

# FSC

January 2026

*Who's hungry?*

## “Soul On Fire”: A Story of Everyday Heroes Amid Tragedy

Jacob Wiegand | [jacobwiegand@archstl.org](mailto:jacobwiegand@archstl.org)

John O’Leary said a movie made about his life isn’t meant to portray him as a hero. Instead, “Soul On Fire” is the inspiring story of the heroes in his life who walked alongside him through tragedy.

The film, which was released nationwide in theaters Oct. 10, portrays O’Leary’s survival from a fire that burned 100% of his body when he was 9 years old. He was given a 1% chance of living. The movie is based on a motivational book, “On Fire: 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life,” that he wrote in 2016.

A member of Holy Redeemer Parish in Webster Groves, O’Leary has shared his story with hundreds of thousands of people all over the world, calling on them make intentional choices to live “radically inspired” lives every day.

Filming for “Soul On Fire” took place in St. Louis in the fall of 2023, taking advantage of a new tax credit in Missouri signed into law earlier that year. Actor Joel Courtney portrays O’Leary as a young adult, with John Corbett as O’Leary’s father, Dennis, and William H. Macy portraying sportscaster Jack Buck, who

befriended O’Leary after the accident. Many of O’Leary’s family and friends played extras in the movie.

O’Leary said he’s still amazed at how the story made it to the big screen. The project took root nearly a decade ago when he met Linda Huntington, one of the film’s executive producers, at a speaking engagement, and Huntington asked him if he had considered making his story into a movie. Eventually O’Leary was introduced to screenwriter Gregory Poirier, director Sean McNamara (“Soul Surfer” and “A Wing and a Prayer”) and others who brought the film to life.

“God’s hand was just in this thing throughout it all,” he said. “At every single step along the way, God opened up a door that had previously been closed.”

A part of the team that chose the actors for “Soul On Fire,” O’Leary said he wanted them to know they weren’t telling a story about him being a hero, but rather that they were telling the stories of the heroes who were part of his life.

The movie’s promotional poster is an image of the actor portraying O’Leary with his back to the



camera and his arms raised in the air. Filling the rest of the poster is a mosaic of images of everyone who was part of his journey.

“I wanted to make sure the light shined brightest not on John, but on the heroes,” he said. “What ‘Soul On Fire’ puts in front of audiences is an example of an honest hero – and they look like custodial staff members, they look like CNAs and RNs, like sorority girls who see beauty in a guy with no fingers, and they look like a mom and a dad praying before meals.”

The movie shows ordinary moments of life with a tragedy interwoven and ultimately a message of redemption in *cont.*

## We Serve Great People!

*cont. from cover page*

the end, O'Leary said. "What we wanted to portray is a call in your life to recognize that in the mundane is the miracle and in the broken is the good," he said. "And don't wait for someone else's hero story to come forward; be that example for someone else in theirs."

O'Leary brought his father, Dennis, to a screening of the film in May, just a few weeks before Dennis died on May 30 at the age of 80. His father was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease when he was 48 years old and had largely lost his ability to stand and speak toward the end of his life.

Dennis and his wife, Susan, had a cameo in the movie, appearing right behind the actors playing themselves at John and Beth O'Leary's wedding.

"The wild thing about that is my dad was unable to stand, and yet in that moment when he heard Sean say 'action,' my wonderful dad, for one of the very last times in his life, pulls himself up in the pew and stands up," John O'Leary said.

At the screening, Dennis shared his review of the movie, and what were some of the last words he would speak before he died: "What a gift."

After the release of "Soul On Fire," O'Leary plans to share on his website, [johnolearyinspires.com](http://johnolearyinspires.com), a series of short videos from some of the primary characters in the film, what characteristics they modeled and "what modeling that might do for others in your life, including yourself," he said.

"We want people to recognize this film, it's not about feeling, it's about moving," he said.

## New President at SLUH



Father Matthew C. Stewart, SJ, has been named the next president of St. Louis University High School, effective July 1, 2026. This concluded a comprehensive national search for the successor of Alan R. Carruthers, who has served as president since 2018.

Father Stewart is a 1998 SLUH graduate and has served as principal at the school since 2023. He is the first Jesuit to assume the role of president since Father Paul G. Sheridan, SJ (1997-2005) and the first Jesuit alumnus since Father Robert T. Costello, SJ '47 (1992-97).

After entering the Society of Jesus in 2009, Father Stewart served in a variety of roles in Jesuit schools, including adjunct professor at Saint Louis University, associate director of the Alum Service Corps, chaplain and teacher at Loyola Academy, board member of Arrupe Jesuit High and associate university minister and faculty member at Regis University. He serves on the board of trustees at Rockhurst University and on the SLUH board of members. He has a licentiate in sacred theology from Boston College, a master of music in choral conducting from the University of Denver, a master's in philosophical resources from Fordham University and a master's in theology from Saint Louis University.





## FSC Family Features

On Friday October 31st, Marlon Merrill's daughter Marlona and her husband Joshua Morgan welcomed their second child, Matthew Ezekiel. He weighed in at 5lbs 7oz and is joined by his sister Atarah and cousins Major and Marlee, which makes Marlon a four-time grandparent! Marlon is a District Supervisor at FSC.



Bridgette Beaman's son Landon is committing to Culver-Stockton College for football. Bridgette is our manager at Purina Farms.

Al and Nancy Sanders became the proud grandparents of a baby girl on 12/17/2025. Eliza June Cooper was born to their daughter Abby and her husband Mitch. Al is our Purchasing Director.



“

What the new year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the new year.

VERN MCLELLAN



# We Serve *Great People!*

## A Morning of Math, Manners, and Memories

The cafeteria at City Academy looked a little different one morning last spring. With crisp black tablecloths, live violin music provided by Violin Teacher Laura Reycraft, and parent volunteers dressed as waitstaff, it was transformed into “Café City” – an upscale dining experience designed to teach kindergartners and sixth graders lessons in etiquette, financial literacy, and community.

What began as a simple idea quickly grew into something much bigger. “We were at a professional development and just talking about math,” recalled Kindergarten STEAM Teacher Rochelle Bain-Wright. “I asked Mrs. [Stephanie] Oteng if she had ever heard of restaurant math, and she hadn’t. I explained it, and it just came out of us having a conversation. We didn’t know it was going to keep building – but it did.”



*Kindergartener Khairi puts his cutting skills to the test.*

The two teachers decided to make “restaurant math” the centerpiece of a capstone project. In the weeks leading up to the brunch, sixth graders and kindergartners were paired into “families.” Together, they created family names, designed menus, and practiced the skills they would need for the big day. Guest speaker (and kindergarten mom) Shalisa Wings, from First Bank, talked to students about “needs and wants” and how to make good choices with money. In the classroom, kindergartners practiced cutting with forks and knives – using Play-Doh as their entrée – and learned how to carry polite conversations at an appropriate voice level.

On the morning of the event, students and guests, including Head of School Jarrett Young, President and Co-Founder Don Danforth, and several staff members, were greeted by a hostess and seated with their “family.” Parent volunteers played the role of waiters and waitresses, serving a menu of milk, juice, biscuits, oatmeal, eggs, hashbrowns, and turkey sausage. As food arrived, kindergartners tallied the totals on their guest checks while their sixth-grade partners checked the math and calculated the tip using percentages.



*Head of School Jarrett Young shares a toast of orange juice with his table.*

For Bain-Wright, the collaboration between the younger and older scholars in the school was central to the project’s success. “Sixth graders are supposed to be the leaders in our building – the students that others should emulate,” she explained. “Having them paired with kindergartners helped both groups boost their self-esteem. I think the sixth graders really took ownership, coming up with their family names, designing the menu, and helping guide the conversations at the tables.” The event also became a showcase for community involvement. Parents eagerly embraced their roles as servers, even coordinating their outfits. “Once I told the parents what we were doing and asked if they could volunteer, they were so excited,” Bain-Wright said. “The night before they were calling each other asking, ‘Are you wearing heels? Are you wearing flat shoes? Are we all



## We Serve Great People!

wearing white tops?" I think the parents took it very seriously. It was a great event, but it had meaning behind it."

Chief Financial and Operating Officer Brian Gross was one of the special invited guests that morning. "I thought they did a tremendous job overall," he said. "One of the parts that stood out to me the most was seeing parents engaging and serving the kids. You could see how much the students enjoyed the experience. To be able to see that community aspect between faculty, staff, parents, and students – it was very special."

Behind the scenes, Bain-Wright worked with Gross, Food Service

Consultants (FSC), and Food Service Manager Laura Carpenter to make the vision a reality. "Rochelle gave us the vision," Gross explained.

"The FSC crew had some flexibility to support it and provide the food in a way that worked for the event. They were all hands on deck."

Looking back, Bain-Wright emphasized that the heart of "Café City" was more than just math lessons or table manners – it was about giving students something to remember. "When I had my interview here at City Academy, I came from a school district where the most important thing was data," she



*Rochelle Bain-Wright seats a family at their reserved table.*

said. "And I told them, if I don't do anything else, I want to make memories. I want students to walk away with something more than just their test scores. Doing this created a memory, and I think they'll always remember it."

## Lutheran High School – St. Charles freshmen and sophomore Scholar Bowl teams had an incredible day at the Orchard Farm tournament!

We're proud to celebrate three Cougars who finished in the top 15 for individual scoring:

- Nathan Williams – 15th with 38 points per game
- Landon Bargaen – 10th with 52 points per game
- Miriam Gimbel – 2nd with an impressive 80 points per game!

And a huge shoutout to the B Team, who placed 2nd overall! Team members: Anna Layfield, Miriam Gimbel, Emily Riemenschneider, Hannah Fessler, and Nathaniel Silbey (Not pictured: Anna and Nathaniel)



*Way to go, Cougars!* Keep growing, learning, and shining—both in knowledge and character!



## Sports

### MLB Coach



Tony Vitello is the new manager of the San Francisco Giants, having been hired directly from his position as the head coach of the University of Tennessee baseball team. He is the first person to become an MLB manager straight from a college program without any prior professional coaching experience. His hiring is considered a bold move by the Giants, who are betting on his success in building a championship culture at the collegiate level to translate to the major leagues. He led the Volunteers to their first-ever College World Series championship in 2024, after three other College World Series appearances during his tenure.

Tony Vitello's father is Greg Vitello, a hall-of-fame high school soccer and baseball coach who had a significant influence on Tony's baseball career. Greg coached Tony at De Smet Jesuit High School in St. Louis, and the two have a close relationship rooted in their shared love of baseball. Greg is very proud of his son.



### SLUH wins 2025 MSHSAA Class 4 Soccer Championship

For the first time in school history, the Jr. Bills are back-to-back MSHSAA Soccer Champions!

### Congratulations to Jacob at Bishop DuBourg High School - taking 5th in the state for eSports!



### DeSmet Wins!

The DeSmet Jesuit High School Yellow Buckets take the Jesuit Cup back home with a 5-2 win over SLUH in an electric matchup! *Congrats, Gentlemen!*

## Sports

### St. Pius X Lancers Football Head to State

The excitement is soaring at St. Pius X Catholic School in Festus, Missouri, as the Lancers football team has officially secured their first ever spot in the Class 2 State Championship. With grit, heart, and exceptional teamwork, the Lancers have battled through a standout season. Overcoming challenges, exceeding expectations, and uniting their school community behind a shared sense of success.

Led by dedicated coaches and fueled by the unwavering spirit of their players, this run to state reflects countless hours of preparation, determination, and faith. The Lancers have shown what it means to play with purpose, represent their school with class, and lift each other up on and off the field.

As St. Pius X rallies behind the team, they congratulate their athletes and coaches on this incredible accomplishment. The road to state is a testament to their hard work, and the entire Lancer community stands proudly behind them.

*Go Lancers!*



Saint Louis Priory School Soccer Team are District Champions! Varsity soccer defeats Chaminade 3-2 in overtime! Sean Kaveney '26 with all three goals!



Congratulations to the seven Lutheran South soccer players who earned postseason honors, including Cooper DeShryver who was recognized as the All-Region Goalkeeper of the Year!

Cooper and Evan Caron, both seniors, were named to the All-District, All-Conference, All-Region, All-State, and All-Academic teams.

Sophomores Josh Fabbiano and Alex Reis were recognized on the All-District and All-Conference teams.

Brayden Buss and Charlie Pike earned All-District and All-Conference honorable mentions. And Luca Wangia also received All-District honorable mention.

*Well done, Lancers!*



## Café Fun!

Holy Infant celebrated Halloween  
with fun treats and a raffle





## Café Fun!

Rosalyn at Mary Queen of Peace made a great sign and baskets for the children to win.



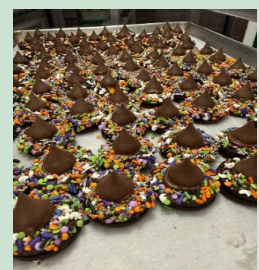
Piper and Evelyn won the raffle baskets at Sacred Heart in Valley Park.



St. Gerard had a Fall raffle and the lucky winners were very happy with their prizes.



Visitation Academy made some yummy Halloween treats!

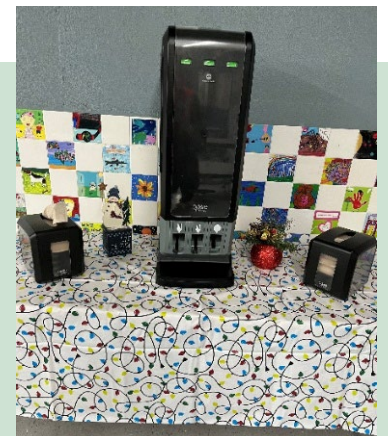


## Café Fun!

The Holy Infant team enjoys coming up with new ideas for their Elf on a Shelf!



The café crew at St. Catherine Laboure was in the spirit of Christmas with these festive decorations!





## Café Fun!

The team at DeSmet enjoyed National Cookie Day!



Holy Infant had some fun baskets for their December raffle.



The café staff at Saint Louis Priory School provided warm cookies to the students on Warm Cookie Day.



There were fun prizes for the winter raffle at St. Gerard.



Millicent and Lisa received a special Christmas gift from the principal Mrs. Chapman, Father Mark and two student elves at Loyola Academy.





## Café Fun!

Liz at Our Lady of the Pillar hosted cookie parties for 45 students. The children had a great time baking cookies together.







# FSC Excellence Awards

The creation of the FSC Excellence Awards was announced at our Manager Meeting in October 2023. Supervisors and Office Staff nominate accounts for each of the awards and a panel, including Home Office staff, will collaborate and select the winners in each category and they will be presented at three of our managers' meetings.

**The parameters for each category are as follows:**

- **Food** – Cost, Presentation, Inventory, Handling and Creativity.
- **Safety & Sanitation** – Health Inspections, Slip Resistant Shoes, Gloves, Personal Hygiene, Food Temps and Food Storage.
- **Communication** – Paperwork Timeliness, Response Time to Messages, Client Relations, Interaction with Students & School Staff, and Interaction with Their Team.

The winning team receives a poster to hang in their kitchen and each employee receives a pin signifying the category in which they won the award. Our hope is for employees to try their best to win all three pins!

**The winners of the Latest Round of Awards are:**

**Food** Marianist Retreat Center

**Safety & Sanitation** Visitation Academy

**Communication** Purina Farms

This year we added a new category **Exclamation Point!** The inaugural winners were Jessica Cambron-St. John School and Katie Creach-Lutheran High School St. Charles and Events by FSC.

FSC wants to thank all the nominees and winners for their hard work and dedication.

*You make us proud!*



Winners, L-R: Food Category–Marianist Retreat Center, Vadym Sytyashenko, Manager; Safety & Sanitation–Visitation Academy, Maria Boylan, Manager; Communication–Purina Farms, Bridgette Beaman, Manager; Exclamation Point!–St. John School, Jessica Cambron, Manager; Exclamation Point!–Lutheran High School St. Charles–Katie Creach, Manager and Events by FSC

## Food Talk



By: Lisa Baragiola

### Understanding Food Marketing Terms

Each year brings a host of new food products and trendy terms and claims to describe them. Too often, however, blurry definitions and vague usage can lead to confusion. Learn which food marketing phrases can help you make healthier choices – and which terms won't make much of a difference to your diet.

#### “Natural”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates many of the health claims on food labels. However, despite its appearance on packaging, there is not a formal definition for the use of the term “natural.”

According to the FDA website, the agency considers the term to mean “nothing artificial or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to, a food that would not normally be expected to be in that food.” However, it does not apply to food production methods (such as pasteurization or irradiation) or pesticides.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) also provides guidance on certain food terms and allows the use of the term “natural” to be used in the labeling of flavorings. However, those ingredients are subject to FDA regulations. Ingredients that come from animal sources also must be disclosed and cannot be listed as “natural flavoring.”

#### “Processed,” “Unprocessed” and “Ultra-Processed”

These terms are frequently misunderstood. Many people think of “processed” foods as unhealthy products with empty calories, and “unprocessed” foods as everything else. Neither of these beliefs is entirely correct.

The foods many people think of when they hear “processed” are actually “ultra-processed” foods with added sugar and salt. For example, desserts, chips and many convenience foods are ultra-processed. However, many foods go through some type of processing before they're eaten – even if it's just washing and chopping. Some examples of healthy foods that have been processed include shelled nuts, tofu and frozen vegetables.

#### “Local”

The local food movement refers to buying food that is grown close to where you live. This movement is connected to a broader philosophy of environmental sustainability and supporting the local economy. Still, even “local” has nuances depending upon whom you ask, as the same distance may not be used by everyone.

#### “Whole”

There is no regulatory definition for describing whole foods. The term generally refers to foods that are minimally processed and do not have any added ingredients. By most definitions, whole foods include fresh produce, whole grains, meat and fish – more specifically, any food that appears close to its original form with minimal processing.

#### “Organic”

Of all these terms, “organic” has the most specific criteria and legal meaning. As defined by the USDA, organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth





## Odds & Ends

hormones. Organic plant foods are produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation. A government-approved certifier must inspect the farm to *cont.* ensure these standards are met. In addition to organic farming, there are USDA standards for organic handling and processing.

There are three levels of organic claims for food:

- 100% Organic: Products that are completely organic or made of only organic ingredients qualify for this claim and a USDA Organic seal.
- Organic: Products in which at least 95% of its ingredients are organic qualify for this claim and a USDA Organic seal.
- Made with Organic Ingredients: These are food products in which at least 70% of ingredients are certified organic. The USDA organic seal cannot be used but “made with organic ingredients” may appear on its packaging.

*Reviewed March 21, 2025  
www.eatright.org*

### Start Spreading the News!

If you would like us to include stories about your school or business, please let us know. The information can be sent to Susan Parisi ([susan@foodserv.org](mailto:susan@foodserv.org)) or mailed to Food Service Consultants, 8534 Watson Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63119. If sending photos, it is best to send in digital format. Newsletters are published as follows:

<u>Newsletter Date</u>	<u>Deadline for Info</u>
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April	March 22nd
October	September 11th
January	December 15th

Some of the information in this newsletter was taken from articles originally published in the St. Louis Review, and various school newspapers and social media.

### \$100 Recruitment Bonus

We are always looking for good employees, and the best source for that is with our present staff.

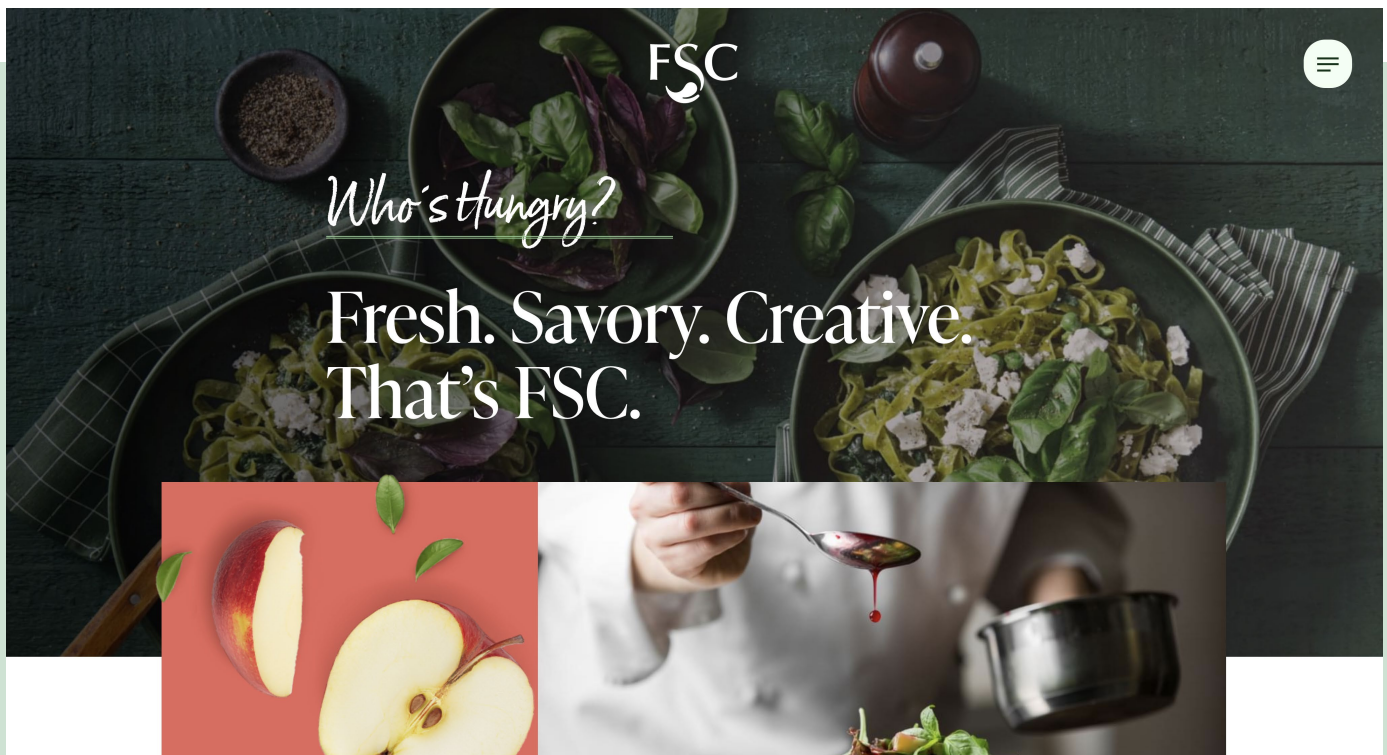
As an incentive to help recruit new people, we will pay a \$100 bonus to any present employee who brings in an applicant who is subsequently hired and completes 3 months of employment. This does not apply to people you hire for your account.

All non-salaried personnel are eligible for this bonus.

Applicants may apply by email to [susan@foodserv.org](mailto:susan@foodserv.org)



8534 Watson Road  
St. Louis, MO 63119



## Digital Edition

In an effort to expand our Going Green program we offer a digital version of the FSC Insider. If you would prefer this version over the printed version, please email [susan@foodserv.org](mailto:susan@foodserv.org). Once the digital version is available, you will be sent a link to view the document. *Thank you.*

**Visit our website!**

**[www.foodserviceconsultants.org](http://www.foodserviceconsultants.org)**