THE FOUNDATION
Serving the Catholic Community of Eastern North Carolina

October 2026 | Issue #49

STEWARDING YOUR LEGACY

Sharing & Growing Your Gifts

TOGETHER IN FAITH

October is National Estate Planning Awareness Month so I'm going to share with you about my own personal estate plans.

I am currently working on updating my will, health care directive and establishing a revocable trust. Working with an estate planning attorney prompted reflection on things I hadn't thought about before, for example:

- If I die and my parents are still living, what do I want done with my estate since currently my four beneficiaries include my nephews and my best friends' children?
- If my beneficiaries are under the age of 30, do I want them receiving a lump sum of money?
- Where will my funeral be and where will I be laid to rest, since I am no longer in Georgia where I spent 26 years?

I am also thinking about my own legacy and philanthropically what I want to support. I attribute my leadership skills to Catholic education. Woman and leadership are areas of passion for me. And I love my Catholic faith. How will this translate for my personal
legacy?

I do not yet have all of the answers but am moving in the right direction and encourage you too also. The exercise of meeting with an attorney and working on my plans has prompted prayer time and reflection.

We are all going to die. It's hard to think about and plan for, but it is a reality. If my vulnerability touches one of you and creates momentum, I am grateful.

Sincerely,

Dawn M. Stark
Executive Director

Please Join Us In Welcoming
The Newest Team Member of The Foundation:

Erika Estrada Boden, J.D. M.S.
Director of Planned Giving



Estrada Boden, J.D., M.S., Director of Planned Giving

The Foundation is pleased to welcome Erika as our new Director of Planned Giving. In this role, Erika will work with donors to help them achieve their philanthropic and personal goals by providing strategic guidance on financially-savvy ways – including charitable bequests, gifts of complex assets and other legacy giving opportunities – to support the mission of the Diocese of Raleigh for generations to come.

Erika comes to The Foundation from Duke University's Office of Gift Planning, where she served as Associate Director for 4 years and raised over $55 million in planned and current gifts for the university. Before pivoting into the planned giving industry, she spent more than 15 years as an entertainment transactional attorney for several major media companies in Miami, Florida. Erika holds both a Juris Doctor and a Master of Science from St. Thomas University and earned dual bachelor's degrees from Duke University.

A proud Durham native, Erika attended pre-K through 8th grade at Immaculata Catholic School in downtown Durham, where her two daughters are now students. Erika also serves on Immaculata's Advisory Council and the Home & School Association Board. She and her family are parishioners at Immaculate Conception Church.

Faces of The Foundation:
Board of Directors Spotlight

Mike Thelen
Board Member



Mike Thelen is a partner with the Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP law firm in its Raleigh office where he helps clients navigate State and local permitting processes for large development projects and litigates real estate matters throughout North Carolina.

A parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Raleigh where his children attend school, Mike coaches the varsity girls' basketball team, serves on the Parish Finance Council, and is a past chair of the Parish Council.

Mike grew up outside of New York City and is a proud undergraduate and law school alumnus of the University of Notre Dame. Mike, Meghan, and their two daughters live in Raleigh.

New Endowments Established



Thank you to **Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral** for establishing their endowment:

Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral Cemetery, Columbarium, and Mausoleum Endowment
Which will support the care, maintenance, and preservation of the Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral Cemetery, Columbarium, and Mausoleum

Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral's commitment and generosity will have a lasting impact, supporting the Church's mission for years to come. We are grateful for

the privilege of partnering with donors and parishes in support of our shared mission whose generosity strengthens our Catholic community.

Save the Date for Upcoming:
Wine, Wills, and Ways to Give Seminars

St. Michael the Archangel
November 3rd 6:00-7:30pm

Holy Family
November 15th (Spanish) 1:45-2:45PM

Holy Family
November 18th 6:00-7:30 pm



A New Opportunity to Support Education: The Education Freedom Tax Credit

As advocates for educational opportunity and community growth, the Foundation of Raleigh is always looking ahead to initiatives that empower families and strengthen our educational landscape. A landmark federal development is on the horizon that promises to expand choices for students and families: **The Education Freedom Tax Credit.**

Beginning in 2027, a new federal opportunity may help donors expand access to educational opportunities for qualifying K–12 students. The **Education Freedom Tax Credit** offers eligible taxpayers a federal income-tax credit of up to $1,700 and for married couples filing jointly, the proposed federal regulations provide for a combined credit of up to **$3,400** for qualifying cash contributions to approved Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs). Unlike a deduction, a

tax credit reduces the amount of federal income tax owed, dollar for dollar, subject to program requirements.

How the Credit Works

A Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs) is a nonprofit organization that receives eligible contributions and uses at least 90 percent of its income to provide scholarships for qualified K–12 education expenses. These scholarships may support tuition and fees, academic tutoring, classroom supplies, services for students with disabilities, career-training equipment or uniforms, and other qualifying educational needs at public, private, or charter schools.

To participate, a state must elect to become a “covered state” and identify qualifying SGOs operating within the state. Donors must then make a cash contribution to an SGO on their state’s approved list. Eligible taxpayers may claim the credit when filing their federal income-tax return; any unused portion of the credit may be carried forward for up to five years. The U.S. Department of Education states that the credit will be available for qualifying contributions made on or after **January 1, 2027.**

What Does This Mean for North Carolina?

North Carolina has elected to participate in the program for 2027. The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA) states that the program will begin for donations made after **December 31, 2026**.

The details of how the program will be administered in North Carolina are still being finalized. Federal regulations were proposed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and IRS on October 1, 2026, while North Carolina continues to develop its process for identifying and overseeing eligible Scholarship Granting Organizations.

An Opportunity to Invest in Education

For individuals who are passionate about the importance of education, the Education Freedom Tax Credit may provide another way to support students and educational opportunities. For Catholic families and supporters of Catholic education, this new program may be particularly relevant as details about eligible scholarship organizations and participating schools become available.

As with any tax-related decision, donors should consult with their tax advisor, financial advisor, or attorney to determine whether a contribution and the associated tax credit are appropriate for their individual circumstances.

Learn More

The U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of the Treasury have published a fact sheet explaining the Education Freedom Tax Credit, including eligibility requirements, scholarship granting organizations, and how the credit works.

Read the Education Freedom Tax Credit Fact Sheet

The Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Raleigh encourages donors, schools, parishes, and families to stay informed as North Carolina's participation and program details become clearer. We will continue to share updates as they become available.

This article is provided for educational purposes only and is not legal, tax, or financial advice. Please consult a qualified tax professional, attorney, or financial advisor regarding your individual circumstances and eligibility.

Prayer Corner

As October is dedicated to the Holy Rosary, let us offer this prayer:

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve.
To thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us,
and after this our exile
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.

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The Foundation of the Diocese of Raleigh

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