

'A huge blessing': Regina Caeli Academy now in its second year serving Portland-area home-schoolers



Regina Caeli Academy first-, second- and third-graders perform a skit for their drama class in October. The Portland center is in its second year and serves around 90 home-schooling families. (Courtesy Regina Caeli Academy)



Katie Scott
1/14/2019 4:30 PM

A hybrid model of education that integrates home schooling with a classical curriculum taught by Catholics in love with the faith recently was established in the Portland area. Its foremost mission is to shape minds and hearts for Jesus.

"We want to assist parents in preparing their children not just for this life but for eternal life," said Kari Beckman, Regina Caeli Academy founder and executive director. "We want them to leave as well-formed Catholics who bring light into the world."

The first academy was founded in 2003 in Atlanta and the program has grown to nine states in the past 15 years. RCA, as it's often called, provides two full days of tutoring instruction each week for students in preschool through high school, augmenting the remaining three home-schooling days. The



Loewen Shaferly and his pals at the local Regina Caeli Academy, based in Vancouver, Washington, wait to begin a footprints art project last fall. Kari Beckman, founder of the national home-schooling hybrid program, said she wants students to “leave as well-formed Catholics who bring light into the world.” (Courtesy Regina Caeli Academy)



Portland. “I was not at home as much as I wanted to be working with the kids, and (the academy) offered a nice support.”

Aldric feels that home schooling sometimes can be isolating and that the academy allows for interactions with like-minded people.

Many of the tutors are parents, though some are hired; all must have a deep dedication to their faith. Tuition depends on the student’s grade level and ranges from \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year. There’s a tuition cap at four children per family; additional siblings attend for free. Parents who work as tutors are paid, helping offset tuition.

Johnson said her one critique of the Portland-area center is that she wishes there were a few male tutors. “Maybe as the program grows and is more established that will be possible,” she said.

Aldric, who has a background in math and master’s in education, savors the chance to teach advanced mathematics to RCA high schoolers.

“I don’t do the glittery arts and crafts, and being a mom with young kids, I like that there are other parents who are amazing at working with the preschool kids and love doing those things,” she said.

“It’s beautiful how different parents have different gifts, and they share them with the community,” added Johnson.

Portland center, one of 14 Regina Caeli satellites nationwide, is in its second year with around 90 students and operates out of a Christian church in Vancouver, Washington.

This fall Regina Caeli Academy will become international when a center opens in the United Kingdom.

The academy’s growth in the United States comes as more families opt to home school. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, from 1999 to 2012, the number of home-schooled children more than doubled, rising from 850,000 to 1.8 million.

One home-schooling parent drawn to RCA is Rebecca Aldric, a Vancouver Catholic and mother of five — one in the womb. She said the academy appealed to her because of its “emphasis on the classics and on the great thinkers; it’s not dumbed down.”

RCA instruction, often in the Socratic, discussion-centered style, is based on the Mother of Divine Grace syllabi, which follows the Western intellectual tradition of the liberal arts.

Beckman explained that RCA offers an educational structure that’s similar to college, where students take a few classes each week and are expected to work independently to prepare for lessons. “We find students are really motivated, intrinsic learners,” she said during a recent interview with Mater Dei Radio.

Beckman said the academy is “very supportive of home schooling, but offers a hybrid approach that meets us in our own needs.”

One of those needs for home-schooling mother Crystal Johnson was extra support as she taught five children, the youngest with Down syndrome.

“It got a little overwhelming with teaching a high schooler and then having our little one with lots of appointments,” said Johnson, a member of St. Stephen Parish in Southeast

Johnson said it's comforting to know that all students are treated with love and gentleness and are enveloped in the Catholic faith.

"It's a community where parents want to talk about Jesus, talk about the faith, teach the Ten Commandments and help make sure the children are living that out," said Aldric. "It's a huge blessing."

Learn more

An open house for Regina Caeli Academy is Jan. 21 from 10:30 a.m. to noon at First Friends Church, 2710 NE 65th Ave. Vancouver, Washington. A high school information session starts at noon.

The Fabulous Fathers' Priest Talent Show, featuring local priests, is Feb. 9 at The Madeleine Parish, 3123 NE 24th Ave., Portland. The fundraising event for the academy includes dinner, entertainment and a silent auction. Doors open at 5:45 p.m.

For talent show tickets and more information about the academy, go to rcahybrid.org.

Related Articles

[Homeschool students learn art of speech](#)
[Homeschoolers learn public speaking](#)