughout my whole time at FXW.** Now, as I am moving on to high school, I realize FXW has completely changed my mindset. I feel as though I am prepared to move on to this new chapter in my life because **FXW has taught me to be inclusive to everyone**, including showing everyone the same love and kindness I was shown at my first day at FXW.

Although FXW is a Catholic school, it is welcoming of every faith and adapts every-day curriculum to ensure everyone is included in different faith-based traditions. By the end of my first year, I learned about many different traditions and now, as a soon-to-be high school student, I am looking for a school that can reflect FXW's inclusiveness so that I can continue to understand the different cultures and religions of my classmates.

Every day at FXW, I am reminded of how fortunate and privileged I am to attend a school such as this one. As a student, I push to reflect this appreciation by donating my spare time to others. After my first few times doing service at a small elderly home, I came to love it and now enjoy going back. **FXW teaches students that giving back is an essential part of not only our school community, but to the whole world.** As I mature to an adult, I will always remember the joy and satisfaction I received to put smiles on other people's faces and will continue to serve others for the rest of my life.

Although I have had only three short years at FXW, I have learned to love it as a home. Teaching me valuable life lessons, FXW has given me so many memories and experiences that I know can neither be forgotten nor replaced. **I optimistically look forward to the different challenges the future will hold because I know that, through the support and love of such amazing teachers, I have truly been prepared by FXW.**

## Payton G. '19

From Preschool to Grade 8, I woke up at 6 a.m. to go to a school that changed my life forever. It's hard for me to believe how fast those years went by and how much I truly learned over that time. I still think back on those times, wishing I could go back and tell my younger self to savor every moment. **FXW's core Charisms not only prepared me to transition to high school but provided an excellent road map for my life well beyond my academic studies.**

When my time at FXW came to an end, I realized that all my years there were very special to me, and I would miss dearly the people and experiences I had. When I began to search for high schools, I knew I wanted an experience very similar to FXW. **This included a faith-based school with talented teachers who drive academic rigor, kindhearted, intelligent peers who take pride in their community, an environment that is inclusive and promotes diversity in its purest form, and a commitment to serve the world in which we live.** I knew it would be hard to find a place exactly like FXW, but, to my surprise, there was a high school that hit the majority of the elements I was seeking. Who knew it would be in Connecticut?

Today, I attend Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Connecticut. It's an amazing school with opportunity at every turn, but **I would have never been ready to go to Choate without first going to FXW.**

FXW taught me discipline, kindness, social skills, community engagement, and how to handle situations under pressure. I also learned to take orchestrated risks at FXW. I never realized how important these values were until I left the School; now, I apply them every single day. For example, the teachers at FXW gave me all the help in the world, but ultimately my grades were determined by my individual input. Being able to take good notes, have good study habits, and pay attention in class are all important skills I developed at FXW. **However, at FXW, I also learned it's okay to ask for help. Every single one of my teachers at FXW recognized when I was struggling in a subject or unit and helped me work through the problem to find a solution.** When I got to Choate, I realized that I couldn't do everything



*Currently a Freshman at Choate Rosemary Hall, a boarding and day school in Connecticut, Payton is pictured in front of his dorm in fall 2019.*

**FXW's core Charisms not only prepared me to transition to high school but provided an excellent road map for my life well beyond my academic studies.**

on my own. Now, when given the opportunity to meet with a teacher, I almost always take it. FXW promotes a culture of responsibility, accountability, and individuality so all students can succeed.

Despite being in Wallingford, Connecticut, I was pleasantly surprised that Choate is pretty diverse.

I could have only hoped there would be students and faculty who would look like me from all around the world. Choate's thirst for inclusion makes it an incredibly diverse school. However, I don't believe I would have been open to having friends from so many different places without first attending FXW. **FXW made inclusion and respect for differences something completely normal and routine in our everyday lives. We were taught to learn about others and evaluate people based on their actions—not because of their appearance, religion, or zip code.** It's painful to see some of my peers at Choate struggle in social settings because they really haven't spent quality time with someone who doesn't look like them. I now have friends from all around the world because at FXW I was taught to engage with people from many different backgrounds and lifestyles.

While I love academics and believe they are incredibly important, I have the same strong connection to sports. I played basketball and ran track almost every year I was at FXW's HNC campus, and the coaching was incredible. I won a lot at FXW, but I also lost a lot, too. After playing varsity basketball and running track, I came to appreciate how well my coaches helped me prepare to compete at a high school level. At Choate, we are currently at the beginning of our basketball season, and I am playing on the junior varsity team. **Because of the dedication to the game I learned at FXW, I'm the starting point guard every night.** Keeping a balance between school and sports is hard, but I know what it takes because of the training I received at FXW.

FXW's charisms are etched into the blue print of my life. Even though I'm miles away from Chicago now, I still keep a piece of FXW in my heart at all times.



*Payton is pictured second from right at FXW's annual Grade 8 Roller Coaster Rally.*



*Collin pictured with his FXW classmates (located top row, farthest to the left).*

## Collin Andrews '10

Thirty years ago, The Frances Xavier Warde School (FXW) created an environment rife with the nature of humankind: diversity. After I graduated from FXW in 2010, I attended other private schools. Each had a more homogeneous student body than what I was accustomed to at FXW, so **I became grateful for the one-of-a-kind, inner city, inclusive, private Catholic schooling that FXW offered.** This gratitude is what I playfully deem my superpower: my sensation to care for others was and is that Peter Parker spider bite I feel like I always need to itch. My name is Collin Andrews. I am the oldest brother of three. And I cried while writing this testament about my experience at The Frances Xavier Warde School.

**While FXW does good on its promise to teach math, science, social studies, language arts, sports, and drama, it is an educator of life's lessons. First and foremost, on diversity.**

**While FXW does good on its promise to teach math, science, social studies, language arts, sports, and drama, it is an educator of life's lessons. First and foremost, on diversity.**

The core identity of an FXW education is the diversity of its student body. My FXW classmates and I were too young to know how different our lives were from each other's. FXW places children on a carpet together, under a cute homeroom name (The Smart Cookies 2001-2002), and nurtures their academic and social minds. **Cultural**

**backgrounds and parents' paychecks may have distinguished us outside of class, but inside, we were all humans.** Each of us were capable of raising hands in class, picking our noses, and choosing not to use our "inside voices."

Any hypothetical ranking system of diverse backgrounds in America wouldn't have scored mine as such. I was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, crew-cut baseball player who sported no-teeth smiles. My parents went by the titles of real-estate developer and lawyer. I didn't know diversity was not something taken at face-value until FXW showed us how religion, socioeconomic status, and sexuality even separated one race of individuals from another.

The Frances Xavier Warde School has taught me many things about people. One lesson I'll never forget is simple: relationships are worth our time. The lasting impressions of my FXW experience were of my tight relationships with students who didn't sound, act, or look like me. I liked to play LEGOs with my friend Emilio. So, I went to



his birthday party year-over-year in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. Likewise, I remember running into my friends' dads as they were walking to pick them up. Each of them was very nice, so I liked to say hi whenever I saw them. After being so curious as to why one of my friends had always been picked up by her mom, she told me her dad was, and will be, in jail for a while longer.

I'm without the words to best describe how this school's commitment to inclusion actually betters our world. Mr. John O'Rourke reminded me that life isn't fair. It's not predictable or convenient. However, The Frances Xavier Warde School conveniently embraces life's lessons. With a mission of collaborative generosity, we can bring fairness to a world forever unfair.



*The Andrews family from left to right: Cameron (FXW Grade 6 student), Shauna (Mom), Dave (Dad), Quinn '16, Christine (friend of the family), and Collin '10.*

## Catherine Healy '99

The shelves in my office are stacked to the ceiling with books. Tucked in among the study Bibles, Greek dictionaries, commentaries, and congregational development texts is a slim spiral-bound volume from 1998: The Confirmation Book of Catherine Elizabeth Healy.

I don't have too many occasions to consult my confirmation book at the St. Paul & the Redeemer Episcopal Church in Hyde Park, where I now serve as rector. But every so often, after a long day at work, I pull it off the shelf and turn through the handwritten (and enthusiastically hand-decorated) pages. I remember how much it meant to me to take ownership of my faith; how hard I worked at putting that book together, carefully choosing quotations and symbols and Bible stories; and how Brigid Cashman, my Grade 8 religion teacher at FXW, counseled me that confirmation was ultimately about falling in love with Jesus. **At 13, I wasn't entirely sure what I believed about God or the church, but I thought I might be ready to follow Jesus and devote my life to him—so I decided to give it a try.**

A lot has happened in the two decades since. I majored in religion at Swarthmore College and completed my graduate work at Harvard Divinity School. I found my way into the Episcopal Church and was eventually ordained as a priest. Just last year, my wife, daughter, and I moved home to Chicago. In December, I was lucky enough to climb into the pulpit at Holy Name Cathedral for FXW's interfaith celebration of the Season of Light.



*Catherine Healy is pictured above as the keynote speaker at FXW's Holy Name Cathedral campus Seasons of Light Prayer Service in December 2019.*

**FXW's culture also taught me early that the purpose of education is not to help us enrich ourselves, but to empower us to be of service to others.**

I couldn't help smiling as all the students clambered noisily into the pews, and I enjoyed watching them read, sing, and present posters on the winter traditions of different cultures and faiths. When it was my turn to address them, I wanted to tell them something about

how much my time at FXW had meant to me. But I found my voice catching in my throat.

**In countless ways, my nine years at FXW laid a strong foundation for the rest of my life.** I was fortunate to have incredible teachers who fostered my love of reading and encouraged me to approach all academic work as an exciting challenge. Thanks to them, I learned how to push myself to excel—and how to ask for help when I was in over my head. For me, that latter skill of asking for help turned out to be the most important key to future success.

FXW's culture also taught me early that the purpose of education is not to help us enrich ourselves, but to empower us to be of service to others. My middle-school community service commitments didn't seem like a big deal at the time, but they led me toward tutoring in high school, volunteer EMT work in college, leading a Girl Scout troop in my twenties, and, finally, a vocation in service to the church. My teachers and role models embodied the wisdom that I try to live by in my own daily life and work: "Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

**Most importantly, though, FXW gave me a vision of a diverse, progressive, inclusive, and joyful Christian faith.** Years after I graduated, I came out of the closet and wondered if there could still be a place for me in the church. When I thought about my years at FXW, I knew that it was possible. In my life as an Episcopal priest, I try to offer other people the same sense of meaning, purpose, and comfort in the radical love of Jesus that FXW gave to me.

**I will be 35 this year, and I am still discovering new ways in which FXW's charisms have changed my life for the better.** My own daughter is still in diapers, but I am already hopeful that I will be able to pass the same Charisms on to her. Maybe someday I'll be turning the pages of her confirmation book. I can only hope so.



**Holy Name Cathedral Campus**

751 N. State St.  
Chicago, IL 60654  
312-466-0700

**Old St. Patrick's Campus**

120 S. Desplaines St.  
Chicago, IL 60661  
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