

## **St. Joseph's' Catholic School named one of the country's best** *School makes honor roll*

By Cindy Landrum, staff writer

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What started with 13 students, a donation of \$800 and nine community members willing to take a chance is now one of the nation's best Catholic high schools.

Greenville's St. Joseph's Catholic School has been named one of 50 high schools nationwide, and the only one in South Carolina, to be named to the Catholic High School Honor Roll.

"When we started out in 1993, we were so convinced it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing for our kids and it was the right thing for the community," said Margaret Ann Moon, one of the founders of St. Joseph's Catholic School and board president.

But they never thought that just 12 years later St. Joseph's would be named one of the nation's best based on academic excellence, Catholic identity and civic education.

"In some respects, it's a confirmation of what we've known about ourselves for a while - that good things are happening here academically and socially," said Headmaster Keith Kiser.

The school has no gym. It doesn't have a library or media center on campus.

But what it does have, according to students, is a top-notch faculty, tough academic classes and an atmosphere that promotes respect, trust and learning.

"Our teachers are really tough," said Jackie Boyle, a 16-year-old sophomore. "They're really passionate about what they teach. They really want you to learn more."

Zach Svec, a 15-year-old sophomore, said the school has a "sort of communal atmosphere."

"I was in public school and everybody was separated. There were clear-cut grades," he said. "Here, there's a mix of upperclassmen and underclassmen. It's really open and warm here."

Kiser said two things are non-negotiable when it comes to teachers hired to teach at St. Joseph's competency in their field and an embrace of the school's Catholic Christian mission.

"We've been able to assemble an incredible faculty and staff," Kiser said. "We have a staff of men and women who are competent, gifted and dedicated to our students."

St. Joseph's was named among the Top 20 schools for academics, which consisted of PSAT scores, number of years of course work offered and for number of Advanced Placement classes.

Other things considered included the use of textbooks that conformed with catechism, whether a school offered or required economic and civics classes, the percentage of Catholic students and faculty, and whether ministers were on staff.

There are more than 1,300 Catholic secondary schools in the nation.

The honor roll is a project of the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty. It was produced in consultation with a national advisory board comprised of Catholic college presidents and Catholic scholars.

Schools selected ranged from the 23-student Holy Rosary Academy in Anchorage, Alaska, to St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., a school with 2,100 students.

St. Joseph's has 371 students in grades 6 through 12.