



Gala of Hope Shines in Its Inaugural Year, Celebrating Community and Student Talent

Ursuline College Chatham's first ever Gala of Hope welcomed students, staff, families, and community partners for an evening of food, music, and celebration on January 21, 2026. The sold-out event transformed the UCC cafeteria into an elegant dining space and raised approximately \$7,000 to support new ovens and essential equipment for the school's expanding hospitality program.

Guests were greeted with live music from the UCC staff band and student performers before enjoying a three-course meal prepared and served by hospitality students. A silent auction added to the excitement, with all proceeds directly supporting hands-on learning opportunities.

Principal Lisa Harnarine praised the event as "another wonderful example of what makes the Ursuline College Chatham community so special," noting the generosity and enthusiasm that will continue to inspire students.

Hospitality teachers and event organizers Janine Deneau and Brian Machado expressed pride in the students' leadership throughout the evening.

"The response from the community was overwhelming," said Deneau. "Watching our students rise to the occasion with such professionalism and pride was truly inspiring."

"This wasn't just a fundraiser," added Machado. "It was a celebration of what students can achieve when they're given the chance to shine."

Among the guests was David Argenti, St. Clair Catholic Trustee, who commended the students and staff for an exceptional evening.

"I was truly impressed by the professionalism, culinary talent, and teamwork on display," said Argenti.

"The staff and students demonstrated tremendous dedication and skill. The meal was outstanding, and the collaboration behind the scenes was evident in every detail of the evening." Students shared their own reflections on the experience.

"Everyone worked together to make the night run smoothly, and seeing more than a hundred guests enjoy the atmosphere made all the hard work worth it," said Lily Babin, Grade 11 hospitality student.

"We stayed organized, supported each other, and made sure every guest felt taken care of," added Sofia Male, also in Grade 11. "I'm proud of what we accomplished."



The success of the inaugural Gala of Hope has sparked enthusiasm for future events and strengthened the foundation of UCC's hospitality program—an environment where students continue to build confidence, creativity, and real-world skills.

For further information regarding this release, please contact:

Catholic Education Centre
420 Creek Street
Wallaceburg, ON N8A 4C4
www.st-clair.net

Director of Education
Lisa Demers
519-627-6762, ext. 10241
media@st-clair.net

Chair of the Board
John Van Heck
john.vanheck@sccdsb.net

Communications and
Community Relations
519-627-6762
communications@sccdsb.net



