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## **Alum starts 'Kicks 4 Kids' to help inner- city youth**

# CV

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*plus:*

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John Pomponi

Matthew Croft

Annalisa Simmer

Cheer state champs

Nick Watson

Irish news

Alumni notes

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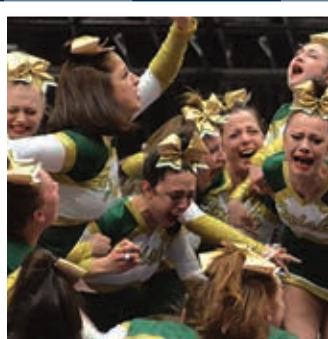
Notre Dame Preparatory School  
1300 Giddings Road  
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spring 2015

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# ***CONGRATULATIONS, NOTRE DAME COMPETITIVE CHEER! STATE CHAMPS!***

(See page 5)



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**NOTRE DAME**



# irish

IRISH is a magazine devoted to the alumni and friends of Notre Dame Preparatory, Notre Dame, Oakland Catholic, Pontiac Catholic, St. Michael and St. Frederick schools. It is distributed free of charge. For more information, please see the alumni section of Notre Dame Prep's web site at [www.ndpma.org/alumni](http://www.ndpma.org/alumni).

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ON THE COVER: Former NDHS English teacher Conrad Vachon. (Photo provided by Vachon family.)

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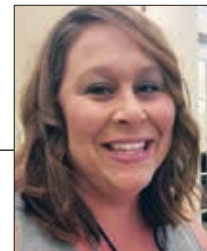
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Are you interested in advertising to nearly 14,000 of your fellow alumni and friends? Place an ad in an upcoming IRISH. Contact Mike Kelly '73 (NDHS) for more information and pricing: [mike@group-ex.com](mailto:mike@group-ex.com).



# A WORD FROM YOUR ALUMNI DIRECTOR



Greetings from the Father Colin house, home of the alumni office!

Just over halfway through my first year as the alumni director, I am thrilled at the many plans we are making for the alumni association. So much to look forward to, including changes to our alumni board, upcoming alumni challenges, an alumni-impact survey and most importantly, new and exciting ways for our alum to reconnect with Notre Dame! Spring is the season that traditionally reminds us of fresh beginnings and opportunity for growth. As we make necessary changes and re-examine the objectives of the alumni association, I hope to set course on a new path filled with endless opportunities.

Prior to becoming the alumni director, I spent two years here as the competitive cheer coach. I thought I had a clear understanding of how wonderful this community is, but through my time in the advancement office, I have gained an even greater understanding of what it means to be Irish! The lifelong connections our alumni have to Notre Dame are inspiring and continue to motivate me to do more.

The alumni association surely can take pride in its growing and rejuvenated alumni association Board of Directors. This group of dedicated alumni volunteers is thriving. New alumni board members

have been recruited and plans for the next year are already in the works. We welcome to the board Erin Kish '03 (NDP), Bob Lesnau '98 (NDP), Dan Staniszewski '02 (NDP) and Bobbie Hall '00 (NDP).

I am hoping to conduct an in-depth alumni survey to find out from all of you how we can improve what we are already doing. You should have received a postcard from my office asking you to update your current email address so we can be sure you will get the survey. Please be sure to send in the card or update it online at our website. As always, please feel free to reach out to me at any time and please remember to send in your notes and updates. We love hearing from you!

Looking forward to the future!

Irish blessings,

*Beth Campbell*

Beth Campbell  
Director of Alumni Relations

## 19th Annual Notre Dame Golf Outing

Registration for the 19th Annual NDPMA Golf Outing is still open.

Please join us for this fun event on Tuesday, June 2, 2015, at the Oakland University Golf Course.

Mark your calendars and help out the school's athletic department!

If you are interested in participating in the following...

Lunch, dinner or beverage cart sponsorship

- Hole sponsorship
- Donating items to the silent auction or raffle
- Volunteer to work the event for Booster Club "parent hours"

...please call 586-873-8150.

Event details and registration available at:  
[www.ndpma.org/golfouting](http://www.ndpma.org/golfouting).

# Two in a row!

## Notre Dame wins second consecutive state cheer championship

When the competitive cheer team arrived in Grand Rapids on March 6, one day ahead of their state championship title defense in Division 3, the mood was one of excitement, for sure, but more importantly, one of quiet confidence.

Confidence that last year's state title was not just a fluke, but a springboard into the culmination of another championship season — with more to come.

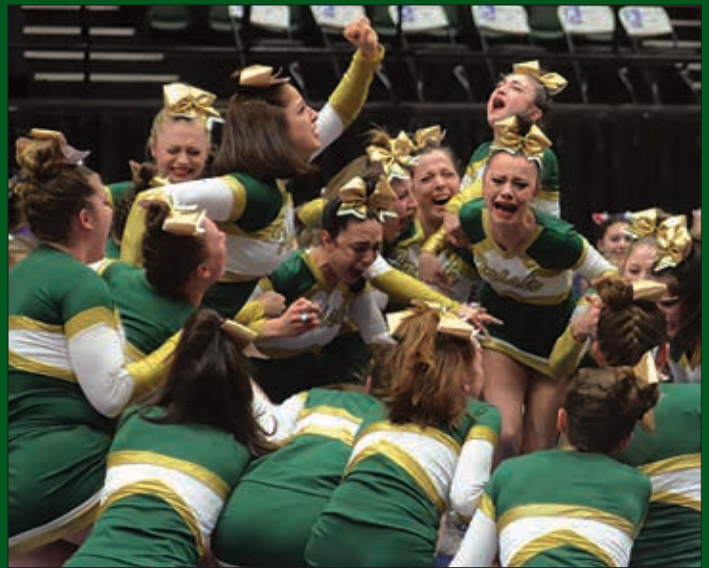
And sure enough, the Irish proved Saturday night at the DeltaPlex Center that that confidence was not misplaced as they earned their second D-3 championship in convincing fashion, leading from wire to wire. In fact, the closest any other team came to Notre Dame was 1.4 points in round one (Richmond).

In a news article posted by The Oakland Press, Irish coach Beth Campbell, who also serves as the school's alumni director, said she thinks there are more good things in the future for her team.

"Our seniors have trained up the juniors all season and now they are ready to be the seniors," Campbell said to the reporter. "They are already talking about 'strive for three,' so they are already making plans

for next year."

Notre Dame's seven senior team members are Aly Gonzales, Morgan Gales, Margaret Michel, Kennedy Quirk, Olivia Riley, Emily Schiavi and Angela Serra. ■



# Volleyball's best

Determining what Notre Dame Prep's Katherine Carlson is best at, you might pick volleyball.

That makes perfect sense since the 5-foot-11 senior excels at the game, evidenced by leading her Fighting Irish teammates to the state semifinals in 2014 as well as to a Class B championship last season. Or you might say her faith and work in the community is where she does her best work since she's a regular at St. Vincent DePaul clothing drives, various food pantries, parish picnics and nursing home visits.

Or is it academics? She currently holds a 4.37 grade-point-average at the academically tough Notre Dame and earned a four-year scholarship to Valparaiso University, itself academically strong.

She's also a fine artist with keenly developed talent in both drawing and painting.

But, truth be told, it is all of the above that catapulted Carlson in November to the top of Michigan's volleyball class as the 2014 Miss Volleyball.



Notre Dame head coach Betty Wroubel says she cannot think of a more deserving player than outside hitter Carlson. "Her skill is just one thing, but her love and passion, not only for the game but for her teammates set Katherine above any athlete that I have known or coached," Wroubel says. "In addition to being a great player and teammate, Katherine is also an excellent student and is very involved in her community — just a great representative for all of us."

Since 2003, the Michigan Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association has conferred the Miss Volleyball award to the high school senior in the state who exhibits stellar skills in her sport as well as in the classroom and community.

Carlson and her Fighting Irish teammates finished their season in the 2014 MHSAA semifinals, losing to North Branch. In addition to last year's title, NDP also won the volleyball state championship in 2007. ■

PHOTO PROVIDED BY KIM BUCCHI PHOTOGRAPHY





*Notre Dame 9th-grader Nathan Audia (with coach John Smith) at the MHSAA tourney.*

## Great Year for Notre Dame Bowling

Both the boys and girls bowling team for Notre Dame finished their seasons exceeding most expectations. The girls team entered the 2015 CHSL tournament with much confidence and finished the first round with a 2168 series score, good enough to help them qualify for the final four. Erin McIntosh earned All-Catholic honors by posting a score of 492. In the opening playoff round, the Irish took on topped-ranked Mercy. However, the Irish would not be intimidated as they beat their best Baker series score by over 40 pins to take out the #1-seeded Marlins and advance to the championship. Regina would prove to be too much for NDP in the finals but nevertheless the Irish enjoyed a very respectable 2nd-place finish.

The boys team finished in 6th place in their division at the CHSL championship. Spencer Urban led the NDP bowlers with a 194, 177, 220 (591), Gram McIntosh was second with a 190, 190, 196 (576), and Nathan Audia finished in third with a 187, 193, 165 (545). In addition, Urban was awarded All-League honors for being in the top 15 bowlers in the CHSL and Nicholas Raggio was awarded the All-Academic award for having a top 15 GPA among CHSL bowlers. Audia went on to be the first bowler in NDP history to qualify for the MHSAA state finals.

## It's a Small Notre Dame World

Notre Dame High School meets Notre Dame Prep in Vail, Colorado, as Bill Parish, a 1966 graduate of NDHS in Harper Woods, finds out the person who is attending to his ski injury at a medical clinic is a 2008 graduate of NDP.



Let's let Parish explain:

"The young lady in the pictures I am sending you is Chase Rogowski. She is an athletic trainer and medical assistant working at the Steadman Clinic in Vail, Colorado (where skier Lindsay Vonn gets put back together from time to time).

"I live about 30 miles down valley from Aspen and while skiing in December, I fell and severed a thumb ligament. A few weeks after surgery, Chase was taking out the stitches and I asked her where she was originally from (ski-area populations are very transient) and it came up that she graduated from ND Prep in 2008. What a small world!"

## Four VEX IQ Robotics Teams from Notre Dame Earn Trip to World Championship

Notre Dame's VEX IQ Robotics teams (Bumble Bees) again earned big wins over the weekend when four of the school's six VEX teams won an opportunity to compete in the VEX Robotics World Championship, April 15-18, in Louisville, Kentucky.

Saturday's event, which was a combined event for elementary schools and middle schools, was held at Cranbrook's middle school

in Bloomfield Hills.

Two of the Bumble Bees teams also won the "Excellence Award," which is presented to the best overall team from each division. The Bees also won the Robot Skills Award, the Programming Skills Award and a Judges Award for creativity.

## Notre Dame Art Students Honored at the DIA



*Notre Dame artist: Reagan Kazyak*

It was a big night for Notre Dame student-artists as they took home prestigious Scholastic Art honors at an award ceremony held February 11 at the Detroit Film Theater, which is located in the Detroit Institute of Arts in the city's Cultural Center.

According to Sandy LewAllen, chair of Notre Dame's visual arts department, the awards were well-deserved. She said that two of her art students, Calvin Burns and Reagan Kazyak, were even featured in the event program.

The Notre Damers earned a total of 17 Scholastic awards this year, the most ever in one year for the school.

"What an awesome and prestigious honor this is," LewAllen said. "I am so proud of all our art students and their tremendous efforts!"

## Two NDP Seniors Perform as Part of the Colin House Concert Series

Notre Dame Prep seniors Anna Watson and Sarah Ringwood performed four songs recently for a group of friends and school staff members gathered in the main room of Notre Dame's Fr. Colin House. The girls' February 12th performance was the fourth of the Notre Dame Alumni Association's recorded "Colin House Concerts" in which Notre Dame students and alumni are invited to sing and play in a small, informal setting at the school. Ringwood and Watson, who said they have been friends since the fourth grade, played covers of recently popular songs, including those written by Ed Sheeran and Hunter Hayes. Check out the performance on [ndpma.org](http://ndpma.org).

Notre Dame alumni and students interested in performing for the Colin House Concert Series should contact alumni director Beth Campbell at 248-373-2171, ext. 3, or email [bcampbell@ndpma.org](mailto:bcampbell@ndpma.org), or marketing director Mike Kelly at 248-373-2171, ext. 4, or email [mkelley@ndpma.org](mailto:mkelley@ndpma.org).

## Alum Artist (and Flying Fish) is Making Art for Detroit

Nineteen-eighty-two Notre Dame grad Bryan Ureel welcomes the uptick in the economy in general and the local economy in particular. He's a commercial artist and has been working at his Royal Oak-based company, Flying Fish Studios, for a number of years. The fact that the automotive industry and Detroit's economy is going great likely has something to do with Flying Fish also going great lately. But his business relies a lot on something other than cars: worker clothing, which, when lots of houses and buildings are going up in the Detroit area and nationwide, also sells well.

"Not so much automotive anymore, but what really keeps us busy is Carhartt," Ureel said. "We've had the account for several years and

do a lot of product photography, retouching and color correction for their catalogs. We also do the model photography and retouching for the company's e-com site, Carhartt.com."

Ureel and his partners at Flying Fish have been producing award-winning graphic design, illustration, digital imaging, retouching and photography to clients ranging from Coca-Cola, Disney, Chrysler, Ford and Honda to Steelcase and, of course, Carhartt, a Metro Detroit-based company.

#### Four from Notre Dame Sign to Play College Athletics



On what is traditionally the annual signing day for high schoolers across the country heading to college in the fall to play sports, Notre Dame Prep did indeed host a signing ceremony on campus Feb. 4 for four of its student-athletes.

In the photo, from left, Kennedy Quirk has signed up for competitive cheer at Alma College; Garrett Guthrie has committed to join the swimming and diving team next year at Kalamazoo College; Christine Scheer will be playing soccer for Albion College; and Jenna Sassack will play volleyball for Seton Hall University.

#### Juniors from Atlanta and Pontiac Get Together for Leadership Summit

More than 20 juniors from The Marist School made the trip up from Atlanta last month to spend the weekend with NDP juniors in an important spiritual, learning and fun retreat sponsored by the campus ministry departments of both schools.

In addition to a number of meetings and discussion-group sessions, the juniors also enjoyed a Super Bowl party at the Pontiac campus of Notre Dame.

Marist School in Atlanta, which was founded in 1901, is an independent, Catholic, college-preparatory day school enrolling approximately 1,042 boys and girls in grades seven through 12. It is owned and operated by the Society of Mary (Marists).

#### Notre Dame Senior Picked from 93,000 for Scholarship

Notre Dame Prep senior Jessica Caruso was surprised today when her parents and classmates gathered in classroom A10 for an announcement by community-service organization DoSomething.org that she had earned one of its four annual \$10,000 college scholarships.



DoSomething.org is one of the largest non-profits for young people and social change, with 3.3 million members "who tackle campaigns that impact every cause, from poverty to violence to the environment to literally everything else," according to DoSomething.org.

Caruso learned of her scholarship in front of a classroom full of family, faculty and classmates. In Caruso's case, she participated in

a mobile app called "Science Sleuth," which involved a game and scavenger hunt that promoted STEM education (science, technology, engineering and math) for girls. A key part of the game was that once tasks were completed, donations were made to a designated charity.

#### Notre Dame 8th-Grade Racer Raises \$4,000 for Charity

Logan Wenneshiemer, an 8th grader in Notre Dame's middle school and sprint-car race driver, recently reached the \$4,000 mark in fundraising for Paws and Stripes, a charity that provides service dogs for wounded U.S. military veterans with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) and traumatic brain injury.

Wenneshiemer chose Paws and Stripes to be his beneficiary for the 2015 racing season.

"We are donating a percentage of race earnings as well as a percentage of our Intense Racing fundraising efforts to Paws and Stripes," Wenneshiemer said. "We are very passionate about the work they do."

Shawn Bacoccini, director of development for Paws And Stripes, thanked Wenneshiemer for his involvement: "I wanted to reach out and again say thank you for the support that you have given and to compliment you on your 'supreme awesomeness.' There are not many people your age who are making such an effort to make the world a better place. Thank you again for that and keep up the good work."

Wenneshiemer has for years raced with much success on the Mini Sprint circuit, primarily on a track in Jackson, Mich. His car, which in the past has had a Fighting Irish motif and paint job, features a 636CC Suzuki super-bike motorcycle engine that is methanol fuel injected and can hit speeds of up to 140 MPH on a 3/8 mile dirt course.

This year, Wenneshiemer races in the POWRi Speedway Motors 600cc Outlaw Micro Series with its first race scheduled for April 10 in Belleville, Illinois. He said the choice of Paws and Stripes as his team's charity sponsor was an easy one to make.



#### Students from Notre Dame in D.C. for March for Life

More than 40 students from Notre Dame's upper division were in Washington, D.C., last month to participate in the 42nd annual March for Life,

which was held at the National Mall in the nation's capitol. They joined hundreds of other young people in "Champions for Life" clubs from many other Detroit-area Catholic high schools.

A March for Life rally was from noon to 1 p.m. March 22 with a host of speakers as well as for a warm-up event and concert. The actual march began immediately after the rally and followed a route up Constitution Avenue to the Supreme Court building on Capitol Hill.



*Please see IRISH News, page 14*



# Alum 'kicks' in for kids

Nineteen ninety-nine graduate CheKeita Jones helps students in underserved communities

**Y**ou wouldn't think that something so basic as shoes would inspire a philanthropic movement. Yet, when 1999 Notre Dame Prep grad CheKeita Jones, who at the time was a teacher in the Pontiac school district, noticed that many of her elementary-school students wore ill-fitting, worn out shoes, boots and hand-me-downs, she thought there must be something she could do about it.

She knew a lot of "sneaker heads" and people with the wherewithal to help get these

College to earn a master's degree in education." She said her family is full of educators and something must have told her that her true calling was in fact teaching, not supply-chain management.

"I got my first teacher's job within the Pontiac school district, my hometown," Jones said. "Working in an urban community, it quickly became apparent that it was more than just pencils and books. Low socioeconomic communities, minimal resources, and cash-strapped districts have left many students hopeless. The combination of all these issues

the school and its culture. From my experience at ND, I was prepared to attend any major university with knowledge and confidence."

School spirit was a big part of Jones' time at Notre Dame. "My favorite memory from NDP was of the general school spirit of just about everybody, but especially of our class," she said. "The Class of '99 won the Irish Games as freshmen AND as seniors."

She was a multi-sport athlete during her time at NDP, playing soccer, running track and participating in competitive cheer, where she was the captain of the team during her senior year.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHEKEITA JONES '99 (NDP)

**Students at the Brenda Scott Academy for Theatre Arts in Detroit "show off" with their new shoes provided by the Kicks 4 Kids Foundation.**

kids out of unfit footwear and into new shoes. So she launched a program called the "Kicks 4 Kids Foundation," with a goal of raising enough money to get these students sneakers they were proud to wear.

"Thus, Kicks 4 Kids was born," she said.

As Jones and the Kicks 4 Kids mission statement states, "The mission of Kicks 4 Kids is to alleviate one of the most burdensome social pressures for inner-city youth, which often leads to bullying. With support from our community stakeholders, we will be able to boost self confidence while providing one of the most basic needs."

For Jones, who now teaches in Detroit, being an educator was always on the horizon for her, even if at first she didn't see it.

"I graduated from MSU with a degree in supply-chain management in December of 2003," she said. "I then enrolled at Marygrove

and many others really hinders a child's educational experience."

So, since the spring of 2011, Jones has been tackling these issues head on, or should we say "foot-on," two shoes at a time.

"Kicks 4 Kids is my heart," she said.

"Eventually, I would love to work solely on my nonprofit. I adore service and I've finally found my place in the world."

Looking back to high school, Jones said her "place" at Notre Dame was well-grounded and "well-rounded."

"ND prepared me for success on many different levels," she said. "Although I was well-schooled academically at Notre Dame, the best lessons I learned were how to be a well-rounded individual. ND taught me how to get along with all walks of life. Although I was 'technically' a minority student at NDP, I never felt that way. I was totally immersed in

"Notre Dame Prep gave me the foundation to become a leader, show pride and have confidence," Jones said. She said it's hard for her to pick a favorite Notre Dame teacher, though she said Padre Juan [Gonzalez] was a favorite during her first few years in high school.

"But now that I think about it, NDP had so many teachers that hold a special place in my heart. And now that I am an educator myself, I can truly empathize with the passion Mr. Simon had for education and for his students. If it wasn't for Mr. Simon, I'm not even sure that I would have chosen Michigan State University."

We're glad she did, and we're pretty sure most if not all of her students from Pontiac and Detroit are glad she's been a part of their lives. ■

**You can reach the Kicks 4 Kids Foundation at [www.kicks4kidsfoundation.org](http://www.kicks4kidsfoundation.org).**





# Faith and Notre Dame

Faith and Notre Dame highly influential to orthopedic surgeon in Chicago

**J**ohn Pomponi, who graduated from Notre Dame in 1999, checked in recently with his high-school alma mater. He currently is an attending orthopedic surgeon in Chicago with the Franciscan Alliance hospital system.

He says he misses NDP, especially the teachers, and he mentioned math teacher Anthony Borton and government teacher Gregory Simon (“a lot of heated political debates in his class!”).

Pomponi recently was married to “a great girl named Sarah,” who coincidentally is an alumnus of Notre Dame High School in Peoria, Ill.

“Sarah and I feel that our strong Catholic education and upbringing fostered an amazing beginning to our lives,” he said. “Also, I truly felt privileged that my parents were able to send me to such an exceptional prep school like NDP, which fostered my Catholic faith. Being able to attend Mass and receive religious education along with the rigorous math and science programs helped to keep me grounded and focused on the bigger picture in life.”

Pomponi began his life in medicine right out of NDP when he enrolled in the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) in Boston, Mass. MCPHS is a small health science-focused academic institution located in the famous Longwood medical area of downtown Boston. Pomponi said he majored in biology and pre-medical studies.

“Upon graduating from MCPHS after three years I was accepted into the medical school at Michigan State University,” he said. “After medical school, I matched into an orthopedic surgery residency at what is now McLaren Oakland Hospital in Pontiac.”

He said he actually passed by NDP almost everyday during his residency because he lived in nearby Lake Orion. At McLaren, he served as chief orthopedic surgery resident and was one of the young-

est residents in the entire hospital. After his residency was completed at McLaren, Pomponi took a position as attending orthopedic surgeon at Franciscan Alliance. He said it’s a large Catholic healthcare system located

*Please see FAITH, page 26*





*The Notre Dame Fund is creating an opportunity for donors to feel more empowered in their giving. The change, much like each student's experience on campus, is expected to give donors an experience that is uniquely Notre Dame.*

By Gregory Simon '89 (NDHS), director of The Notre Dame Fund

Welcome to a new, donor-empowered version of The Notre Dame Fund! Over the last ten or so months, I have had an opportunity to meet with a good number of community members about ways to improve our approach to fundraising at Notre Dame. From alumni to alum parents, long-time community members to new parents, we saw a recurring theme in those conversations – the ability to choose—to decide—where their donations go. Nearly every conversation included a reference to our mission as well as a passion for a specific aspect of programming here at Notre Dame.

No matter the connection to the school, each person expressed a desire to impact a certain aspect of our mission through giving. Some expressed a commitment to helping kids afford our school, others reflected on their experience in sports, arts, or leadership; still others spoke about the skill and commitment of teachers to challenge every student academically.

# YOU decide!

The message was clear: while we all love the Notre Dame mission, every student and constituent's experience is different. So, we were asked to come up with a way for them to follow their passions and give to an area they believe impacted them (or their student) the most. The result – The Notre Dame Fund!

The conversations resulted in a new commitment by us in the advancement office to create an opportunity for donors to feel more empowered in their giving. We believe this change, much like each student's experience on campus, will give donors an experience that is uniquely Notre Dame!

So, as we relaunch The Notre Dame Fund (formerly annual fund), we invite you to feel the power of giving by choosing from one of the fund's "ways."

In its previous form, the fund focused on unrestricted gifts to the school. You are still able to contribute in this manner. By giving "where Notre Dame needs it most," you give the school the flexibility to address needs as they arise from day-to-day and month-to-month. A donation of this nature is among our most powerful gifts and is essential to a vibrant, innovative and healthy Notre Dame.

By giving to Mary's Way, your gift helps create access to Notre Dame for families struggling with tuition and/or students earning merit-based scholarships to the school. With more than \$1 million devoted to scholarships and financial aid last year, Notre Dame is doing its part to make the school available to more and more mission-driven families. In short, Mary's Way helps continue our efforts to bring the best and brightest to Notre Dame.

The Scholars Way supports the programs that make it "cool to be smart" here at Notre Dame. In partnership with their teachers, students create an atmosphere that embraces knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual growth. We are always working to enhance that experience by providing classroom resources, added training for teachers and curriculum improvements. The Scholars Way helps us provide top-notch materials, instruction, and support to our students as they stretch, grow and succeed academically.

A gift to the Citizens Way provides support for students as they explore their creativity, leadership, and skills necessary to collaborate and contribute to the community. Working in concert with academics to form truly well-rounded students, the programs supported by Citizens Way include the fine and performing arts, student clubs, Student Council, robotics, and more than 75 arts, leadership, and service opportunities for kids!

You are also welcome, if desired, to support athletics through the Irish Way. A Notre Dame education includes a healthy mind and body. A gift to the Irish Way encourages students to maintain their physical health while learning the importance of teamwork. Your gift to the Irish Way helps support more than 40 sports and more than 70 teams at all levels of Notre Dame!

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Through this new approach, we hope to inspire you and other members of the Notre Dame family to feel more a part of the life and work being done on campus for kids. While we know giving is a deeply personal choice, we hope you choose to give generously to this year's effort. If you have any questions about The Notre Dame Fund, or would like to chat about life here at Notre Dame, please do not hesitate to contact me in the advancement office: 248-373-2171, ext. 5, or [gsimon@ndpma.org](mailto:gsimon@ndpma.org). You also can donate or read more about the fund online at [www.ndpma.org/ndfund](http://www.ndpma.org/ndfund). ■

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**Jane Dika '02 (NDP)**

**Erin Kish '03 (NDP)**

**Bob Lesnau '98 (NDP)**

**Dan Staniszewski '02 (NDP)**

**Bobbie Hall '00 (NDP)**

**John McCabe '63 (NDHS)**


**Scott Lockhart '98 (NDP)**

**Grant Golasa '10 (NDP)**

**Daniel Terzano '10 (NDP)**



# One of a kind



Many-layered, textured, gruff, kind, stubborn, witty, hilarious. These among many other words are used when describing Conrad Vachon, the esteemed former English teacher from Notre Dame in Harper Woods. Vachon died 15 years ago this spring (May 11) at the age of 67. But his legacy and influence continue to resonate with all those Notre Dame men who were lucky enough to know him and to take a class taught by him.

For those who did not know Vachon, it's hard to describe or define him—despite many who try. He was an enigma in every sense of the word.

Imagine a combination of Hunter S. Thompson, Lenny Bruce and Pope Francis. [Sorry, Mr. Vachon!] Or maybe it's Oscar-winner J.K. Simmons' character in the movie "Whiplash," without the flying chair of course [though chalkboard erasers often took flight in his class].

Imagine Bo Schembechler, Woody Hayes and Jack Kerouac wrapped into one. Maybe TV's Dr. House?

Or, how about let's just forget about trying to describe him in simple terms because it is nigh impossible. So, after a brief biographical sketch, we'll let those who knew Vachon best talk about him.



Conrad G. Vachon was born on November 24, 1932, in Detroit to parents Rudel and Alice. (His older brother Maurice currently lives in suburban Detroit.) Vachon attended Detroit's St. Rita grade school and graduated in 1950 from Catholic Central, which at that time was still in Detroit. He received his undergraduate degree in English from Assumption College, in Windsor, Ontario, and his graduate degree, also in English, from the



University of Detroit.

Irene Vachon, Conrad's sister-in-law and Maurice's wife, said she first met Conrad around the time he was in the Basilian Seminary, which she said he entered out of high school, but didn't finish.

Irene and her family were close with Conrad throughout his life. An avowed life-long bachelor, Irene said her brother-in-law was always included in their family gatherings.

"Conrad was in many ways more like a brother to me than my own brothers," Irene recalled. "And he was a very good uncle to my children. We would never think of having a birthday or holiday celebration without him."

She said he was also generous to a fault to her family.

"He really loved books and the arts," Irene said. "In fact, every year on my birthday and Christmas, Conrad would always give me a book. Same with the kids. And he would always write something on the flyleaf." She said they still have all those books.

Conrad Vachon started teaching at Notre Dame High School in 1957 just a couple of years after it opened in Harper Woods and he was on staff there until he died in 2000. He taught English from the get-go and coached track and cross country for most of his years at the school. From 1974 until 1981, he also served as principal.

So, between those years at Notre Dame—1957 and 2000—Conrad Vachon touched the lives of many students and staffers. We reached out to some of them and what follows are their thoughts, remembrances and anecdotes. And we wrap it up with a special, touching essay written in the year 2000 by a 1965 graduate. It really does capture the special essence of a special man.



Conrad Vachon is with his nephew, Guy Vachon, in the 1970s.



*Doug Brown, a 1970 graduate of NDHS, qualified for the Olympics three times (1972, 1976, 1980) and was a two-time American record holder and five-time national college champion (Tennessee) in steeplechase. During his senior year at NDHS, he won the Michigan class A state championship in cross country. Vachon was Brown's cross-country coach and his number-one mentor.*

"Simply put, Conrad Vachon was one of the most influential people in my entire life. It's not a cliché to say he was like a father to me. He would kick my butt when it needed kicking, hug my neck when it needed hugging, and taught me so many things that could never be learned in the classroom. He always believed in me and for

that reason I was willing to run through walls for that man—pun intended!"



*Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., is a 1965 alum of NDHS and current head of school at Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy.*

"Conrad Vachon was the quintessential English teacher. I enjoyed him immensely in class. Additionally, he was a wonderful support to me when I became principal at Harper Woods Notre Dame. God bless Conrad for the many good things he did for his students."

*Please see ONE OF A KIND, page 18*

Ten parents from NDP accompanied the students as chaperones.

### 2001 Notre Dame Grad and Cranbrook Alum is Creating Big Art in Washington



Notre Dame Prep graduate Brian Widmaier ('01) has been a busy artist.

He completed an art project in Seattle this past fall that was part of an outdoor exhibition sponsored by MadArt, an organization loosely affiliated with the University of Washington that is rethinking how and where art is viewed in local communities. Widmaier had been a visiting artist and adjunct professor for U-W's School of Art.

The 12-foot obelisks were created and installed by Widmaier to interact with the environment surrounding them. He joined twelve other artists to create art installations across the U-W grounds for the Mad Campus exhibition, which ran September 13 through October 25, 2014.

### Notre Dame Students Work in the Community on MLK Jr. 'Day of Service'

On January 19, Notre Dame once again joins the nation in celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which honors the life and legacy of one of the great figures in modern American history.

King Jr. believed that acts of service were the great equalizer. "Everybody can be great," he said, "because everybody can serve."

Service to the community always has been an important component to the education of Notre Dame students. Simply measure the many community and Christian hours of service spent annually by NDP seniors alone, and you come up with well more than 10,000!

On the weekend before MLK Jr. Day, a number of Notre Dame students again were serving the community along with more than 400 others in the 2015 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, which was sponsored by the Archdiocese of Detroit's Black Catholic Ministries and Youth Ministry offices.



### Notre Dame Senior Earns Rare Eagle Scout Rank



Logan Verheyen, a senior at Notre Dame Preparatory School, has earned the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest award given by the Boy Scouts of America. According to BSA, only 4 percent of the nearly three million scouts nationwide earn Eagle Scout status.

For his Eagle Scout project, Verheyen designed and built a 174-foot long, 5-foot wide wheelchair-accessible path at O.A.T.S. (Offering Alternative Therapy with Smiles), a therapeutic horseback riding ranch for handicapped children and adults. The path connects the paved driveway to a handicap-accessible dock (which was built by Logan's brother, Connor, in June 2012).

Verheyen joins fellow NDP students Brennan Eagle, Tyler Obear, Ryan Flaherty and alums Ryan Dau, Erik Egner, Connor Verheyen, Jack Stouffer, Joe Lombardo and Peter Dondanville, who also have achieved Eagle Scout status.

### Mixer Brings Current and Alum NDP International Baccalaureate Students Together

Over the Christmas break, members of the growing International Baccalaureate community at Notre Dame got together at a coffee shop to share experiences. According to IB Diploma Programme coordinator and Spanish teacher Kim Anderson, the get together was organized in an effort to connect alums who already have gone through the rigorous curriculum of the IB with NDP students currently enrolled in the program.



"I am hoping to make this a regular event to help the NDP IB alums connect with the current NDP IB students and become mentors," Anderson said. "The alums would provide a support system for the current NDP IBers and help them out with sorting out potential colleges and universities, and also just to lend an ear when things get stressful."

In October, during the IB extended essay "lock-down," Anderson coordinated a Skype session with a number of NDP IB alums currently at the University of Michigan (@UMich). "It was awesome and inspirational for our current IB kids," she said. "And now I think this coffee night, which had a great turnout, has taken it to a whole new level."

### New Marist Provincial Elected in the U.S.

Rev. Paul F. Frechette, s.m., has been elected to become the next provincial for the Society of Mary (Marists) Province of the U.S. He was chosen by his fellow Marist priests and brothers to lead the province over the next three years.



Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is sponsored by the Marist Fathers and Brothers.

Rev. Timothy (Ted) Keating, s.m., who has led the province for two successive three-year terms, described Frechette as a Marist marked by the deep values of the Society, a marked love for the poor and marginalized, and an excellent vision for the Society in these times of change in the Society and Church.

Frechette will assume duties as Provincial on July 1, 2015.

### Notre Dame Alum Named Football Coach of the Year

Paul Verska, who graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1963, was named the 2014 Macomb County Coach of the Year at The Macomb Daily Football Awards Dinner held December 1. Verska led the De La Salle football team out of Warren, Mich., to this year's Division 2 state title by beating Muskegon Mona Shores, 44-8, at Ford Field on November 28.



Also at the awards dinner, the De La Salle football team was named Macomb County Team of the Year.

Verska has been the Pilots' coach since 2002. His teams have made three appearances in state championship games. He also was named Coach of the Year, and De La Salle was named Team of the Year, in 2008.

*Please see IRISH News, page 24*



# A 'valued' education

2012 graduate Nick Watson recognizes the many values of a Notre Dame education

**N**ick Watson, who graduated from Notre Dame in 2012 and is now a junior at the University of Chicago, said the value NDP placed on real "learning" has been tremendously beneficial for him in college.

He says that while his degree is an important goal and he looks forward to receiving it, the driving factor for him at Chicago is to learn as much as possible. And he credits his high school for much of that mentality.

"I think the mind-set of placing an intrinsic value on learning itself is something that comes with growing up," Watson said. "But I also feel that I started to develop this attitude toward the end of my time at NDP. It's so easy to get caught up in focusing on the end product, whether it be getting an A in a class, or a degree, or a job. I've found that being able to learn something and think about how it applies to your life and how it can make you a better person is much more fulfilling than being driven by an external reward and going through the motions."

Watson, who was a valedictorian when he graduated from high school, also credits Notre Dame for fine tuning his time-management skills. He played baseball at NDP and juggling that with a heavy load of academics turned out to be fortuitous for him, especially since he also plays ball for Chicago.

"I learned how to push myself academically and explore my extracurricular interests at the same time," he said. "A large part of my experience at NDP was learning how to balance the time commitments of classes, playing sports, and being actively involved in school clubs."

Playing college baseball, he said, while still prioritizing schoolwork came naturally for him thanks to NDP. "In addition, I found that the discussion-based International Baccalaureate classes I took in high school prepared me very well for similar classes in college."

For example, he said, tak-

ing Theory of Knowledge, an IB course, with Notre Dame Head of School Fr. Leon Olszamowski, has given him an edge in understanding the philosophical arguments that persist in many of his college classes. "In addition to preparing me for specific class subjects," Watson said, "the NDP curriculum helped me to develop an analytical framework that also has proved to be invaluable."

## THE ONION

An internship at satirical publication The Onion during his sophomore year at the University of Chicago also benefited from Watson's NDP education. He said Notre Dame helped him realize initially how much he enjoyed writing.

"But part of what led me to apply at The Onion in the first place was how much fun I had writing satire for the NDP student newspaper," Watson said. "As an intern at The Onion, I helped to analyze current events and presented research to the writing team every day."

As much as he enjoys and excels at writing, however, he's still got an open mind when it comes to career choice. He says the econ classes at NDP as well as the fact that he enjoys that subject led him to choose economics as a major at Chicago. It also led him to another internship this past summer when he worked at the Kresge Foundation in Troy with its investment team.

## MUSICAL MATH

Watson misses his time at NDP and misses many former classmates and teachers. In fact, he would have liked to bring a few teachers with him to the Windy City.

"There were so many teachers at NDP who I will never be able to thank enough for their influence on me," he said. "Notre Dame truly has so many exceptional faculty members, and I often wish they could take over some of my college classes. None of my math teachers here have the musical capabilities of Mr. McCaskey, for example, and I've yet to have an English teacher command a room like Mr. Butorac."

## ENSURING THE FUTURE

So, armed with such a great academic arsenal he received from Notre Dame and thankful for the head start it gave him in college, Watson said he wants to make sure others also benefit in the future.

"I feel that it's important to support NDP after graduating because it helps ensure that the opportunities I was able to take advantage of will be available for future generations of students. I am very grateful for everything that NDP did for me and I look forward to being able to give back." ■

**Notre Dame Prep alum Nick Watson is a pitcher on the University of Chicago baseball team.**



PHOTO PROVIDED BY NICK WATSON '12 (NDP)



# Ivy League Tiger

Hard-working Ivy Leaguer wants to help bring Detroit back

Even though he's not yet a full year removed from Notre Dame, current Princeton undergrad Max Schwegman '14 (NDP) says he's pretty sure of what he'd like to do with his career. Schwegman's an economics major at Princeton and plans to get an MBA. So he believes that once all of that is behind him, he'll leave the Ivy League and head back to Detroit.

"I believe Detroit has more to offer than it is generally credited with, and I want to be a part of its comeback," Schwegman, who was a member of Notre Dame's valedictory court, said in a recent interview with the Notre Dame alumni office. "I want to help spark the industry, create jobs, and form a better living environment in the city. It is my home and where my heart lies, and ultimately I want to be able to give back to this community." He thinks his passion for what he believes in, a motivation to always work to the best of his ability, and a strength of character and conviction will be key to any success he has back in Detroit and beyond.

Besides a hefty workload of academics at Princeton, Schwegman runs track for the Tigers and helps out with Athletes in Action, a global sports ministry working with college and professional athletes to encourage them to share their faith story and encourage others along the way. With all of that on his plate he still keeps a spot open for memories of Notre Dame. He says the school always felt like family to him.

"The close relationships that were built at NDP are probably what I miss the most," he said. "That sort of rapport is not as prevalent at the university level, for sure. The faculty at NDP weren't just teachers, they were mentors and friends who genuinely wanted the very best for their students." ■

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MAX SCHWEGMAN '14 (NDP)

## Alum David Bonior visits with Notre Dame students

Former U.S. Congressman David E. Bonior, a 1963 graduate of Notre Dame, was on the NDPMA campus March 4 to visit with students and sign copies of his new book, "Eastside Kid: A Memoir of My Youth, From Detroit to Congress."

The book, the fourth by Bonior, is a heartfelt recollection of his coming of age in working-class southeast Michigan, his strong Catho-

lic faith and his ascent to the second highest ranked position in the U.S. House of Representatives, a position he held for 11 years.

Bonior spent the afternoon on March 4 with a number of NDP students, including those in the school's government class. Afterward, he signed copies of his new book for alumni, faculty and staff.

Bonior's other books include "Taking Back the Workers' Law: How to Fight the Assault on Labor Rights," and "The Vietnam Veteran: A History of Neglect," where he laments about the poor treatment veterans received in the U.S. when they returned from Vietnam. ■





Ask 2003 Notre Dame Prep graduate Annalisa Simmer what drove her to her career and she immediately scoffs at the notion that she actually “has” a career. “It’s more of a ‘life work’ than a career,” she says. “No one ever went into humanitarian aid or mission work to make money or become successful as those in the U.S. might define success.”

Life work or career, what Simmer is doing is simply both unselfish and commendable. After what she calls a “privileged” upbringing and a degree from Albion College, Simmer began a journey that took her not to grad school, but to Guatemala.

She says she’s been a full-time missionary in Guatemala since October of 2010 at which time she thought she was going to teach massage therapy to the Guatemalans. But there was a real need for someone to teach English, so she jumped in with both feet.

“I run an educational program,” Simmer says. “The people here call it a scholarship program, but I also call it an incentive program. I offer ‘points’ to the kids based on the grades they get in school. With those points they can buy ‘emergency supplies’ such as beans, rice, salt and sugar, among other things, or they can buy items to help improve their own family economy; things like a sewing machine, a wood stove or hair clippers.”

They also use those points to buy their school supplies and pay their school fees, which Simmer is happy to see. “But they need so much more. In the villages where I work, schools only go to the 9th grade. Currently, two

# Making a difference



Notre Dame alum is making a big difference in a big world.

of my most advanced students are entering 9th grade and it’s my hope that within the next year I’ll be able to purchase a large enough house to provide housing for those two girls and any future students who may want to study at a high school or university level. But that’s still a lot of prayers and a lot of money away.”

even in America don’t have. That definitely is a privilege!”

## IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Simmer also is grateful for the education she received both at school and at home. “First of all, both of my parents are or were teachers,” she says. “My mother gave up teaching to raise

## ‘PRIVILEGED’

Having witnessed such poverty and need, Simmer says it’s made her appreciate even more her upbringing in the U.S. and her education. “I recognize that I was born privileged,” Simmer says. “For starters, I was born in a country that allows me hassle-free access to just about anywhere in the world. No one looks over my documents and declares me unfit to be in their country. No one in America ever assumes that I don’t have the money to pay any loan, and they all believe me if I tell them I have a certain amount of money in my bank account.

“And I was also born in a state that requires education up until the age of 16 and doesn’t allow children to work until a certain age. Like so many children in Guatemala, no one ever told me at the age of eight that I wouldn’t be going to school anymore and that I’d have to wash clothes for my neighbors all day or work in the field all day.”

She also says that beyond being born in such a privileged country, she also was born into a privileged family. “While I was probably one of the poorest in my class from NDP, I did have two parents present in the household, which many children

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ANNALISA SIMMER '03 (NDP)

Please see *DIFFERENCE*, page 26

## ONE OF A KIND, from page 13



*Mark Binelli, who graduated from NDHS in 1988, is an author and journalist based in New York City.*

"I remember how Vachon would refer to Joseph Conrad as 'Joe Conrad,' and how he told us never to leave a movie before the credits ended, and of course, the poems we'd recite at the beginning of every class. Funny enough, my girlfriend teaches high school English here in New York and I mentioned Vachon's poetry regimen—and she loved the idea and started doing it with her kids! She even used Tennyson's 'The Eagle,' the very first poem Vachon had us memorize in 12th-grade English class, which I'm sure he chose in part because he knew how much he looked like a balding bird of prey himself. So anyway, because of Vachon, now there are a bunch of tough New York City public school kids who can recite 'He clasps the crag with crooked hands. . .'"



*Tom Novak, a 1958 graduate of NDHS, is a former cop, businessman and author of a number of novels. He talks about what got him interested in writing and, of course, Vachon.*

"Actually, it started in grade school where I wrote essays for the ADF (Archdiocesan Development Fund) while at Ascension School in Warren. I won a rosary in the fifth grade, I think, for an essay. Then, during my senior year at NDHS, Mr. Conrad Vachon, my English teacher, wanted us to write for a Detroit Free Press or Detroit News contest. I did not win, but Mr. Vachon said, 'You can write, Tom. Don't waste your talent.' Much later, I sent him a copy of an outdoor magazine published out of Cincinnati that bought two articles from me in the late 70s just to show him I was trying to follow his wishes. I also loved the way Mr. Vachon read Macbeth, changing voices for all the characters. And he was a sharp dresser. Being the class clown, I always had to make comments about his Robert Hall wardrobe."



*Gini Kelly worked as Conrad Vachon's secretary when he was principal of NDHS. She and her husband, Tom, the former teacher, coach and athletic director at Notre Dame, were very good friends with Vachon.*

"To say working for Conrad was a challenge is definitely an understatement. But he always put the kids first, always had their best interests in mind. I will always remember, though, what to me was a very funny episode near the end of one particular school year. I'm sure he'd have a different take on it, however. One afternoon, he came flying out of his office, almost screaming, 'Gini, call the police! Those damn girls from Regina are driving around our school and mooning the boys!' He was beside himself. He'd go back into his office and then come back out a few minutes later. 'Gini, call the police! Did you call them yet?' While nearly falling out of my chair laughing, I told him 'you call the damn police. I'm not calling them!' What he was conveniently forgetting about was the call we got the week before from the principal of Regina complaining about the ND boys mooning the girls—and that he had told me, 'Oh well, boys will be boys.'"



*Bob Artymovich, a 1970 alum of NDHS and owner of EA Graphics, recalled an encounter with Vachon on his graduation day.*

"I went up to Mr. Vachon after the ceremony and said that I'm sure happy to see this diploma because I wasn't sure I was going to make it. He said 'Until last

night, you weren't.' I didn't know if he was joking or not!"



*Gregory Simon, a 1990 NDHS grad, is currently director of The Notre Dame Fund.*

"I found my inner scholar because of Conrad Vachon. I learned to think and critique the world around me. I learned to never hold my tongue when I saw indifference, arrogance or authority running amok. And, of course, I learned living with passion, humor, and a bit of an edge is not to be shied away from..."



*Norm Kotarski taught at both NDHS and NDP for more than 30 years. He also directed the drama departments at both schools.*

"Conrad Vachon = unconventional and effective.

"As a member of the English department, I observed Conrad use some classroom strategies that could only be used most effectively by Conrad. He had a way of invading the students' minds by creating some tension without provoking animosity. His swing from formality to informality could keep a class of students on their toes.

"He prodded students to view literature on a different slant. Students created the questions and then answered them with often an intellectual reversal to the point of the story. Did this lead to argument? Of course! Only the students who took part in the discussions were the winners of the argument.

"Tensions were relieved with nicknames, trips to 'check the flag,' and crazy 'window' rules. Who else could ask a class of senior boys to memorize the first fourteen lines of Chaucer's introduction to The Canterbury Tales in the original Old English dialect and then hear them spontaneously shout it out as part of a cheer at a sports rally. That made even Conrad smile.

"Why do the alumni remember Mr. Vachon? Because he was full of surprises and successfully rode that line between boys and men."



*David Bonior, former U.S. Congressman and author of four books, graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1963.*

"Conrad Vachon was as good a teacher as I've ever had. I remember he made me miss a baseball game once. Kept me after school. But he did the right thing. I was mad at him, but it was the right thing to do. Also, I had a habit of silent reading with my lips. He cured me of that by sticking a pencil in my mouth!"



*Fr. Joe Hindelang, s.m., who graduated from NDHS in 1968 and is the current principal of Notre Dame Prep, had a "very Vachon" story to tell. It was during the time Hindelang was on staff at Notre Dame and Vachon was teaching English.*

"When I was an assistant principal at ND in the mid-to-late 80s, near the end of the year, one day I was walking innocently down the main hallway and I smelled smoke. So I was a bit concerned about that and determined that the smell was coming from the end of the middle wing.

"So I walked to the end of the wing and there was Conrad's class of seniors and they were all sitting there smoking cigars. So I figured Conrad knows what he's doing and I turned around and walked back to my office. Three or four hours later I saw Conrad in the hall and I said, 'Conrad, I was walking down the hallway at 9:05 this morning and saw a bunch of guys smoking in your room.'

"Conrad said, 'Did you see that? That was the damndest thing!'



And I said, what was going on, and he said, 'I was standing there teaching and all of a sudden this Barr kid lights a cigar.' And I said, what did you do? And he said, 'Nothing. I didn't want him to know it bothered me.' Then what happened? He said, 'Everybody else took out a cigar.' And I said, then what did you do? He said, 'I kept teaching. I didn't want them to think it was bothering me.' After a long pause, he said, 'But when it got to the end of the period, I said, put those things out and open the windows. We've got freshmen coming in here next and we don't want them scandalized.'

"Come to find out, three or four days later I was talking to Mr. and Mrs. Barr and I said something about this to them. They said the class wanted to do something special in Conrad's class since it was the end of the school year. But they all thought they would get expelled. "So our son said, 'Look, I'll light the cigar and if he is going to do anything, he'll just throw me out, and then you guys are all set. But if I don't get into trouble, then you guys light up.' They had this all worked out."



*Comedian and actor Dave Coulier, a 1977 NDHS alum, recalled Vachon's writing classes.*

"He would give out a gold star if your paper was the best of that week's assignment. I would usually write something funny about a serious subject matter. Well, my first four papers in his class were Ds. He told me (insert nasally Conrad Vachon impression here): 'David, not everything in this world is funny.' And I said, 'Yes it is.' He laughed, shook his head and walked away. I stuck with it though, and for the next assignment I wrote something that I thought was really funny about the Vietnam War. The following week he was giving out our papers and I thought, here comes another D. He threw my paper on my desk with a look of sheer disgust on his face. I looked down. I got the gold star! Before I read my paper to class, he told everyone what guts I had. The moral of the story for me? STICK WITH WHAT YOU BELIEVE even though there's going to be some failure on the way to success."



*Duane Holmes taught, coached and was the dean of students at NDHS before he came to work in NDP's athletic department in 2005. He began his Notre Dame career in 1978 when then-principal Conrad Vachon hired him to teach at the Harper Woods campus. Holmes had been at Detroit Austin High School for two years before that school closed.*

"I thought Conrad was a very interesting individual, to say the least, when I first met him at my interview. But he was a wonderful, wonderful man."



*Tom Schusterbauer taught English at NDHS for nine years before a 30-year stint at Mercy High School. Many former Notre Dame students to this day compare him to Vachon. Schusterbauer said that when he first got to ND, he was scared to death of Vachon.*

"I told fellow English teacher Bob Kelly that I was struggling with teaching advanced comp. He suggested that I sit in on CV's class. When I asked Vachon if he minded, he said, 'I don't give a damn what you do.'

"But later that same year, as I was walking to the library for the faculty Christmas party, Vachon came up to me and said, 'I'm hearing great things about you, Schusty.' Nothing meant more to me."



*Fr. Jim Strasz, s.m., is on staff at Notre Dame Prep. He graduated from NDHS in 1970 and was at Notre Dame for his first few years of teaching.*

"I was grateful to Conrad for his kindness when I first went to teach at ND. He was the principal then and was always very enthused about the school. And he was most helpful in my first year or two giving advice on teaching. I especially remember after Vachon gave up the principal's job and was back in the classroom. Across the hall from me in the second wing I could hear him boom to his students, "Don't you dare look out that window!" It brought back memories of when I was at NDHS and had him as a teacher. He often would bellow to unsuspecting kids, usually freshmen, "Go out to the football field and see if the flag is flying!"

*Bob Gassen is a 1965 alum of Notre Dame as well as a writer and college professor. He wrote the following after a visit to Notre Dame to hopefully catch up with his favorite high school teacher.*

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## The Gift

*By Bob Gassen*

"On May 17, 2000, I entered the back door of Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods, Michigan, holding a paperback copy of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Although this book was faded and worn, held together with yellowed mending tape, it was in remarkably good condition, considering the service it had given to me. I had first used this book in 1965 as a senior at Notre Dame. Three years later, as an English major, I made use of the critical commentary at the back of the book while I studied Shakespearean tragedies. Then in 1976, I again used the reference works when studying Shakespeare as a graduate student in English. On numerous occasions, I have used



**Conrad Vachon also coached track and cross country at Notre Dame.**

this old Signet Classic Hamlet when teaching Introduction to Literature at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas. After teaching English for thirty years. I decided to give this book to Mr. Conrad Vachon, my senior English teacher at Notre Dame. This book, along with a number of others that I had saved from high school, undergraduate work and graduate study, meant much to me. To some extent, it was symbolic of my scholastic attainments, and I wanted to give this worn copy of Hamlet, one of the crowning achievements in the English language, to the man who had introduced me to the power of language.

"At the end of my junior year in high school, the dean of studies at Notre Dame asked me about my career plans. Although

*Please see ONE OF A KIND, page 23*



# Alum loves being

Notre Dame alum Matthew Croft is practicing at the keyboards during a tour stop in Lexington, Kentucky.



# in the pit

Alum and musician is touring with professional theatre troupe. With more than 100 musicals behind him, Matthew Croft currently is traveling the country with ‘Guys and Dolls.’

# N

otre Dame alum Matthew Croft ('06) currently is on the road with a national tour of “Guys and Dolls,” originally one of Broadway’s most enduring musicals. The tour, which is being staged by Big League Productions out of New York City, began in December in Florida and finishes up at the end of May in New London, Connecticut. In between there are more than 50 performances of the Tony Award-winning play with Croft as assistant conductor and keyboardist in the pit orchestra.

He loves what he’s doing—he’s got more than 100 musicals on his resume—and says sitting with the nine-piece orchestra and 23-person traveling company is something he thinks he was always meant to do . . . well, at least since high school.

“I realized pretty early on that I wanted to go into music for a career—something that my music teachers at NDP and college as well as my private teachers encouraged me to do,” Croft said in an interview last month from Santa Barbara, California. “I originally wanted to study film music, but I discovered Broadway music and pit orchestras, and I immediately knew that’s where I should be.”

He spent a lot of time in his formative years studying classical music, i.e., theory, harmony, composition, conducting, etc., and he played as many shows as he could fit into his



schedule in order to gain as much experience as possible. All that work seems to have paid off, he said, but his time at Notre Dame Prep and later at Wayne State University, where he studied music composition and conducting, also played a big part as well.

“I owe a lot of my success in college to my music teachers at NDP,” Croft said. “Joe Martin and David Fazzini both were a great help, working with me to develop my skills as a pianist, a composer and an arranger. They also gave me the opportunity to have my compositions played by the band and choir,

and to learn how to conduct and lead a group—all skills that have come in very handy in my current career.”

While learning his musical chops at NDP, Croft also worked for an outside professional theater company and even conducted the musical “Hair.” He continued to hone his skills while in college, including two years with the Meadow Brook Theatre as a keyboard player and assistant conductor.

“I got involved with Big League Productions through my work at Meadow Brook Theatre, which was a big break for me,” he said. But Croft believes it was more than just a big break that led to his current success.

“At NDP, David Fazzini and Joe Martin were nothing but encouraging and helpful my entire time there. They really pushed me to be creative and to work hard.” He also credits former NDP teacher Russ Cannon, who pushed him to “really think outside the box” and to be an independent thinker.

When his schedule allows, Croft would love to visit Notre Dame and work with current music students. “As a musician and someone who went on to a success-

ful music career, I feel it’s very important to provide encouragement to the younger students in terms of a career in the arts,” he said. “The arts tend to get overlooked in a lot of ways, so I think the more that I and other alumni who are working in the arts can do to encourage and develop young talent at NDP through visiting, mentorships, etc., the better it will be for them. It’s a great way to give back to NDP!” ■

# Notre Dame judge

Hard-working alum and former police officer now enforces the law in the courtroom

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RICHARD CARETTI '71 (NDHS)



**R**ichard Caretti '71 (NDHS) graduated from Wayne State University in 1975. Since then, he's been traveling a very robust legal-career road: first stop was as a Detroit cop while pursuing a law degree. His road-trip now includes a current stint that sees him presiding over the civil and criminal

division of the Macomb County Circuit Court in Mt. Clemens, Mich.

His other stops along the way include 23 years of private law practice with firms Dickinson-Wright and then with his own firm, Strobl, Cunningham, Caretti and Sharp. He also once served as chief judge of the Macomb County 16th Circuit Court, part of a truly stellar judicial journey.

But he reserves a special shoutout for one of his first stops in life. . . the one on 20254 Kelly Road in Harper Woods—Notre Dame High School.

"My time at Notre Dame taught me the value of hard work," Caretti, who graduated in 1971, said. "This work ethic prepared me well to complete a rather grueling schedule of work as a Detroit police officer while attending both WSU and the Detroit College of Law, where I received my J.D. The excellent curriculum as well as the tremendous teachers at Notre Dame also contributed greatly, I believe, to my academic success and to my career success."

As a young man, he says he was pretty much convinced, even in high school, that his future was law. "While at Notre Dame I took the usual aptitude tests, and my test scores revealed that I apparently had strong verbal and communication skills," Caretti recalls. "This led me to the conclusion that I wanted to become an attorney."

Others at Notre Dame also noticed his legal leanings.

"I remember discussing my high school aptitude scores with Fr. Saunders, who I had for English and who also was my counselor," Caretti remembers. "Fr. Saunders agreed with the results and encouraged me to pursue a career in the law."

Even though his busy schedule doesn't leave much room for anything other than enforcing or interpreting the law, Caretti nonetheless believes it's important to stay connected to the extracurricular community at large. And connected he is, with active memberships in the Michigan Judges Association, Macomb County Bar Association, Michigan State University Alumni Association, Detroit Athletic Club, the Italian American Bar Association, and the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies.

Back on the subject of Notre Dame, Caretti expresses sadness and regret that his alma mater closed (in 2005), but he still has "extremely fond" memories of his four years at the school. "I really do believe my time at Notre Dame prepared me well for my career path and whatever success I have achieved thus far. And I also forged many strong friendships while there, some of which persist to this day." ■



I had no career plans, I told him that I wanted to become a writer. English was one of the only courses in which I had earned a B grade. I enjoyed writing and put occasional effort into it. On the strength of my remark to the dean and my Bs in English, I ended up in one of Mr. Vachon's senior English classes with the smart kids, those who enrolled in fourth-year Latin and calculus and were prepping for colleges such as Brown, Boston College and Michigan. My only impression of Mr. Vachon prior to my senior year was of a skinny guy with a hooked nose and an almost continual scowl, a no-nonsense teacher who walked quickly through the halls. He reminded me of a rooster wearing black, horn-rimmed glasses.

"Conrad Vachon praised me once during my entire senior year of English. Before starting class one morning, he saw Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* on my desk. 'You're reading *A Moveable Feast*. I'm impressed, Gassen.' That was the only time he was impressed with me. What I didn't mention to Mr. Vachon was that, the day before, I was killing time in study hall, which was located in the library. While doodling in my notebook, I noticed a book with a multi-colored dust jacket on one of the shelves and began reading it out of curiosity. Just before the end of the hour, I checked out *A Moveable Feast* and read it all. Hemingway made writing seem like such an adventure that I even wrote some of my essays for Mr. Vachon in a drugstore restaurant to imitate Hemingway's account of writing in restaurants. I didn't know who Hemingway was and had no recollection of reading any of his fiction, but at that time, I was only beginning to really care about anything.

"If a young person is lucky, he becomes involved with the right adult at the right time. In my case, I was doubly lucky. As a cross country coach, Mr. Bill Raymond made me believe that mediocrity was my lot in life only if I allowed that to happen. From him, I learned that if I wanted to excel as a runner, I would have to have the determination to win and put in the requisite hard work. As an English teacher, Mr. Vachon demonstrated what commitment and passion for a profession and a field of study really meant. In Mr. Vachon's classes, we didn't take study halls or discuss any issues not pertinent to the lesson at hand. Under him, we studied the craft of writing—such as formulating a thesis and improving verb density. We read and discussed such works as Sophocles' *Antigone*, Beowulf, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. We memorized John Donne's sonnet 'Death, be not proud,' Shakespeare's sonnet "That time of Year," and Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' soliloquy. I still remember sitting at an old Formica kitchen table writing Donne's 'Death, be not proud' sonnet over and over until I had, to use Mr. Vachon's phrase, 'committed it to memory.' At that time, I had no idea what this poem meant. It could just as well have been written in a foreign language. But what was important then was that I was beginning my apprenticeship in the profession of language. Several years later, I came to appreciate Donne's ingenious Italian sonnet, and a few years after

that, I took an entire graduate course entitled *Age of Donne*. But I had memorized 'Death, be not proud' in 1965, and to this day, I can recite it and the other poems that I memorized in Mr. Vachon's class.

"I'm not suggesting that requiring students to memorize a number of poems and read a voluminous amount of literature is a necessary characteristic of good English teaching. However, Conrad Vachon brought such intense passion and conviction to his teaching that I really didn't mind the work. In fact, years later, when preparing certain works of literature that I previously studied under Mr. Vachon for college classes that I was taking, I would hear his phrases and ideas echoing in my mind. When discussing Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* in a college class, I remembered Conrad Vachon lecturing in the cafeteria while team teaching with Mr. Robert Kelly and Father Richard Cochran. His emphasis that *Jim* was 'one of us' still reverberates in

my memory. By the end of my senior year at Notre Dame, I knew that although I had a long way to go, I wanted to teach English like Mr. Vachon.

"During the first semester of my freshmen year at college, my mother sent me an article about Mr. Vachon as the new coach of the Notre Dame cross country team. I knew that Coach Raymond had taken a sabbatical to study at Arizona State University and was wondering who would coach cross country. When I read the article, I scoffed at the idea of Conrad Vachon being a coach. I should have known that he would put forth the

same passion and commitment to coaching that he put into teaching English. As a student at Notre Dame, I dedicated myself to running. Coincidentally, when I went to college, I channeled that dedication into the study of English, and Conrad Vachon dedicated much of his energy into coaching cross country and track, eventually producing championship teams and nationally renowned runners. Perhaps it is just as well that Mr. Vachon began coaching the year after I left Notre Dame. I don't think that I could have dealt with such intensity both in the classroom and on the track.

"As I passed through the gym and began walking down the main hallway, I looked into the room where I had Mr. Vachon for senior English. Farther on, I approached a faculty member walking in the opposite direction. 'Excuse me, I'm looking for Mr. Vachon.' He gave me a solemn look before telling me that Mr. Vachon had recently passed away.

"Before leaving, I spoke briefly with the principal, Father John Sadjak, about Mr. Vachon. As I walked out the back door, still holding the book I had intended to give Mr. Vachon, I remembered Horatio's famous line to the dead Hamlet: 'Good night, sweet prince, I and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.'" ■

#### *About the Author*

*Bob Gassen '65 (NDHS), free-lance writer and frequent contributor of articles to professional journals, teaches composition and literature at Hutchinson Community College in Hutchinson, Kansas.*



PHOTO PROVIDED BY GUY VACHON

## NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI

**Jim Zyla '68 (NDHS)** Thanks for the stories about recent grads, along with the ones about guys from my era, in the fall issue of Irish. I was a frequent attendee at the Friday night sock hops in the 1960s. (That is what we called them, isn't it?) So, I enjoyed the story about Fr. Bryson and the bands. And, it was nice to see fellow students and former teachers mentioned elsewhere. I was disheartened when I heard that NDHS had closed. At the time, I hadn't heard about what was happening in Pontiac. I got my first inkling of how well things have gone when I asked a guy who walked by one day, wearing an NDP jacket. He went on for much longer than I expected. It gave me a warm fuzzy feeling.

**Greg Ulrich '70 (NDHS)** was elected to a seventh term as a commissioner, State Bar of Michigan, Board of Commissioners; member, SBM Finance Committee. Business law firm in Grosse Pointe, adjunct law professor, Western Michigan University - Cooley Law School in the LL.M. Corporate Law and Finance. Member, American Bar Association, House of Delegates; named in September 2014 by the president of the American Bar Association to be a member of the ABA Military Assistance to Military Personnel Standing Committee. Director, University of Detroit School of Law Alumni Board. Appointed in December 2014 to the University of Detroit-Mercy Alumni Association Board of Directors. Appointed in February 2015 as a Trustee on the Grosse Pointe Library Board.

### We'd love to hear from you!

Send a note to let us know what you're up to: e-mail Beth Campbell at [bcampbell@ndpma.org](mailto:bcampbell@ndpma.org), or visit [ndpma.org/update](http://ndpma.org/update).

# Alumni Notes & Info

Notre Dame Prep: **(NDP)**; Notre Dame High School: **(NDHS)**; Pontiac Catholic: **(PC)**; Oakland Catholic: **(OC)**; St. Frederick: **(SF)**; St. Michael: **(SM)**

**Carey Grzadzinski '72 (NDHS)** Hmmm, so many years have gone by!!! I am preparing for retirement next spring from the Los Alamos National Nuclear Lab in New Mexico, where I have worked the last 10 years as a Nuclear Safety Engineer. Seeing your mail makes one reflect on an entire lifetime from HS graduation to retirement.... Surreal? Satisfied? Pridelful? Time will tell. I still remain in contact with fellow alumni Dave Powers, Mark Popp, Dave Hergott and Dave Marasco. We manage to have a holiday card game when I return every year at Christmas. Maybe that would be something other alumni would like to join? Euchre? Texas Hold'Em? Well, next year I will be looking at where and what I will embark on next. I don't ever see myself returning to the Detroit area or even east of Mountain Time zones as that goes. I now own a cattle/horse ranch in Idaho where I call home. But maybe becoming an active, though distant, participant in the alumni group is a possibility then?

**Robin Brant '82 (NDHS)** So much has happened over the years. In brief, I designed the Detroit Bad Boys logo in 1988, created Detroit Pistons logo and mascot "Hooper," created current cartoon characters for Hard Rock Cafe (Roxstars) and producing their animated movie; and currently art director in Orlando, Florida, developing merchandise for Disney, Universal Studios and Sea World. Hi to all my 1982 classmates. Hope everyone is well and happy!

**Jeffrey Iannuzzi '87 (NDHS)** I wanted to say hi to the class of '87 and give a little update on myself. My family and I have just returned from

living in Shanghai, China, for the past three years. It's great to be home in America. I'm a new model launch manager at Ford Motor Company where I have been working for the past 20 years. My wife and I have two sons Domenico (14) and Anthony (12). My oldest started school at De La Salle this year as a freshman. Still adjusting to belonging to the Pilot community. Will always be a ND graduate.

## NOTRE DAME PREP ALUMNI

**Josh Reese '98 (NDP)** After moving to New York, then Richmond Va., my wife Liz and I are currently living with our daughter June in Chicago. Liz is a part-time photographer, part-time mom, and I'm working as the head of design department at a large ad agency.

**Bobby Finn '05 (NDP)** has been living in LA and doing music out there since 2007.

**Matthew Croft '06 (NDP)** is currently touring the country as the Keyboard 2/Associate Music Director of the national tour of "Guys & Dolls," presented by Big League Productions. Tickets and more info can be found at [guysanddollsontour.com](http://guysanddollsontour.com).

**Kaelyn Petras '06 (NDP)** After completing her undergraduate studies at Michigan State University in 2009, Kaelyn went on to earn her doctoral degree in veterinary medicine this year. She is now living in Chandler, Ariz., and is working as an emergency vet at a multi-practice emergency and specialty clinic in the Phoenix area.

**Kaitlin Clark '10 (NDP)** is now in Oregon, leading interns into the field of ornithology! Doesn't think she will be coming home too soon.

She loves the great northwest! She is working toward a doctorate in the same field. She is working with Klamath Bird Observatory, but would love to fund one of her own!

**Kendall Hendler '10 (NDP)** is the stage manager at the Pix Theatre in Lapeer, Mich., for Jeff Daniels' "Escanaba in da Moonlight" play. It was on stage Oct. 3-5.

**Megan Petras '10 (NDP)** Megan completed her undergraduate degree in 2013 at Central Michigan University in communication disorders and will be completing her master's degree in speech language pathology this year. In January, she will be relocating to Charleston to work at the Medical University of South Carolina.

**Maria Pangori '13 (NDP)** ended her sophomore year at John Carroll University. Maria left this August to study abroad in the Vatican City for one semester at Pontificia Universita Urbaniana. She will pick up a minor in Catholic Studies while studying at the Vatican. Her JCU professor believes she will start an internship with "Vatican Radio" in October. They are in need of help in the Mandarin Department, but she does not know what department she will be involved in. (Maybe her five years studying Mandarin Chinese at NDP will be in her favor.) Her NDP education with the IB learner profile has enriched her to continue to be a risk-taker, open-minded, knowledgeable, communicator, and balanced. Irish pride!

**Theresa Schmid '13 (NDP)** has made the New York University equestrian team, which frequently goes to zone regionals and sends individual riders to the national championships every year. The team is comprised of about 20 riders and competes through the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association in Zone 2, Region 4 in at least 10 shows each year. ■

NEWS, from page 14

## Notre Dame Students Wrap Up Week of Computer Coding

Notre Dame's "Hour of Code" events during the week of Dec. 8-14 went without a hitch, according to school administrators. Joanne Widmaier, NDPMA's registrar and academic technology coordinator, said that students in all three divisions got a lot of coding completed during their one-hour special time periods.

Notre Dame students in junior-kindergarten through fifth grade wrote code on Friday, Dec. 12. "I love days like this," she said. "You just never know what one hour of learning code can do for a student or where it will take them. Coding introduces them to thinking skills that are critical for the digital age."

The entire school — from Jr.K through 12th grade — were part of the worldwide "Hour of Code," which this year was held December 8-14. Last year, the school also participated in the event.

## Alumni Hockey a Big Success

From Ricky Winowiecki '04 (NDHS), who helped organize the alumni hockey event: "The game went great! We had 19 skaters, two goalies, and an hour and a half of ice.

"The team coached by George Ambrozio '05 (NDHS) ended up winning, 8-7, over the team coached by Kyle Berg '05 (NDHS). The game winner was scored when Jason McBride '04 (NDHS) tripped classmate Steve Pokorski on a breakaway, earning him a penalty shot,

on which he scored. Other notable performances were turned in by Mike Smartt, who would have been an '06 (NDHS), with two goals and four assists. Ryan Sexton '99 (NDHS) was the winning goaltender, due in part to an outstanding defensive performance by Vito Ciaravino, also '99 (NDHS).

"With the surplus from the ice bill, we managed to buy a round of appetizers and still have some left over, which we donated to the 'Tour de Shores 2015 Charity Bike Ride,' run by Joe Eovaldi '05 (NDHS).

"Looking forward to next year!"

## Super Raffle Winners Pick Up Big Checks

At Notre Dame's 2014 Oktoberfest celebration held last fall on the school's Pontiac campus, the winning Super Raffle tickets were drawn from nearly 50,000 tickets, netting the lucky winners big prizes. Raffle ticket holders had a chance of winning one of the seven main prizes: \$50,000, \$10,000, \$5,000, \$2,500 and three \$1,000 payouts.

The proceeds from the raffle—more than \$370,000—is expected to help Notre Dame with finan-



\$50,000 winner Loretta Adams with son, David, a junior at NDP.



cial aid, continuing technology upgrades for the students and other classroom enhancements.

### Fundraising Event in Memory of NDP Grad Ashleigh Iserman ('04)

The 6th Annual "Light the Lakes" 5K Run/Walk will be held this May. The Ashleigh Iserman Boating Safety Foundation was established to honor Ashleigh's life and memory by promoting boating safety education and awareness. With hope, this will help keep our families safe on our waterways.

The event is Sunday, May 17, 2015, at the Thelma Spencer Park in Rochester Hills, Michigan; 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Check-in begins at 7:30 a.m. Race starts promptly at 8 a.m. Further information at [www.ashleighiserman.com](http://www.ashleighiserman.com) or Jan Willhite-Iserman: 248-652-1439; [chipps347@aol.com](mailto:chipps347@aol.com).



### Alum Returns Home to Play Concert with the DSO on New Year's Eve

Notre Dame alum and world-renowned jazz musician and composer Walt Szymanski ('72) was in Detroit on December 31, 2014, to play a special concert with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.



Led by DSO Principal Pops Conductor Jeff Tyzik, Szymanski and jazz trumpet legend Byron Stripling, organist Bobby Floyd and the orchestra performed a swinging combination

of jazz standards, including "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Ain't Misbehavin'," as well as light classical selections by Strauss and Smetana.

Currently a full-time resident of Ecuador, Szymanski says he's "living and enjoying life on the center of the planet where it is 72-80° every day and 55-60° at night, all year long."

He has served as a professor of jazz studies at the University de San Francisco de Quito/IMC in Quito, Ecuador, and has a number of private music students. He also is writing and composing music for a varied clientele worldwide.

During his Detroit visit, Szymanski also played a weekend set at the Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe in Grosse Pointe Farms.

### Notre Dame Junior Honored for Academics

Notre Dame Prep junior Erica Schwegman, a volleyball player at NDP, in November received Academic AAU All-America recognition.

Schwegman, who owns a 4.0 grade-point average, is a starting middle for the defending Division 2 state champion Fighting Irish. The three-year varsity player helped lead Prep to district and regional titles this season and a spot in the Catholic League championship match as well as to the MHSAA semifinals.

She also has started an initiative called Teen Hearts for Haiti, where she collects summer skirts for teen-age girls in Chiraque, Haiti.



### Alums and Brothers Get Icy for Special Olympics

Notre Dame alums Curtis Hertel, Jr., from the Class of 1996 and his brother Kevin, Class of 2003, both took a plunge March 5 in an icy swimming pool set up outside the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing.

They joined 50 lawmakers and staffers in the 21-degree weather to raise money for the Special Olympics in Michigan. Curtis Hertel is a state senator of the 23rd District of Michigan and he and his brother raised more than any other this year in the "Polar Plunge."



NDHS alums Curtis Hertel, Jr., ('96), left, and Kevin Hertel ('03).

### Weddings/Engagements

**Mackenzie Schwarzkoff '06 (NDP)** wed Jeremy Barber (Romeo High School) September 13, 2014.

**Ashley Ouellette '05 (NDP)** is engaged to Brett McMahon (Lutheran High Northwest), planning a July 2015 wedding with brother Adam Ouellette '04 (NDP) and Ashley (Reece) Raleigh '05 (NDP) in bridal party.

**Adam Ouellette '04 (NDP)** is engaged to Veronica Pryciak, planning a January 2015 wedding with Ashley Ouellette '05 (NDP) as maid of honor and Sammy Vitale '04 (NDP) as best man.

**Ryan Yanik '10 (NDP)** and Stephanie Kasmicki were married on August 23, 2014, in Honolulu, Hawaii, where they presently reside. Groom is son of Ron '78 (NDHS) and Sheri Yanik.

### Births

**Kelly (Cole) Patterson '99 (NDP)** and Bob Patterson welcomed Avery Victoria. She arrived Friday, February 13, 2015, weighing 6 lbs., 14 oz., 19-3/4 inches.

### Alumni/staff/faculty rest in peace

**Maxine Boucher '42 (SF)** 2-25-15

**Rachel Henahan (Nacianceno) '98 (NDP)** 2-21-15

**James Steiner '63 (NDHS)** 2-3-15

**Tim Schrieber '71 (NDHS)** 1-21-15

**Frank Colagiovanni '68 (NDHS)**, brother of Vince, '70 (NDHS) 1-6-15

**David Walch '64 (ND)** 1-4-15

**Marie Lauinger '50 (SM)**, husband of Chuck '48 (SM) 12-20-14

**J. Michael Lacombe '74 (NDHS)**, brother of Charles '70 (NDHS) 12-5-14

**Scott Anderson '02 (NDP)**, nephew of David Reis '67 (NDHS) 12-3-14

**Madelyn Panks '50 (SF)** 10-13-14

**Richard Magerman '39 (SM)**, father of Roger '67 (SM), brother of Janet Whitfield '53 (SM), brother of Madeline Deem '57 (SM) 10-23-14

**Richard Healander '53 (SM)** 10-22-14

**Charles Sornig '57 (SM)**, husband of Betty Sornig '56 (SM) 10-18-14

**William Souriall '48 (SM)** 9-27-14

**Loren G. Verlinden '65 (NDHS)**, brother of Michael '66 (NDHS) and the late John '62 (NDHS) and uncle of Michael '92 (NDHS) 8-25-14

**Denise (Fleming) Sharum '73 (PC)** 5-17-14

**Christopher Scott Glass '87 (NDHS)**

**Mary Ellen Grubb '43 (SF)**

**John Albo '63 (NDHS)** 1-29-97

NOTE: For a complete list, see [ndpma.org/prayers](http://ndpma.org/prayers). May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. ■

## DIFFERENCE, from page 17

my brother and me, but she still taught us. My father is now retired from teaching, but my mother has since gone back into it." She says her parents always instilled in her the importance of education, a concept that also was reinforced at Notre Dame Prep.

"I remember my senior year at NDP. I took three languages, various art classes, religion and English," Simmer says. "I also ended up auditing Mr. McCaskey's AP calculus class, and that I can tell you affected me at college. I refused to let a math class beat me. I took it at Albion and passed—with a C!"

She adds that her creativity and love for learning were omnipresent in college as well, which she attributes to her time at NDP.

"Having the ability to identify my interests also led to a few additional college degrees at Oakland Community College after finishing my bachelor's.

But, she says, that same self-awareness and the ability to see potential in everybody ultimately led her to Guatemala. Seeing such potential drives just about everything she does now. "I believe that so many people could do so much with their lives if they just had a simple hand up. I have one girl in my program who is brilliant; I think she could be an ambassador or president of Guatemala. But right now her family struggles to have food on the table even once a day."

Compared to her upbringing in the U.S., Simmer's own way of life in Guatemala also could be considered a real struggle.

"When I first started doing what I'm doing now in Guatemala, I was renting an unfurnished house," she said. "The landlord left me



Notre Dame Prep alum Annalisa Simmer with two 8th graders in her educational program. They had just taken two of three places in a competition at their school in Guatemala.

a couch that he didn't feel like moving. That's where I slept for months until some friends with a hotel decided to get new beds and gave me two of their old ones. I didn't have a stove or a fridge. Only a slow-cooker. I had no chairs, but at least I had a table for that slow-cooker and could stop living out of suitcases."

With time, however, she was able to get the money together to buy some stools for her little house, and with those "accruals" she was able to start giving English lessons to earn a bit more income. From that point forward the program grew even beyond her own considerable imagination. But back then, all that existed was one young woman with enough tenacity to not give up.

"I still don't have a fridge," Simmer said. "And I still don't miss it."

Simmer is hoping to take her program to the next level. "After four years of doing this the money-free way, I'd like to form my own 501(c) organization," she said. "The number of families I help is limited only by the meager amount of funding that I get currently. I've had a few people who have said that they would help set up a 501(c), but then they get busy or forget. So, if there's anyone out there who knows how to do that or is interested in helping, let me know! I can be reached at [asimmer@gmail.com](mailto:asimmer@gmail.com)."

### BUSY TEACHING, BUSY LEARNING

Obviously dedicated to helping others learn, Simmer said she also looks for opportunities to learn something new herself. Even though she's studied five different languages—French,

Spanish, German, Latin and American sign language—she's not done. "Soon I hope to learn Kaqchikel, a Mayan language, so that I can communicate with another relatively large group of Guatemalans without the use of a translator."

Also when she's back in the U.S., Simmer looks forward to helping her mother in the classroom. And if all that isn't enough, she's planning a big event for this summer. "I'm engaged and planning a June wedding. We tried for a tourist visa last August to come home, but were denied. So you all will just have to come to Guatemala to meet him!" ■

## FAITH, from page 10

outside of Chicago. In late 2014, he successfully completed the final stages of the orthopedic board certification and is now board-certified in orthopedic surgery at 33 years of age, pretty young for such a certification.

Pomponi says his parents were without a doubt the most influential driving force for him during his school years and now as a doctor.

"They grew up in modest households where hard work, honor, faith and family were paramount," he said. "They taught me that no matter what gifts God has blessed you with, you must develop them to their fullest."

He said those gifts include focus, determination, strength, and manual dexterity. "Orthopedic training requires all of those attributes so I know this field is perfectly suited for me," he said. "I'm very black and white when it comes to solving problems and I don't argue well. I would have been the worst lawyer or politician in the world. But if I see something broken, I like to fix it by using a knife, drill or hammer, not the pen or podium."

Pomponi also credits Notre Dame for what he's become.

"NDP has helped me in my career in no small part due to the great classmates who surrounded me there," he said. "They established a competitive environment that helped to foster a philosophy of life where only excellence is expected." ■



Notre Dame alum Dr. John Pomponi ('99) during hip replacement surgery in Chicago. He says he felt privileged to be able to attend such an exceptional high school.



Simmer is shown in a traditional outfit of the women she serves in Guatemala.



# CLASS REUNIONS

## NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL

**Class of 1995**, 20-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 2000**, 15-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 2005**, 10-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 2010**, 5-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

## NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

**Class of 1960**, 55-year. Reunion Planning Committee in formation for a reunion event. Volunteers needed to join the committee. Please contact Ron Kolito at [kolito@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kolito@sbcglobal.net).

**Class of 1965**, 50-year. Reunion being planned for 2015. Details TBA. The committee is looking to update e-mail addresses and contact information. Reunion Committee: Dennis Berger, [dennisaberger@aol.com](mailto:dennisaberger@aol.com), (909) 223-4483; Fr. Leon Olszamowski, [lolszamowski@ndpma.org](mailto:lolszamowski@ndpma.org).

**Class of 1970**, 45-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 1975**, 40-year. Reunion being planned for 2015. Details TBA. Please contact Joe Vicari for more information or to join the planning committee, [joev@andiamoitalia.com](mailto:joev@andiamoitalia.com)

**Class of 1980**, 35-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 1984**, 30-year reunion is being planned. Reunion committee contacts: Todd Grzelewski, [tsg663@aol.com](mailto:tsg663@aol.com); Paul Gaynor, [prgaynor05@yahoo.com](mailto:prgaynor05@yahoo.com); and Andy Guest, [aguest@ndpma.org](mailto:aguest@ndpma.org).

**Class of 1985**, 30-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 1986**, 30-year reunion for 2016 is in the planning stage. Reunion committee: John Kaminski, [jkaminski1700@yahoo.com](mailto:jkaminski1700@yahoo.com) H: (612) 822-4759 C: (952) 261-5546; Dan O'Brien (248) 840-8391, [dobrien734@comcast.net](mailto:dobrien734@comcast.net); Paul Arnone, [paul.c.arnone@gm.com](mailto:paul.c.arnone@gm.com); Stephen Schultz, [stephen2000\\_fl@yahoo.com](mailto:stephen2000_fl@yahoo.com); Jonathan Zaidan, [jkmzc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jkmzc@sbcglobal.net)

**Class of 1990**, 25-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested

**Class of 1995**, 20-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 2000**, 15-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

**Class of 2005**, 10-year. Volunteers from your class are needed to help plan a 2015 reunion. Please contact the alumni office at [alumni@ndpma.org](mailto:alumni@ndpma.org) if you are interested.

## PONTIAC CATHOLIC

No reunions scheduled currently.

## OAKLAND CATHOLIC

No reunions scheduled currently

## ST. FREDERICK

**All-class reunion**, Sunday, September 13, at 11 a.m., followed by a tour of the old school, which is now Great Lakes Academy.

## ST. MICHAEL

No reunions scheduled currently.

# NOTRE DAME UPCOMING EVENTS

## NOTRE DAME UPPER DIVISION ART SHOW

On Thursday, April 16, at NDP, join us for the Art Show reception from 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

## DRIVE 4 UR SCHOOL ATHLETIC FUNDRAISER

On Saturday, April 25, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., head over to the NDP parking lot to test drive a car and earn \$25 for the school's athletic program.

## BIG BAND DINNER DANCE

Friday, May 15, at the Lafayette Grande in Pontiac.

## CONCERT ON THE HILL

Join us on Friday, June 12, at 7 p.m. for Concert on the Hill on the campus of Notre Dame.

## DETROIT TIGERS OUTING

Date TDB. Join the alumni association for its annual Detroit Tigers outing at Comerica Park! Date to be announced. Visit [www.ndpma.org/tigersouting](http://www.ndpma.org/tigersouting) for updates.

## HOMECOMING WEEKEND 2015

Mark your calendar for October 2 for this year's homecoming game and October 3 for the Alumni 5K Fun Run.

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