



## **Josephium Academy of the Sacred Heart: Community Activation Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

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## **Abstract**

This paper outlines the development of a strategic plan for Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, located in Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood of Wicker Park. Due to declining enrollment, Josephinum is seeking a strategy to engage the local community and increase student enrollment. Our recommendations focus on understanding community needs and perceptions, evaluating current outreach efforts, and proposing actionable strategies to strengthen community involvement and enhance the academy's visibility, thereby increasing enrollment.

## **Introduction & Context**

Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart is a private, Roman Catholic, all-girls high school in Chicago, Illinois. A French woman of the same name founded Josephinum in 1890. Originally, the school served German girls, then Ukrainian girls, and now predominantly Black and Hispanic girls. Although Josephinum is located in Wicker Park, a neighborhood known for its arts scene, trendy restaurants, shopping, and nightlife (Spewer, 2025), its students come from 44 different zip codes across the Chicagoland area, mostly from the West and South sides, including Pilsen and Humboldt Park, rather than the local community.

The school prides itself on small class sizes, with an average student-to-teacher ratio of 10:1, and offers strong college-prep, arts, and theater programs. Approximately 90% of students receive financial aid. Tuition is around \$9,000, though most students pay only \$1,000 per year. Additionally, all incoming freshmen receive their first year of tuition for free. Josephinum is recognized as a safe, nurturing environment that fosters bold, tenacious young women while emphasizing diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and student voice.

However, Josephinum also faces several limitations. At its peak in the 1990s, the school enrolled more than 500 students, but current enrollment has dropped to 77, and local awareness is notably low. Additionally, its religious affiliation presents a challenge: only 25% of students identify as Catholic, yet mandatory religious services remain in place due to its Sacred Heart identity.

## **Methods**

The purpose of this project is to increase enrollment through strengthened community engagement and strategic outreach. To develop our insights and recommendations, we applied a mixed-methods approach that incorporated both primary and secondary research.

Our primary research began with an in-depth conversation with Josephinum's principal, Nichole Jackson. This meeting provided essential background on the school's history, enrollment trends, student demographics, and current challenges. These insights shaped the direction and priorities of our secondary research.

Building on this foundation, we conducted secondary research to analyze community needs, competitive educational environments, and best practices in school outreach and engagement. Together, these methods informed a comprehensive understanding of Josephinum's context and opportunities for growth.

The Segment Directory, along with our Media Planning Calendar (see appendices #1 and 2), provides a cumulative way to track possible community partners like female-owned businesses, artists, local cafes, restaurants, and community organizations and groups, as well as surrounding middle schools that can be referenced for targeted marketing efforts. This can be used to track collaborations and maintain relationships with community members over the years.

## Insights

Our community-angled campaign focuses on three main strategy components: community activation, creative collaboration, and student mobilization. These three strategies will allow Josephinum to improve name recognition in the Wicker Park and surrounding communities, identify itself as a hub of a unique and creative education experience, and invite increased enrollment by outwardly sharing the highlights of what it means to be a “Jo Girl.”

Research shows that the community around a school makes a real difference. When students are supported by strong neighborhood networks, they feel a greater sense of belonging and emotional safety, which leads to better engagement in school. The same is true for arts programs. Studies consistently show that students involved in the arts do better academically, show up more often, and have fewer behavior issues. Arts education also helps build creativity, confidence, empathy, and teamwork. For students who may be at risk or marginalized, these programs can even increase graduation rates and boost college readiness. Altogether, this reinforces that strengthening Josephinum’s community connections and arts opportunities isn’t only a good idea, but a proven way to support student growth and school success.

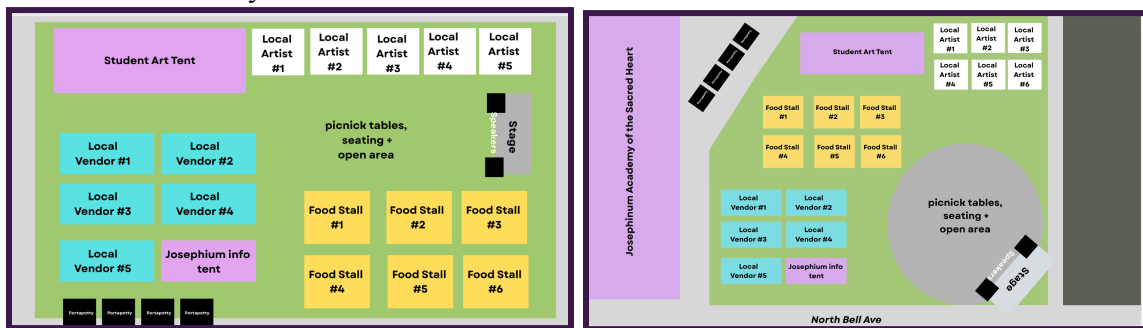
## Recommendations

### Community Activation – Sacred Arts in the Park

The timeline for our campaigning starts in May of 2026, kicking off the beginning of the summer and the end of the school year with our Sacred Arts in the Park event. This idea was derived from our core concept of community activation; SacredArt in the Park is a community-wide fair hosted annually at Josephinum’s field or in a neighboring park. The event showcases student artwork nominated by their instructors, celebrating creativity, empowerment, and the school’s arts program. Local artists, vendors, and community organizations are invited to participate by hosting booths for a small entry fee. Proceeds directly support Josephinum’s arts initiatives.

SacredArt in the Park will strengthen local partnerships with Wicker Park’s wide community of artists, businesses, and community groups, while raising awareness of Josephinum’s robust arts program and mission. This event invites people who may not have heard of Josephinum to engage with local students, artists, and generate awareness of their physical location in the neighborhood.

A key component of this event is student involvement. Josephinum students will contribute through setup, hospitality, social media support, and event operations, earning service or volunteer hours, gaining hands-on experience, and building their résumés while supporting their school and community.



### **Creative Collaboration – Jo Creates**

Also being advertised in the summer, to begin in the following fall school year, is Jo Creates: Afterschool Arts Program. This campaign recommendation focuses on the creative collaboration between Josephinum and its neighboring communities. Jo Creates is an after-school and summer arts program open not just to Josephinum students but to any high school and middle school-age student who wishes to attend. Varying class offerings for different age groups will run in weekly segments, each hosted by local Wicker Park artists and Josephinum creative instructors, including performance art, painting, drawing, collaging, and other mediums that Wicker Park creatives and Josephinum faculty present to the students.

This program will be offered to high school-age students; however, the target audience for these programs is prospective middle school-aged students from surrounding middle schools like Drummond Montessori Magnet, St Mary of the Angels, or Jonathan Burr Elementary School. By inviting outside middle school students to come into the Josephinum facility and engage in their art programs with teachers and local artists, Josephinum will become a desirable and familiar next step for their high school choice. After-school programs will also provide relief to parents who may need extra hours after the school day ends, and create increased name recognition and awareness as a center of arts and education in the Wicker Park community.

### **Student Mobilization — The Pride Times**

Our third recommendation, The Pride Times, is an example of student mobilization to generate community awareness of Josephinum students and education. Incorporated into writing and Journalism classes, or running as an after-school student organization, students will write for and curate a magazine or newspaper that will be physically published and distributed in the Wicker Park and Bucktown communities.

Student-written testimonies about student life, community events, and news create public information that prospective students and parents, and community members can engage with, and professional experience writing and publishing work for the students that can be used on their resumes, portfolios, and college applications. Printed publications can be distributed into local cafes, businesses, and ad-spots for sponsorships from local businesses, or cafes can be included in the magazines and cover printing costs. Development of this program will happen between May and July, to be fully developed by the time the school year starts, including two rising Seniors who may be interested in helping bring in local sponsors and plan the program. These two students can then lead the program with underclassmen for the coming school year, making it a student-led effort.

### **KPI's**

To truly understand the impact of our 90-day campaign and SacredART in the Park, we'll track clear, meaningful goals across visibility, engagement, and community connection. We're aiming for strong attendance, solid vendor participation, and a successful fundraising total that directly supports Josephinum's art program. Digitally, we're focused on measurable reach like impressions, accounts reached, and an engagement pattern that shows real interest, including shares, saves, hashtag use, and QR code scans.

Most importantly, we'll look at long-term community impact: building new partnerships with local businesses and organizations, gathering positive feedback from attendees and vendors, and increasing enrollment-focused inquiries after the event. These outcomes will show not just activity, but real momentum for Josephinum.

## Budget

Josephinum is looking to build strong ties with the community and boost overall visibility. To do that, we're focusing on three straightforward initiatives: hosting a community art event (SacredART in the Park), launching a newsletter, and running small digital ads. Each piece is designed to help Josephinum connect with families and spotlight student creativity, making the school more recognizable and community-oriented.

The plan is budget-friendly and easy to execute. The community art event costs around \$1,200–\$1,500 for supplies and light refreshments. The monthly newsletter uses free or low-cost tools, ranging from \$0–\$300 per month. To reach new families beyond our immediate network, we recommend a targeted ads budget of \$1,000–\$2,000 across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Google.

Altogether, these efforts total \$1,800–\$3,800 and offer an approachable, high-impact way for Josephinum to strengthen awareness, build relationships, and show the community what makes the school special.

### Sample Budget Execution

SacredART in the Park is designed to be a cost-effective community event with an estimated total budget of \$1,200–\$1,500. Major expense categories include:

- Event Permits / Park Fees: \$150
- Tables, Chairs & Tents: \$300
- Printing & Signage: \$150
- Marketing (Digital + Paid Social): \$100
- Art Supplies / Display Materials: \$200
- Volunteer Refreshments: \$75
- Music / Entertainment: \$100
- Contingency Fund: \$125

To help offset these costs, the event generates revenue through vendor booth fees (\$25 per booth × 15 vendors = \$375). Additional support is expected from local business sponsorships and donations, with a target range of \$200–\$500.

A significant contribution comes from student volunteers, who assist with event setup, operations, and social media coverage. Their service hours reduce labor needs and reflect the school's commitment to student leadership and community service.

After accounting for booth revenue, sponsorships, and volunteer student labor, the net estimated cost of the event is approximately \$525–\$900.

## Conclusion

Josephinum Academy is at an important turning point. With enrollment dropping and limited neighborhood awareness, the school has a real chance to reconnect with Wicker Park and reintroduce itself as a creative and supportive place for young women. Our research shows that Josephinum's strengths—its small classes, strong arts programs, and focus on student growth—match what many families are looking for.

Our recommendations give the school simple, community-focused ways to build visibility and trust. SacredART in the Park, Jo Creates, and The Pride Times help Josephinum open its doors to the neighborhood, showcase student talent, and form long-lasting relationships with local partners. These ideas are supported by a manageable budget and clear goals that track real progress.

In the end, increasing enrollment is about more than outreach. It's about creating connections and helping families feel that Josephinum is a welcoming and inspiring place for their children. By investing in the community and elevating student voice, Josephinum can strengthen its identity and grow in a meaningful, sustainable way.

## Appendix #1: 90-day Media Calendar

Date	Day of Week	Campaign/Event	Platform	Topic/Theme	Status	Link to Asset
3/27/2026	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram	Launch Save the Date	Planned	
3/30/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Email	Send initial Save-the-Date email to partners	Planned	
4/5/2025	Sunday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok	Post behind-the-scenes social content	Planned	
4/10/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, TikTok	Promote volunteer sign-ups on social	Planned	
4/15/2025	Wednesday	SacredArt In the Park	All Platforms	Share digital flyer on all platforms	Planned	<a href="#"><u>FLYER</u></a>
4/20/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Email, Blog	Partners share event in newsletters	Planned	
4/25/2025	Saturday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Post artist/activity teaser	Planned	
5/1/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	Other	Submit event to community calendars	Planned	
5/5/2025	Tuesday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Post volunteer highlight	Planned	
5/10/2025	Sunday	SacredArt In the Park	Email	Send 'Details + RSVP' email	Planned	
5/15/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	Other	Flyer drop in cafés, libraries, churches	Planned	<a href="#"><u>FLYER</u></a>
5/18/2026	Monday	Jo Creates!	Instagram, Facebook, Email	Flyer and sign up for 2026 Semester 1	Planned	
5/20/2025	Wednesday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok	Post short-form video teaser	Planned	
5/25/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Other	Partner organizations share social posts	Planned	
6/1/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Kick off 30-day countdown post	Planned	
6/5/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Boost paid social post (\$15–\$25)	Planned	
6/8/2026	Monday	Jo Creates!	Instagram, Facebook,	Flyer and sign up for	Planned	

			Email	2026 Semester 1		
6/10/2025	Wednesday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok	Post 'What to Expect' carousel	Planned	
6/12/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok	Volunteer reminder & shareable IG story	Planned	
6/15/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Email	Send 'Two Weeks to Go' email	Planned	
6/17/2025	Wednesday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok	Boost second paid post (\$15–\$25)	Planned	
6/20/2025	Saturday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Post artist/activity spotlight #2	Planned	
6/22/2025	Monday	SacredArt In the Park	Other	Flyer handout at Mass + park programming	Planned	
6/24/2025	Wednesday	SacredArt In the Park	Instagram, Facebook	Day Countdown social post	Planned	
6/26/2025	Friday	SacredArt In the Park	TBD, All Platforms	Day-before reminder email + IG story	Planned	
6/27/2025	Saturday	SacredArt In the Park	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok	Event day live posting + content capture	Planned	
6/29/2026	Monday	Jo Creates!	Instagram, Facebook, Email	Flyer and sign up for 2026 Semester 1	Planned	
7/3/2026	Monday	Weekly Newsletter	TBD, Email	Up and Coming for 2026 school year / Afterschool programs/ sports/ Pride Times	Planned	
7/15/2026	Wednesday	Jo Creates!	Instagram, Facebook	Sign up for the school year	Planned	
7/22/2026	Wednesday	Jo Creates!	Instagram, Facebook	LAST CHANCE Sign up for the school year	Planned	
8/10/2026	Monday	Weekly Newsletter	TBD, Email	Community Org Highlights/ This weeks events at school	Planned	
8/17/2026	Monday	Weekly Newsletter	TBD, Email	Community Org Highlights + Sports and Student Org Updates	Planned	
8/24/2026	Monday	Weekly Newsletter	TBD, Email	Community Org Highlights + The Pride Times Call-IN	Planned	



## #2: Segment Directory

TITLE	SEGMENT	Location	Contact
<a href="#"><u>Koroko Vintage</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	1323 N. Milwaukee Ave.	info@kokorokokochicago.com
<a href="#"><u>Candle and Castle Co</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	1815 N. Milwaukee Ave.	<a href="#"><u>Contact Form</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Steel Petal Press</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	2321 N Milwaukee Ave,	orders.steelpetalpress.com
<a href="#"><u>The Fox Club</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	1101 N California Ave,	<a href="#"><u>Contact Form</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Botanica Victoria</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	2510 W Division St	(773) 252-0682
<a href="#"><u>BFF Bikes</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	2056 N Damen Ave	773-666-5153
<a href="#"><u>Volumes Bookcafe</u></a>	Women-owned businesses.	1373 N Milwaukee Ave	(773) 697-8066
<a href="#"><u>Wicker Park/Bucktown Artist Directory</u></a>	Artist collectives.	X	Individual
<a href="#"><u>Heaven Gallery</u></a>	Artist collectives.	1550 North Milwaukee 2nd Floor	773-342-4597
<a href="#"><u>HerArtistCollective</u></a>	Artist collectives.	X	<a href="#"><u>Her Artist Collective (@herartistcollective) • Instagram photos and videos</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Bucktown/Wicker Park Branch Library</u></a>	community organization	1701 N. Milwaukee Ave.	<a href="mailto:bucktown-wickerpark@chipublib.org"><u>bucktown-wickerpark@chipublib.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Bucktown Arts Fest</u></a>	community organization	2255 N. Western Ave.	<a href="mailto:inquiries@bucktownartsfest.com"><u>inquiries@bucktownartsfest.com</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>East Village Association</u></a>	community organization	P.O. Box 221405	<a href="mailto:bucktown@bucktown.org"><u>bucktown@bucktown.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Bucktown Community Organization</u></a>	community organization	1658 N. Milwaukee Ave., Ste 520	<a href="mailto:info@bucktown.org"><u>info@bucktown.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Ukrainian Village Association</u></a>	community organization	X	<a href="mailto:info@uvna.org"><u>info@uvna.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>West Bucktown Neighborhood Association</u></a>	community organization	P.O. Box 477282	<a href="mailto:info@westbucktown.org"><u>info@westbucktown.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Wicker Park Committee</u></a>	community organization	P.O. Box 477580	<a href="mailto:wickerparkcommittee@gmail.com"><u>wickerparkcommittee@gmail.com</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Wicker Park Garden Club</u></a>	community organization	2128 W. Evergreen Ave.	Contact: Doug Wood / <a href="mailto:wp garden@aol.com"><u>wp garden@aol.com</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Wicker Park Advisory Council</u></a>	community organization	1425 N. Damen	Contact: John Shirk / <a href="mailto:wpac@wickerpark.org"><u>wpac@wickerpark.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Friends of Holstein Park</u></a>	community organization	2200 N. Oakley Ave.	<a href="mailto:friendsofholsteinpark@yahoo.com"><u>friendsofholsteinpark@yahoo.com</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Friends of Bloomingdale Trail</u></a>	community organization	1805 N Ridgeway Ave	<a href="mailto:info@bloomingdaletrail.org"><u>info@bloomingdaletrail.org</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Jeff McClusky + Associates</u></a>	Local business	1644 N Honore St,	<a href="mailto:jmccclusky@jmapromo.com"><u>jmccclusky@jmapromo.com</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Sacred Heart Of Jesus Church</u></a>	Service groups.	5122 W Division St	
<a href="#"><u>Drummond Montessori Magnet</u></a>	Neighboring School	1845 W Cortland St	
<a href="#"><u>St Mary of the Angels</u></a>	Neighboring School	1850 N Hermitage Ave	
<a href="#"><u>Jonathan Burr Elementary School</u></a>	Neighboring School	1621 W Wabansia Ave	
<a href="#"><u>LaSalle II School</u></a>	Neighboring School	1148 N Honore St	
<a href="#"><u>St Stanislaus Kostka Academy</u></a>	Neighboring School	1255 N Noble St	

### #3: Sample Execution

## JO CREATES!

AFTER SCHOOL ARTS PROGRAM

- Take classes with Wicker Park Artists and Josephinum Faculty
- Explore new mediums of art every week!
- Open to ALL local students Grades 5-12
- No experience required!



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OF THE SACRED HEART

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JOSEPHINUM'S ARTS INITIATIVES AND  
STUDENT PROGRAMS.

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