

DIOCESE OF GREENSBURG

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\$1 million-plus for financial assistance for Catholic school families in Diocese of Greensburg

GREENSBURG — For the first time in its nearly 70-year history, the Diocese of Greensburg has more than \$1 million to award as financial assistance to families in Catholic schools in the coming academic year. Families that are making more than \$100,000 a year qualify for the scholarships.

There are 13 schools in the Diocese of Greensburg in Westmoreland, Indiana, Fayette and Armstrong counties, including Greensburg Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School in Hempfield Township and Geibel Catholic Junior-Senior High School in Connellsville.

While pre-K and elementary enrollment trends have been positive recently, the two junior-senior high schools have the capacity to enroll many more students. Affordability has been an issue for many families over the years.

“This announcement means it’s time for families to visit a Catholic school near them,” said Dr. Maureen Marsteller, superintendent of the Office of Catholic Schools.”

Catholic schools have scheduled enrollment open houses in the coming weeks, with open houses set at Geibel Catholic March 10 at 12:30 p.m. and Greensburg Central Catholic March 26 at 7 p.m.

For a complete schedule of Catholic school open houses, go to www.dioceseofgreensburg.org/schools.

The increase in available aid is a result of changes in Pennsylvania’s education tax credit program, according to Michael Lucotch, director of development for the diocese.

This relatively new source of scholarship assistance is in addition to funds available from existing diocesan and school endowments.

“The diocese has raised \$800,000 since July 1 by working with the Central Pennsylvania Scholarship Fund (CPSF). We expect to raise additional funds in 2019, and will have more than

\$1 million to award in tuition assistance to Catholic school families for next school year,” Lucotch said.

Students are eligible for scholarships from the foundation if their household income is not more than \$100,608 (for a family with one child). That income eligibility requirement rises \$15,608 for each additional child.

Students who live within the boundaries of a low-achieving school, as determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and meet income requirements also are eligible for scholarships.

Pennsylvania established the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program in 2001 to offer tax credits to qualifying businesses in exchange for contributions to scholarship organizations. The Diocese of Greensburg formed the Scholarship Partners Foundation (SPF) in 2001 to accept those contributions and provide scholarships to income-qualified families. The SPF awarded nearly \$460,000 in scholarship awards for the 2018-19 school year.

The Pennsylvania tax code was amended in 2015 to add Pennsylvania personal income tax as one of the taxes for which contributors may receive credits, Lucotch said.

“That was a game-changer,” he said. “It allows participants to re-direct their personal income tax obligation to a Catholic school of their choice for use as tuition assistance.

“The CPSF passes through 100 percent of each participant’s contribution to the school of their choice.”

Lucotch and CPSF personnel have worked with representatives from schools and with volunteers around the diocese to help direct prospective participants to the program.

With the start of tax season, Lucotch encourages people interested in participating in the program to discuss it with their accountants and call him at the diocese for further information.

In addition to the funds from the state’s tax credit programs, the diocese and its parishes provided more than \$5.2 million to support Catholic schools in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018, which helped keep each school’s tuition below the full cost of educating a student.

How to contribute to the tax-credit scholarship program

Businesses and individuals with a Pennsylvania tax liability can participate in the state tax credit programs. For information, contact Michael Lucotch, director of development for the diocese, 724-552-2503, or Collin Bisignani at the Central Pennsylvania Scholarship Fund, 724-961-4170.

How to apply for a scholarship

Contact the local Catholic school. For a list of Catholics schools in the Diocese of Greensburg, go to <https://www.dioceseofgreensburg.org/schools>.