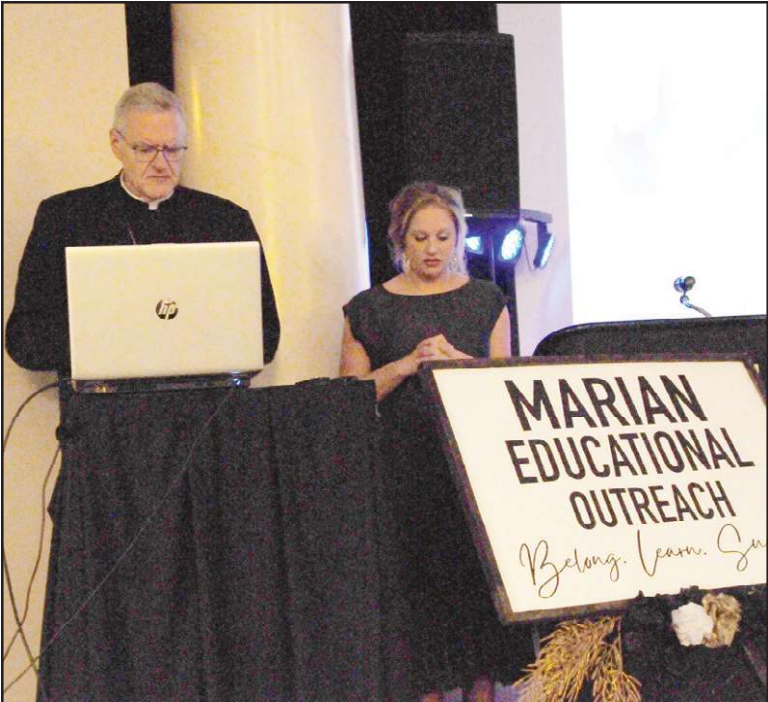


MEO Gala returns in-person to support inclusive Catholic education



Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel blessed the evening meal at Marian Educational Outreach’s Annual Gala April 9 at The Manor at St. Vincent in Evansville. Standing beside Bishop Siegel is MEO Executive Director Emily Schnapf.



The Message photos by Megan Erbacher
Gala attendees browse silent auction items at the annual MEO Gala event on April 9.

BY MEGAN ERBACHER
The Message assistant editor

After a two-year hiatus, about 220 people gathered April 9 at The Manor at St. Vincent in Evansville for Marian Educational Outreach’s Annual Gala to support students in diocesan Catholic schools.

Last year, COVID-19 forced MEO to take a new approach to its annual gala, which was a Grab-n-Go meal, while the 2020 gala was cancelled.

“We are so excited to be back in person and gathering to celebrate the kids,” MEO Executive Director Emily Schnapf said. “We have had a huge outpouring of support, and I am just so blessed to have so many MEO supporters by my side carrying out a wonderful mission.”

Marian Educational Outreach, or MEO, is an Evansville-based nonprofit committed to making sure that students with

unique learning needs and their teachers have as many opportunities for success as possible while remaining in the Catholic school system.

The gala featured live and silent auctions and, new this year, Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos. The pianists provided entertainment, and guests had the opportunity to donate money to request songs. One hundred percent of song donations were given back to MEO to better support the students.

“It’s just a fun, fresh and new way of getting people to gather,” Schnapf said. “We’ve heard great feedback, so hopefully our guests have a great time with it.”

Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel blessed the evening meal and gave thanks for the important work of MEO, which supports children with special learning needs in diocesan Catholic schools. He then asked God’s blessing on



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the efforts of MEO, as well as the students, families, teachers and administration.

Schnapf said she’s blessed to be able to see, on a large scale, how well Catholic schools are doing and what they are doing to support and enhance learn-

ing for all students.

“The work of MEO is so much more than just students with disabilities,” she said. “It creates an environment that teaches all of our students how to be loving, how to embrace, how to be inclusive. What more could we want from our students than that?”

This year’s fund-an-item raised money for classroom grants.

“We are hoping to double the amount given back this year to be able to give back over \$30,000 in grants,” Schnapf said.

Schnapf told attendees that she has big goals to provide professional development to teachers, so they can learn how to become more inclusive of their students with special needs. She said the work of MEO couldn’t happen without generous donors.

“It takes so many people to put this gala on, and I am just blown away by the amount of generosity from our community to support this organization,” she said. “It’s amazing. It’s truly heartwarming.”



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