

The Schools Office of the Archdiocese of Newark is so excited to be a part of the Catholic Alumni Partnership project (A.K.A. CAP). This project is aimed at reconnecting our Catholic elementary schools with their alumni. These alumni have many gifts and talents, and their Catholic elementary schools need them. They don't just need financial support, but they need advisory board members, volunteers for career day, and living history speakers.

The Catholic Alumni Partnership project (A.K.A. CAP) was started back in 2010 when the Archdiocese of New York had a conversation with one of their donors, Mr. Robert Wilson. Although Mr. Wilson, a self-made, multi-millionaire, was an atheist, he believed in Catholic schools. Over the years he realized that many of the the most responsible, conscientious, and reliable people that he knew had a common denominator—Catholic school. Mr. Wilson then proceeded to help not only the Archdiocese of New York, but also the Diocese of Brooklyn/Queens, the Diocese of Rockville Center, the Diocese of Buffalo, and the Dioceses of Hartford and Bridgeport to find their alumni. Although Mr. Wilson passed away before he could fully launch the second round of this project (of which the Archdiocese of Newark is a part) The Wilson Trust continues to fund the project according to Mr. Wilson's wishes.

The alumni who were located in the first cohort of the project have been generous, giving back to their Catholic elementary schools ever since they were put back in touch. These graduates realize that their Catholic elementary schools gave them the foundation to be where they are today. Putting forth your best effort, being kind and respectful to those around you, being on time, working collaboratively toward a common goal, making ethical choices, considering your actions' impact, etc. were all life skills that were learned in Catholic elementary school. The single largest reason that these alumni have given as to why they didn't support their former schools before is simple: no one ever asked. The relationships that have bloomed upon these reconnections have been wonderful. The Archdiocese of Newark is so blessed to be a part of the second group to enter this project. The grant from the Wilson trust of over \$700,00 is making this project a reality.

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Starting in the late fall of 2014 through late spring 2015 we collected records from our currently operating archdiocesan Catholic elementary schools covering the graduates from 1950-1990. Additionally, there were some records that we already had that were pulled in conjunction with the SEEDS program several years ago. It was a tough project to manage. All the records were on cardboard cards in filing cabinets. Many were written in faded fountain pen. Some had abbreviations for towns, or referred to sections of a town when indicating addresses. Additionally, up until the mid 1960's, there were no zip codes. Aside from these challenges, was the challenge of the weather. The snow and the extreme cold slowed the project down as many of these record cabinets were in unheated storerooms and sub-basements.

Once we obtained all the records and transferred these records into electronic form, the records were then “cleaned up”: zip codes added, abbreviations for towns changed to proper names, sections of towns changed to the proper name of the town, SEEDS records reformatted to match CAP formatting, etc. These “cleaned up” records were merged into one master file, and this file was then sent to Blackbaud (the premiere company for alumni research and donor relations) to research where our alumni are today, what are the names they go by today, and what their email addresses are. Through this, we were able to locate close to 100,000 alumni.

Despite our best efforts, nothing is 100% guaranteed. The saddest part were the records that we couldn't read or obtain. Some had faded over time rendering the information unreadable. Natural disaster also struck in the form of Hurricane Sandy destroying thousands of records in Hoboken alone. There were also one or two cases of overzealous spring cleaning back in the 1980's where records were mistakenly discarded. Some records met their end when buildings were damaged by fire, and the subsequent water used to put out the fire. If an alumni doesn't hear from us, it's not that we don't want to reach out, but their records might have been among the missing. ***If you are an alumni of our Catholic schools we want to reconnect with you. Please send us an email at alumni@rcanschools.org or phone us at 973-497-4258.***