

St. Joseph's High School selected to top national list

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When St. Joseph's High School opened its doors in 1993, its enrollment topped out at 13 students and it only offered classes for grades nine through 12.

The school now has an enrollment of 351 students and educates grades six through 12.

Beginning with little monetary support, the school has steadily grown. It has now been recognized as one of the top 50 Catholic high schools in the nation by a Michigan-based organization called Catholic High School Honor Roll.

The honor roll is a project of the Action Institute, a non-profit education organization.

Keith Kiser, headmaster of the school, said he is especially proud for the school's founders, who made a heroic sacrifice to start the school.

"They took what we all refer to as a giant leap of faith by starting a school with 13 students. They had virtually no money in the bank. This was the fourth effort to start a Catholic high school in the Upstate and they did it," Kiser said. "I'm personally pleased for those founders that a national organization has recognized their efforts."

Kiser also said the honor roll's primary goal is to encourage schools to educate its students, as effectively as possible, in a way that integrates the Catholic faith and prepares them for after high school.

"They invited 1,300 schools to make an application for the honor roll. We did that and found out, earlier this fall, that we had been selected as one of the top 50," Kiser said.

The accolades were broken down in three categories that include academics, Catholic identity and civic education.

St. Joseph's ranked in the top 20 in the academics category.

All Catholic high schools in the nation were invited to apply for inclusion by completing three surveys, and about 250 schools responded, said Kevin Schmiesing, director of Action Institute.

"We sent out approximately 1,300 surveys. From that pool of 250 schools, we came up with a top 50 list, so it was really on the basis of the data that we received from those surveys that we made the assessment," Schmiesing said. "This is the first year for the honor roll, and we are already working on next year."