

THE GAEEL

The Newsletter for Alumni and Parents of St. Mary's/Kennedy
Volume 25 - Winter 2017



IN THIS EDITION

ROBOTICS TEAM EARNS HIGH MARKS
SAINT MARY'S FAVORITE SON
BEYOND THE WHITE HOUSE
FALL ATHLETIC ROUNDUP



FIAT LUX!

On November 3, 2017, Kennedy flipped the switches and lit the main athletic field for the first time during the Homecoming football game. Read more on page 7.





Class of 2018 post Color Wars (*Homeroom Olympics*) picture. The games are a fall event favorite. Each grade level wears one color to represent their team: 9th wears white, 10th wears blue, 11th wears red, and 12th wears black.

The Gael is produced by the Office of Advancement at John F. Kennedy Catholic High School. If you have any questions, comments or news you would like to share with us, please call (914) 232-5061 ext. 110 or write to Advancement@KennedyCatholic.org.

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Spring Musical, *The Addams Family* - **March 1-4, 2018**

Spring Art Show - **February 27-March 9, 2018**

President's Dinner - **May 24, 2018**

Graduation - **June 2, 2018**

Annual All-Classes Alumni Evening - **June 23, 2018**

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President's Message



Dear Friend of Kennedy Catholic:

You have to believe me: When we sat down to plan out this issue of the magazine you are holding, it wasn't our intention to brag. We just wanted to update our friends and family about the latest goings-on at their favorite Westchester high school. But as the news came flying over the transom, we couldn't help but notice that, even if we just reported cold facts, it would sound as though we were going out of our way to toot our horn.

So be it!

Our volleyball team dominated their competition. The girls finished first in their league and ended their season as runners-up in the State Championship. Three of our football players were picked for the CHSAA All-League team, and overall the boys enjoyed a great season where their defense – like our new LED field lights! – shone brightly. Boys' soccer and girls' tennis also had very strong seasons. We wrap up all the fall games in an expanded sports section this issue.

Whether you consider it a sport or a series of colorful engineering projects, there is no question that Kennedy Catholic has been a pioneer fielding teams in competitive robotics. Last year the Gaels made it to the VEX League World Finals, held in Kentucky. This year we have equally high expectations.

Our arts program is fielding champions as well. In this issue of *The Gael*, you will read about violinist Hannah Tracey and

trumpeter Marie Hull, seniors both. They were named to and performed with the Westchester Area All-State Orchestras this past fall.

Kennedy's poets regularly turn out verses that are not only acclaimed inside these walls, but honored and recognized in publications around the country. *The Gael* sat down with some of the teachers responsible for inspiring – and occasionally taming – their muses and got them to tell their story for once.

The Class of 2018 has already laid claim to over two hundred college acceptances and \$10 million in merit-based scholarship monies. Kennedy's PSAT/SAT scores are higher than any school in Dutchess, Putnam or Northern Westchester, and our ACT scores are climbing.

Two more of our students were recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Competition in their junior year. Caroline O'Brien received a Commended Scholar Award and Courtney Manbeck Courtney has achieved semi-finalist status in the competition.

From the playing fields to the unforgiving trials of competitive machine-building to the classical music stage to the depths of human spirit plumbed by the most heart-felt poetry to the academic classroom, Kennedy students are competing, and triumphing. Most importantly, they do all this in a co-educational environment that is infused with respect, faith and Christian character.

So, please enjoy this issue of *The Gael*. I think it offers a neat snapshot of the modern Kennedy student – not to mention a glimpse at the resume of one of our older alumni, and newest trustee, His Eminence Edwin Cardinal O'Brien, Grand Master, The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Vaillancourt'.

President and Principal

Kennedy Musicians Named to All-State Orchestras

Last fall, the Kennedy Catholic community was thrilled to be notified that two of our students had been selected to perform with the Westchester Area All-State Orchestras.

Senior Hannah Tracy, a student of the string ensemble director, Mr. Frederick Ostrofsky, performed on violin with the Westchester Area All State String Orchestra. Senior Marie Hull, a student of our new band director, Mr. Chris Melito, performed on trumpet with the Westchester Area All State Symphonic Orchestra. The concert was held on November 16 at SUNY Purchase.

Both students have been studying their instruments through private lessons for over a decade.

Marie, from Yorktown Heights, has not decided on her college or major yet, but she told *The Gael* that music will definitely be a part of her post-Kennedy life. Along with music, Marie is very interested in physics and criminal justice.

Besides her recent All State Orchestra

performance, another highlight of Marie's career was playing with Daisy Jopling's Global Music Academy Orchestra when it performed at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center.

"Being selected to participate in the Area All-State Festival and being an alternate for conference All-State is no easy task for a trumpet player since there are so many talented trumpet players both in Westchester as well as New York State," said Melito. "I've witnessed Marie's commitment to music for the past several years having the opportunity to play the trumpet next to her at St. Patrick's Church in Yorktown where she often plays for confirmations and other events."

Hannah, who lives in Fishkill, told us that she looks forward to playing in a symphony or university orchestra during her time at college. She is planning on a career in engineering. She has played in numerous orchestras and ensembles throughout her musical career, but says that Area All-State has "certainly been a highlight."

Marie agreed: "Playing with the Area All-State Symphony Orchestra was an amazing experience. I had never played with more than about 50 musicians in my life, and this group had probably close to 200 players, both strings and winds. This



sound of so many musicians playing together was indescribable and truly awesome to be part of."

For both students, one of the benefits of participating in Kennedy's arts program was learning about leadership. Marie was the first chair in the band's trumpet section, and Hannah was concertmaster of the string ensemble.

"My four years as concertmaster of string ensemble have solidified my leadership, communication, and teamwork skills," Hannah said. "I love starting every day doing what I love."

Ostrofsky calls Hannah "the glue that keeps the string ensemble together."

The Kennedy Catholic community can hear Marie and Hannah play together one last time at the annual Spring Concert this spring.

Listen to sounds from our Arts Department on SoundCloud.
[SoundCloud.com/User-169482368](https://soundcloud.com/user-169482368)



Kennedy Introduces “FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS” at 2017 Homecoming



Homecoming – a pivotal event for every high school's football team and overall community. This night provides an opportunity for families, teachers, and, of course, students to display unity as they root for their boys and cheerleaders in an exhilarating game. In Kennedy's past, the homecoming game has traditionally been held on a Saturday afternoon. While a Saturday filled with friends and football is certainly nothing to scoff at, our team has never had the opportunity to have a so-called “Friday Night Lights” game due to our lack of field lights. Last year, we were able to break this streak of a daytime homecoming with lights that were rented for the event. It was a night to remember and left the Kennedy Catholic community wanting more. Everyone had the same question in mind: *Why not make the field lights permanent at Kennedy Catholic?*

This goal has finally been achieved in the 2017-2018 academic year. The permanent field lights were installed just in time for Kennedy's 2017 Homecoming Game.

“The evening was so exciting. There was a real energy in the air that night,” said Kennedy Director of Advancement, Fred Compton. “I had the great fortune to meet with a great many of our alumni that evening. Overwhelmingly, they were so happy for our students and wished they could have enjoyed them as students themselves. The support from the community has been so humbling and we are so grateful for the love and support they have shown.”

This groundbreaking addition to the Kennedy Catholic property will allow the school to make a nighttime homecoming game an annual event. Athletic Director

Dominick Tassone said, “The football program has great gratitude to all who donated to the light project and to Father ‘V’ for quarterbacking this thing through. We’ve been working on changing the culture for the last two seasons and now with our state of the art LED lights, we can take it to another level. The school, community, and our league will all be affected in the best possible way. It will add to our home field advantage and give our school community something to look forward to week in and week out. Once again we are grateful to all who contributed to this light project and making this a reality!”

While these lights promise great things for the future of Kennedy's homecoming games, the advantages they provide are not solely limited to the football team. Other sports played on the turf field, such as soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse, will also have the opportunity to have senior nights and play games under the lights. The addition of these irreplaceable LED lights will surely increase attendance and school spirit at sporting events, helping to facilitate an even stronger bond in the Kennedy Catholic community.

#GoKCGaels



St. Mary's Favorite Son ////////// ////////// *Now a Kennedy Trustee*

Before Kennedy Catholic was Kennedy Catholic, it was St. Mary's. Founded by the Sisters of Divine Compassion in 1924, it provided education for grades 1 through 12. In 1957, St. Mary's graduated Edwin O'Brien who would grow up to elect a pope and become Grand Master of one of the Church's oldest military orders.

Now Edwin Cardinal O'Brien has returned to the Kennedy Community. He has been named as a Trustee for Kennedy Catholic High School.

It has been a long and eventful trip back home.

After graduating St. Mary's, O'Brien attended St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers where he received a Master of Divinity and Master of Art degrees. Ordained to the priesthood in 1965, O'Brien served as chaplain for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He was later chaplain at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with the 82nd Division and in Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division. Holding the rank of Captain in the U.S. Army, O'Brien helicoptered about the jungle ministering to soldiers in Vietnam.

After receiving his Doctorate in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas Angelicum in Rome, O'Brien was called back home to serve as the vice-chancellor of the Archdiocese of New York and associate pastor at St. Patrick's Cathedral, where he served from 1976 to 1981. For the next two decades, O'Brien held various posts high up in the Archdiocesan hierarchy, including Communications Director and private secretary for both Cardinals Cooke and O'Connor.

Fr. O'Brien took the mitre in 1996, and went on to become Archbishop for the Military Services a year later. O'Brien left military service in 2007 when he was named Archbishop of Baltimore. Five years on, he was elevated to Cardinal and given leadership over a military brotherhood of a much different and more ancient pedigree: Edwin Cardinal O'Brien was appointed Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in 2012.

One month later, in April of 2012, Cardinal O'Brien was appointed as a member of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which

is the curial congregation responsible for contact with the Eastern Catholic Churches.

On March 13th, 2013, Cardinal O'Brien was among the 115 cardinal-electors for the papal conclave that chose Pope Francis I. A scant two months later, he was the guest of honor at the Kennedy Catholic President's Dinner.

Have you updated your Alumni info with us lately? Visit our website at: KennedyCatholic.org/Alumni



Making Christian Service a Priority

by Megan Cleary '18

Kennedy Catholic High School warmly welcomed Mrs. Falcone this year as a new theology teacher and the head of Christian service. Mrs. Falcone has been a wonderful addition to the Kennedy community, teaching the importance of religion and faith both inside and outside of the classroom. She is always dedicating her time and energy, helping students find service outreach projects that inspire them. Her work here at Kennedy Catholic stems from a "simple calling" that she had originally ignored. This overwhelming feeling of being pulled towards becoming an active member of the Church and a catechist would not go away. In time, she gave a faithful "yes" to God's calling and became a theology teacher. By becoming an even more active member of her church community, she would help young people find their way in this world.

"I would love to help young people find ways to say yes to what they are called to do," stated Mrs. Falcone. Her main initiative is to "connect students with Christian service opportunities that bring them joy while sharing their talents." In doing so, organizations will be supplied with the many hands it takes to help those in need.

Mrs. Falcone always encourages students to get themselves involved in all kinds of Christian community service activities, stating that "If a student or other outside organization has a Christian service idea, they can submit it on our website. I review all submissions and make them available to the students."

Students are highly encouraged to assist local churches and organizations in an effort to serve the needs of their community. Mrs. Falcone



encourages students to be advocates for a cause, giving ideas on how to do this through her statement, "Even here in Westchester, church resources are stretched thin to sponsor much-needed assistance and services. There are food drives, blood drives, ministries to hospitals, ministries to nursing homes and those that are home-bound, not to mention the need for catechists and assistant catechists in the religious education programs. These are all wonderful opportunities for our Kennedy students to show their character." As stated by our newest theology teacher, "A student can be paired with a service that inspires them to keep giving after graduation and throughout their lives. Their continued service will have a ripple effect and that is a benefit we all share."

Mrs. Falcone encourages her students and the rest of the student body to spend time thinking about what they can do in service of others. The students of Kennedy Catholic can greatly benefit from providing a helping hand in our local communities and reap the rewards of Christian service.

To view or submit Christian Service opportunities, visit our website:
KennedyCatholic.org/Christian-Service

"I would love to help young people find ways to say yes to what they are called to do."

GOLF OUTING 2017

September 21, 2017

Kennedy would like to thank everyone who attended our annual Golf Outing on September 21.

The blue sky, warm air, and decadent food made for another memorable day. We look forward to seeing you all at next year's event. Location and date will be announced this spring.





Innermost Joys & Eternal Truths

Creative Writing at Kennedy

"There is nothing to writing," Ernest Hemingway once observed. "All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed."

Kennedy Catholic student writers may have replaced "Papa's" vintage Corona with a shiny iPad, but there is no less blood on the floor, if their published work is any indication. It's clear that Kennedy's creative writers have a lot on their mind.

"I think there is the increased presence of turmoil in their world, and in their lives," Mrs. Susan Willis, Chairman of Kennedy's English Department, told *The Gael*. "Drug crises, poverty, gun violence – the kids are aware of all this, and that is reflected in their work."

Many parents and other adults receive their first glimpse of that reflection with the annual Northeast Westchester Rotary Club's publication of *On My Mind*, a collection of creative writing from suburban, rural, and inner-city schools. Kennedy students' work – spotlighting their hopes and dreams and fears and phantasms – is prominently on display in its pages.

"It's definitely therapeutic for the students," teacher Mrs. Moira Normile said. In her sophomore English class at Kennedy, she requires that all her students write a submission in any genre they choose about "what is on their mind" and from those, about 35 works are selected to be included in *On My Mind*.

"And they share their innermost joys, anxieties, passions, hopes and yes,

romances!" she was quick to add. "At first they are shy about their thoughts and request that their works be anonymous. They write about the things that bother them, or bad experiences they have had, and they say, 'please don't share it with anybody.' I tell them that's fine but encourage them to keep on writing as a way to find answers to the myriad questions galloping through their brains.



"The students recognize that literature mirrors society. We deconstruct the works so that the students can get inside the heads of the characters to understand motivations and actions during a particular period in time."

"What's funny is that when those sophomores return as seniors to ask if they can submit a more recent work, they are amazed at how they have grown out of the emotions experienced as sophomores – and recognize how much they have evolved as individuals!"

None of this should be a surprise. Kennedy students don't do much "beach" reading, at least officially. There's an awful lot going on in the traditional required texts such as "Lord of the Flies," "Macbeth," "The Scarlet Letter," and "Fahrenheit 451," and not much of it can be classified as light romantic comedy.

But if these themes of discrimination, ambition, and morality, to name a few, are the hallmark of classic writing, are they also indicative of the good writing high school students should try to emulate?

"Absolutely!" Normile confirmed. "The students recognize that literature mirrors society. We deconstruct the works so that the students can get inside the heads of the characters to understand motivations and actions during a particular period in time."

For Willis, in her 32nd year as an educator, deconstructing terrifying themes means boiling them down into what she calls "the eternal truths – justice, or honesty, or beauty, or love, or freedom or faith." The final step is to illustrate the application of those qualities to students' lives today.

"What can we learn from this character or this theme?" she demands to know from her students. "As we learn from history, so

Left to right: Mrs. Normile, Ms. Willis, Mrs. Morris



can literature teach us.” In truth, the focus of the English curriculum at Kennedy is on literary analysis and argumentation.

What Kennedy’s writers have that Hemingway didn’t, is today’s technology. The jury may still be out as to whether that’s a hand up or a hindrance.

Mrs. Willis can go either way.

“The promises and the pitfalls!” she laughed. “Everything they need for their English classes is on their iPad, from their tests, to the novels, to their writing, to their note-taking, it’s all there.

“But I think it is important to blend the best of technology with traditional classroom instruction. I never want to lose the personal interaction because otherwise students can become – and I can become – very isolated. If we are connecting with people only through our cellphones or only through our emails we are losing that human connection. So every once in a while I say, close the iPad, we’re going to converse about this. It’s not in your iPad. It’s in your heart and it’s in your mind. Let’s look at each other and let’s have

a conversation. I think it is important that our instruction combines the best of modern technology and the best of traditional teaching methods.”

The elephant in the English classroom at every high school is social media. Mrs. Carol Morris, who teaches English to Kennedy seniors, does not suffer gladly any student who views “LOL” as an adverb.

“You have to just constantly tell them, ‘you are not writing in short hand, this isn’t Twitter, your work must become academically mature,’” she said. “If it isn’t, you give it back to them, and they must do it again until it is.”

Experienced writers know they need to be able to write sonnets before they can attempt free verse, and sonnets are Morris’ job. But when she began teaching Elizabethan poetry to teens eleven years ago, she admits she was skeptical about how the rigid rhyme schemes and syllable-counts would fly with a class more attuned to Snoop Dog than Shakespeare.

Happily, her fears were misplaced.

“They like it!” Morris said. “One year, a bunch of the girls got together and had a sonnet-writing party! And they’re good! One of the students this year came to me and said, ‘I want my sonnet in *On My Mind!*’”

Kennedy English teachers have only four years to guide a student from emoticons to Oxford commas. Considering all the cultural forces arrayed against them, it’s easy to be discouraged.

Mrs. Normile isn’t worried.

“Eventually they get it,” she said. “Writing is a formula, it has structure, and the students have to follow it. They will be writing for the rest of their lives: while as college and graduate students – they will be creating papers continuously; while seeking internships and employment – they will be sending letters and emails of introduction; while enjoying their careers – they will be writing proposals, considering contracts, developing presentations, et cetera... Everything we are doing here at Kennedy is preparing our students for their future.”

FALL SPORTS AT KENNEDY CATHOLIC

By Carley Gilmore '18



As the fall season comes to an end, we are called to reflect on the countless memories and experiences that have helped set the school year into motion, especially the achievements of our Kennedy Catholic fall athletic teams. A reflection of the great accomplishments of our student-athletes helps us to examine how far we have come as a unified Kennedy Catholic community. The 2017 fall season yielded success all around.

Girls' Cheerleading: The junior varsity and varsity cheerleading squads did a wonderful job this season, working extremely hard to boost school spirit and team morale. Both teams united the student body in support of our Gaels with great vigor. They delivered excellent displays of performance in the Kennedy Catholic Homecoming game as well as the celebrated annual Color Wars event. They continue to generate school spirit during the winter varsity basketball season.

Co-Ed Cross Country: Top runner Margaret Tolan had all positive things to say about the progress and achievements of her team throughout the season. Margaret placed second in the varsity girls race at Van Cortlandt Park, running her personal best. She enthusiastically remarks that the team "grew closer throughout the season" and that it was "reassuring to see members who did not have to run show up at the races to support their teammates."

Girls' Field Hockey: According to field hockey captain Caitlyn McKearney, "the field hockey season was better than any of us expected, and the girls were phenomenal." The beginning of the season was admittedly nerve-wracking for captains Caitlyn

McKearney and Molly McSpedon, as they were afraid that there would not be enough players for their last season at Kennedy Catholic. Nine freshmen girls showed up at pre-season, which drastically helped to rebuild the program. They worked with unmatched persistence and improved with every game they played.

Boys' Football: The football team made many noteworthy improvements this year. The team had two defensive shut-outs in back-to-back weeks. The defense allowed an average of only 17.6 points a game, remarkably improving from 26.5 points per game in the 2016 season. Edward Longest (NYCHSFL Class A Lineman of the Year), Cole Esposito (NYCHSFL Class A Defensive Player of the Year) and Gregory Brann (quarterback/running back) were picked to be on the "All-League Team." This year's MVP Edward Longest noted that he had great pride in his team and was honored to be playing in the "Senior All-Star Game."

Boys' Soccer: The boys' varsity soccer team had a season marked by pure excitement and triumph. The team put up a valiant effort in the finals at SUNY Maritime College against Saint Peter's High School and claimed an Intersectional Varsity Soccer Division 'A' Runners-Up plaque. The team collectively scored 74 goals in 17 games including playoffs.

Senior Matthew Togher was the top scorer with 24 goals and sophomore Connor Trainor provided 22 assists, the most for the team. Aidan Dooley, Kevin Mulholland, Liam Mulholland, and Matthew Togher were awarded All-League plaques. Before heading off to playoffs, the team finished third in their league. The team's combined progress and achievements truly showcase what Kennedy Catholic stands for.



Girls' Soccer: Breanna Trainor expressed nothing but sheer gratitude and approval for her teammates. She noted, "although this was not the best season we have ever had, it was one that I am proud of because of the commitment of my fellow teammates." The team lost three key players before the season even began, and then two others a month before playoffs, which you can imagine must have been a major setback to face. However, the remaining team stepped up to fill those spots and shut out Notre Dame 4-0 after a 2-1 loss and beat one of the best teams, Xaverian, 3-1. All in all, the girls' varsity soccer team had a winning season. With a few bumps in the road, the team worked hard to patch them up and reaped the rewards.



Girls' Tennis: This year, the varsity girls' tennis team had a season to remember. Captains Caroline O'Brien and Amanda McNamara did a stellar job organizing and managing the team as well as contributing to the team's success with their skills. As this year's MVP and a four-year varsity athlete on the team, I, Carley Gilmore, highly regard this season as the most memorable. We welcomed nationally ranked singles players Lucy and Ellie Carpenter who won their matches against Fieldston, the most challenging team to beat. The team also shut out Maria Regina in our Senior Night game, undoubtedly our most meaningful, as many friends and family came to show their support.



Girls' Volleyball Team: One phrase that MVP Meagan Gallagher would use to describe the 2017 volleyball season is "memorable, to say the least." This season, the girls' varsity volleyball team dominated the league. The team had a very impressive season with a 14-2 record, including division and league championships. Meagan and eight other seniors will be graduating this year, including Katelyn Agro, Kelly Brann, Anne Burns, Mary Haag, Brittany Henriques, Catherine Howley, Laura Kastberg, and Katherine Lorber. This leaves only six returning players on the varsity team: Eileen Cooney, Julia Costa, Ciarra Ortiz, Kristen Quarless, Mia Troetti, and Olivia Frantzeskos. The girls finished first in their league and ended their season as runners-up in the State Championship.

The momentous triumphs that our Kennedy Catholic fall athletes have gained this year highlight the endless possibilities for overall athletic success in the current winter and upcoming spring seasons. As these milestones are met, it is important that we, as a Kennedy Catholic community, show our love and support for our Gaels.

Follow Kennedy athletics on social media:

Facebook - @KennedyCatholic | Twitter - @KennedyGaels





Christmas Concert 2017

The Kennedy Catholic Chorus, String Ensemble, Concert Band and Orchestra performed an inspired selection of seasonal masterpieces. Special thanks to Mrs. Boston, Mr. Ostrofsky and Mr. Melito and to an auditorium filled with family and friends.

*Enjoy sounds from our Christmas concert on SoundCloud:
[SoundCloud.com/User-169482368](https://www.soundcloud.com/user-169482368)*





MORE TORQUE

Robotics Gaels Rev Up

You won't find them in the gym, on the track, along the baseball diamond or on one of the many specialized sporting fields frequented by Kennedy Catholic's other competitive squads. Home base for Kennedy's robotics team is the basement of the campus convent.

When *The Gael* went to visit the robotics team at their home field, we didn't know what to expect. Actually, that's not true. We were expecting buzz saws. We had fond memories of the BattleBots TV show from years past, when vicious little machines remote-controlled

by their vicious little humans slashed, hacked, trampled and hammered their opponents into so much tin scrap.

Coaches Andrei Achim, Anne Cohen and Howard Cohen disabused us of that notion right away. They were also quick to point out that calling them "coaches" might be an overreach.

"The kids here are doing all of this," Anne said. "They are programming, they are building. We're here just to supervise, but they do all of this on their own."

They've been doing a bang-up job, too. Last

year the team made it through the state qualifying ladders all the way into the VEX League World Championship, held in Kentucky. There they squared off against teams from across the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Not bad for their first year in the league!

"We built a really good robot," Howard said, by way of an understated explanation. "What's fun about the competitions is you see the other robots, and you come back and think, 'y'know we need to make the wheels bigger,' or 'they need to be closer to the engine,' or 'we need more torque in the motors.' And at the next competition, we may see results 50 percent different than we did the previous time out."

Kennedy plays in the VEX league, the fastest-growing robotics organization in the world. One of its goals is to foster STEM – science, technology, engineering, mathematics – education. In the United States there is a shortage of kids going into STEM careers, and the organization hopes its league will get students excited about it.

That excitement is palpable in the convent's basement, where the team spends just about all day every weekend during the robotics season. When we visited them in October 2017, last year's robot, "Borris," had been fondly enshrined, and all hands were on deck crafting his successor, "Finnegan."

On this Sunday, the convent resembles less a cloister and more Lex Luthor's secret lab. Laptops litter the space, columns of code scrolling up their displays in pixelated reverse-rainfalls. A good quarter of the basement is dominated by roped-off, regulation-size competition spaces. Brightly colored pylons are scattered about, many inserted inside one another.

"Some kids come in and think they want to be 'the driver' because they think they can play it like a video game...but when they get into the competition – that's a lot of stress! And some of them say, 'y'know what? I don't like driving.'"



These party-colored plastic cones are the weapons of choice this year in the VEX league. Last season, multi-pronged projectiles that resembled over-sized children's jacks or a giant ninja's caltrops were hurled about. Howard deems this year's game a little bit more difficult from an engineering standpoint than last year's competitions.

Depending upon the event, the robots are tasked with careful placement and/or distance throwing of the objects. All the while, the machines are being instructed to block their opponents' attempts to put points on the board. How much to focus on defense versus offense at any point during the match is part of each battle's overlaying tactics, and usually determined by the one player on the three-person active team who is not directly in control of a robot.

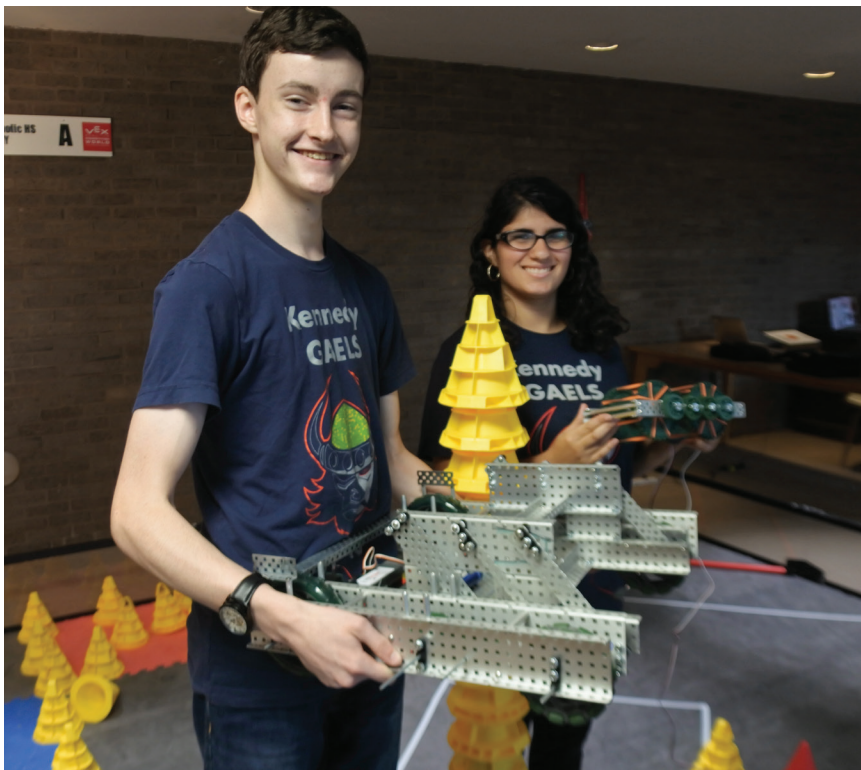
"We have a student now, turns out strategy is his thing," Anne Cohen said. "He will sit there, read through all the manuals and rule books, and come out with something, and we're all, like, 'who knew that?' That's where his interest is, calculating strategies."

"He's been great as the third man during the competitions," Howard said. "He directs the robot to the part of the field where we are likely to get the most points."

Some are born to strategy, and others have strategic thinking thrust upon them.

"Some kids come in and think they want to be 'the driver' because they think they can play it like a video game,"





complicated device to build. But the kids building that actually love cutting the metal pieces, working them into the right positions, getting the correct iterations to get them to work.”

Another sort of building occurs online. The team maintains their own website, YouTube channel, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts. They shoot their own videos, and make all their own flyers and advertisements. One of the members of the team is in the process of re-designing their logo. It’s a testimony not only to the students’ ingenuity and diverse skill-set, but also their team spirit, which runs so high it almost counts as having another man on the team.

The Cohens make a point of tracking Robotics Team alumni after graduation. They have been gratified by what they’ve seen.

“One is in architecture in Notre Dame, one just graduated the U.S. Naval Academy having specialized in cyber security, another is at RPI, Stevens Institute of Technology, Johns Hopkins, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy studying marine engineering... so many of them have gone into some kind of STEM-related field,” Anne enthused.

The team is currently focused on making it back to Kentucky for the VEX World Finals in the spring of 2018, but that hasn’t stopped Howard from peeking behind the curtain at what the league’s powers-that-be have in store for the 2018-19 season.

“There has been some discussion about having a water event,” he said. “That sounds really interesting. I just hope nobody gets electrocuted.”

Interested in learning more? Visit their Instagram page:

[Instagram.com/gaels97140](https://www.instagram.com/gaels97140)

Anne said. “But when they get into the competition – that’s a lot of stress! And some of them say, ‘y’know what? I don’t like driving.’”

“In some of these competitions, there can be up to 60 teams showing up,” Howard pointed out. “And each of the 60 teams can bring parents and siblings and other folks. So you can have a few hundred people screaming, goading the competition on. It’s a lot of stress for them, but they are learning a lot of good ways to deal with it, how to focus on the robot.”

A workbench in the rear of the room is where the physical kanoodling with the struts and sheet metal occurs. A hand-held grinder is in use by one of the students, cutting and trimming what looks to be a miniature version of the power-lifter from the first *Aliens* film. (That grinder and the nearby lathe are the closest we came to the buzz saws we were looking for.)

“Some kids don’t want to be programmers,” Howard explained. “They’re just really interested in building. There’s a scissor lift this year – it’s kind of a



Beyond the White House

By Ava Gallo '18

Jackie Onassis and John F. Kennedy met at a dinner party when Kennedy was a congressman in 1952. In November of that year, Kennedy was elected United States Senator of Massachusetts. In 1953, the two were married and they later had four children, two of which died in infancy. As First Lady, Jackie Kennedy Onassis was known for the importance she placed on arts and culture and for her widely broadcast restoration of the White House, giving her one of the highest rankings as First Lady. She was riding with Kennedy in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963 when he was assassinated. After Kennedy's funeral she and her children withdrew from the public eye and she later married Aristotle Onassis in 1968.

This past November 22nd marked 54 years since the namesake of our school was assassinated. The forerunner of John F. Kennedy Catholic High School, St. Mary's High School, was founded in 1924 in Katonah. However, in the 1950s, with an increase in the demand of Catholic education in Northern Westchester, the Archdiocese of New York announced plans for a new co-educational high school.

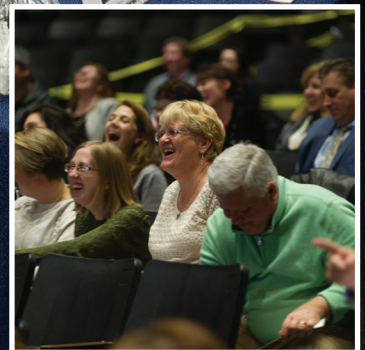


Upon John F. Kennedy's assassination, Cardinal Spellman decided to name this new school after Kennedy. The first graduates of John F. Kennedy Catholic High School walked down the aisles of St. Mary's since the building had not yet been completed. In October 1967, the building and transition into the new school and convent in Somers had been completed.

First Lady of the United States and widow of John F. Kennedy, Jacqueline Onassis, attended the dedication of the high school in 1968, fifty years ago this year. Our beloved Sister Barbara recalled her visit saying "She made a point to stop into each classroom on that day and spoke with the students." Both Sister Barbara and Sister Janet recollected Jackie Onassis's visit to the school. She carried herself with poise, acting the way a lady should and she was composed, yet friendly. Although she didn't give a speech, she sat up straight on the stage with her legs folded and her hands rounded in her lap. Even with the lack of a speech, Onassis was impressed with the school's presentation and her presence was felt throughout the school.

Annual Auction 2017

Thank you to everyone who helped with, donated to, and attended the 36th Annual Kennedy Catholic Auction in November. The event is an important fundraiser for Kennedy and every year the event gets more and more refined. For the second year, Kennedy has utilized online bidding for those who are not able to attend the event in person. We hope to announce the date of next year's event this spring and we hope you will be able to attend.





Alumni News



John Hewes, Class of '57 writes:

"I just returned from Surprise, Arizona where I visited Frank McGuane, fellow classmate, St. Mary's HS 1957. We played some golf and shared many memories of our friendship and days at St. Mary's HS. We made contact with Bob Duffy and Bob set up a lunch date on January 11th at the Boulders Resort Golf Club in Carefree, AZ. Pictured left to right are Frank McGuane, Bob Duffy and John Hewes. We all were teammates on the 1955-56 St Mary's Gaels basketball team that won the Westchester-Putnam County Championship coached by Mr. Joseph Duffy, Bob's dad. After High School Bob attended Colgate, Frank, Notre Dame and John Ithaca College. Following a delicious lunch and numerous stories Bob took us for a tour of his amazing home in the mountains of Carefree, Arizona."



Patricia Hewes Class of '57 writes:

On Saturday, September 30th, 2017, eight St. Mary's 1957 graduates and spouses met at The Shadows on The Hudson Restaurant in Poughkeepsie, NY for a special dinner to celebrate their 60th Anniversary of Graduation from St. Mary's High School. Pictured from left to right as you look at the picture-Back Row-Bonnie Larkin, Tim Shean, Rocco Mancini 1957, Frank McGuane 1957, Bob Kurutz 1957, John Hewes 1957, Stephany Kappesser Woodin 1957, and Mike Giangrande. Front Row-Ann Hawks Mancini 1957, Adriana Bergo Shean 1957, Jane Kurutz, Patricia Hewes, and Susan Kean Giangrande 1957. The group had traveled in from Denver, Co. Florida, and central New York along with more local graduates. Memories were certainly the agenda for the evening as pictures were exchanged, The Yearbook, *Dulces Memoriae* was referenced for students, teachers, our priests, nuns and school activities. Some folks continued the celebration at breakfast the next day at the Ever Ready Diner in Hyde Park.



Send Us Your Alumni News:

Visit our website at KennedyCatholic.org/Alumni to submit your updated alumni information, including any change of name, address, job, or life event.

Reminder:

Save the Date for Kennedy's All-Class Reunion on June 23, 2018. Details to follow.



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Save the Date

Join us for the 13th Annual Kennedy Catholic President's Dinner
on May 24, 2018 at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown.

Kennedy will be honoring **State Senator Terrance Murphy** as well
as members of our community, a Teacher of Excellence, and our
senior Students of Excellence.