

THE GAE

The Magazine for Alumni and Parents of St. Mary's/Kennedy Catholic
Volume 27 - Fall 2018



IN THIS EDITION

***SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR PSAT PROGRAM
BOYS LACROSSE WINS 4TH STATE TITLE
KENNEDY'S NEW BUSINESS CENTER
SPRING 2018 EVENTS PHOTOS***

Graduation 2018

**“An investment in knowledge
always pays the best interest.”
— Benjamin Franklin**







Members of the 2018-2019 Student Government are pictured with Fr. Vaillancourt, Deacon Al Impallomeni, Fr. Connolly, and Mr. Fred Compton

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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Dear Friend of Kennedy Catholic,

Excelsior!

That, as many of you may know, is the Latin for “ever upward” or “still higher.” Others may also know it as the state motto of New York. Yet others among you – a more elite cohort, to be sure – will remember the phrase as the one Marvel Comics Editor-in-Chief Stan Lee used to sign off his many editorials back in comics’ “Silver Age.”

It’s also the phrase best used to describe Kennedy Catholic as we enter the 2018-19 school year. In fact, I couldn’t help but notice the similarities between Kennedy and Marvel. Both are juggernauts in their space, achieving new heights with each new summer blockbuster (we call ours “graduation” – see the pictorial this issue). Both of us are also in the business of churning out super heroes. Our biggest difference? Mr. Lee could never have conceived his creations would spawn a multi-billion dollar industry a half-century after he invented them. Kennedy, on the other hand, has been carefully, and consciously, laying the groundwork for our continued success for nearly twice as long.

In May, Kennedy’s boys varsity lacrosse team won an unprecedented fourth CHSAA championship! We talked to the coaches and some of the stand-out players to figure out if that soft sound we keep hearing is the wind whispering “dynasty.”

Students from the Class of 2018 were awarded over \$49 million in merit-based scholarship money – a new school record, and one we seem to be setting anew each year. We suspect that much of those awards are due to the high scores our students rack up in standardized testing like the PSAT, SAT and ACT. In this issue, we will keep you after class to explain just how we do it.

Over the years Kennedy has turned out more than its fair share of Ivy Leaguers, soldiers, sailors, captains of industry, doctors, engineers and lawyers. But I must admit that I take a special pride when one of our alumni pursue the religious life. Fr. Michael Connolly from the Class of 2010 was ordained just last year, and was recently placed at St. Columba in Hopewell Junction. In this issue, find out why Fr. Connolly called his ordination ceremony “surreal.”

With the new school year comes... a new school. Kennedy has been busy all summer laying the groundwork for the Kennedy Business School, a partnership with Pace University’s Lubin School of Business. Read up on it in this issue, and I think you will agree it’s a bold move, but one Kennedy is uniquely poised to execute.

This issue will also introduce you to Kennedy’s new chaplain, Fr. Adolfo Novio, who comes to us from St. Elizabeth Seton parish in Shrub Oak. Our new chaplain will also be our new retreat director, and in that area at least, Fr. Novio will have his hands full. The convent on Kennedy’s campus is being converted into a new regional Retreat Center, under the auspices of the Archdiocese.

Body. Mind. Spirit. Kennedy is developing super heroes in all three of these core disciplines, and it’s all going according to plan.

Excelsior!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mark Vaillancourt". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Rev. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D.
President and Principal

MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Mrs. Kelly Explains the PSAT to You

By Rich Kirby

For nearly ten years, Kennedy Catholic has offered a course specifically on the PSAT. There is no question the course has improved students' standardized test scores (see the graphic at the end of this), helped increase Kennedy's number of National Merit Semifinalists and Finalists, and allowed students to apply and obtain admission at highly competitive colleges. "The PSAT course is unique in that it's not just a test prep course," said Mrs. Ellen Kelly. She should know: the current chair of Kennedy's math department, she designed the program and also teaches it.

"Kennedy's PSAT course complements our goal of graduating students that are not only ready to succeed in college but also to perform effectively as adults as they advance in their careers. That means having great verbal, mathematical, and problem solving skills. We don't look at it as 'just teach to the test.'"

The PSAT may be the preliminary SAT, but it carries a gravitas all its own as the benchmark for the awarding of National Merit Scholarships. More than 3.4 million high school students (mostly juniors and sophomores) take the PSAT every year. Kennedy's Semifinalists/Finalists have received scholarships not only from the National Merit Foundation but from corporate sponsors and colleges who recognize the achievement of scoring in the top 1 percent of the approximate 1.6 million juniors who take the PSAT.

The course began at Kennedy Catholic in the fall of 2009. "Initially, the sophomores were in disbelief that they had lost a 'free' or a 'study' and now had an additional class that counted! There were some growing pains that year, but over the years, students and parents have grown to appreciate the benefit of test prep during the school day."



In 2017-18 the course was extended to a full year. The SAT had changed in March of 2016: the math portion emphasized geometry less and focused more on algebra and advanced algebra. By the fall of junior year most students have not studied the more advanced algebra that is on the PSAT test. Adding a semester to the course allows Mrs. Kelly and Mr. Furey, another PSAT instructor, to teach advanced algebra topics to sophomores while reinforcing geometry (now only about 10 percent of the math portion). Extending the PSAT course to a year also allows the teachers to devote additional time to the non-math side of things, formerly referred to as “the verbal,” but known now as “Evidence-Based Reading and Writing.” Kennedy learned quickly that the public and private schools in the 45 districts from

“We need our students to get off of Instagram or Snapchat and instead to read literature, well-written articles from the social sciences or science, and historical documents, a variety of texts can appear on a PSAT or SAT.”

which it attracts students don’t all teach semicolons, the pluperfect tense, and misplaced modifiers with equivalent zeal.

“Some students are grammar gurus when they arrive, rarely getting a question wrong; others are unfamiliar with standard conventions of writing,” Kelly said.

When not splitting hairs over comma splices, the

new, improved “verbal” is all about reading analysis, drawing conclusions and parsing through the text-based evidence to support those conclusions. “We need our students to get off of Instagram or Snapchat and instead to read literature, well-written articles from the social sciences or science, and historical documents, a variety of texts can appear on a PSAT or SAT.”

Another reason Kelly credits for Kennedy students doing so well on those tests is the school’s strict adherence to the Common Core curriculum which is the basis for much of the content on the PSAT and SAT. “As long as you have a school that is truly teaching the Common Core Standards -- which we really follow -- then the students, provided they are doing their work, are going to do well on college admissions tests.” It is interesting to note that David Coleman, president of the nonprofit College Board who designs the PSAT and SAT, is often referred to as the architect of the Common Core.

“The implementation of Common Core was really the most difficult aspect, and I think that is what caused some opposition in many states, particularly at the elementary grades,” Kelly explained. “At the high school level we had a phase-in period, so it was not as challenging for us. And we had lots of training.

“I have to say – to the credit of the Archdiocese – we went for training regularly over a two year period to prepare to teach common core math, and we benefited tremendously from the sessions. We had some of the leading teachers in the nation sharing best practices with us, so I felt that when we had to make the shift, we were in a very good spot.”

Just shy of a decade old, Kennedy Catholic’s PSAT course, always far more than “teaching to the test,” continues to evolve and actively adapt.

“We constantly reflect and review. We are big on item analysis,” Kelly said. “We get data from the College Board to see exactly how many students answered a particular question incorrectly, and then we go back and fine-tune the teaching. Every year presents a new challenge, and we’re up for it.”

The Chart



If you are a subscriber to The Gael, there's a good chance you've seen "The Chart." It's become a darling of Kennedy social media, the centerpiece of a number of magazine and newspaper ads, and is featured prominently in any number of PowerPoints and other presentations the school has produced in the past year. What The Chart shows is how well so many Kennedy students do on the SAT test. The school overall places near the top of the list with some of the most competitive districts in Westchester County.

When we first saw the chart at The Gael, what stood out most to us was not the high placement of Kennedy students but the low percentage of students at other schools who sit for the test. Close to a hundred percent of Kennedy students take the SAT.

"The Regents data is similar," Kelly noted. "We have all our students take all three math Regents, and in a lot of the districts and other private or Catholic schools, students only take the Algebra Regents, with very few going on to take the Regents in Geometry or Algebra II.

"It's all about expectations. We have the expectation here at Kennedy that if we teach the material well, then the students will learn it. Even on the ACT, our students perform well. The PSAT course helps them prepare for all standardized tests, even those they may encounter when pursuing graduate studies. We are proud of our results and we are proud to have so many sitting for both Regents and college entrance exams."

Kelly explained that some schools have decided against a curriculum based on the Common Core Standards or one where students are required to pursue the Advanced Regents Diploma which 96 percent of Kennedy's students in the class of 2018 earned. She feels that adhering to a more rigorous college preparatory curriculum aimed at awarding Advanced Regents Diplomas is a primary reason that Kennedy students are doing well on the SAT and ACT. While some colleges have gone SAT/ACT optional, the most competitive colleges are among the approximate 80 percent that still require one of the two.

"The PSAT course, coupled with our rigorous curriculum, helps broaden the horizon of opportunity for our students," she said.

District	Number SAT Test Takers	SAT score (combined)	Reading Avg.	Math Avg.
Blind Brook-Rye Union Free School District	27	1297	650	647
Bronxville Union Free School District	35	1297	648	649
Scarsdale Union Free School District	118	1291	640	652
Chappaqua Central School District	108	1287	635	651
Edgemont Union Free School District	51	1271	633	637
Katonah-Lewisboro Union Free School District	111	1237	627	610
Kennedy Catholic High School	154	1222	605	617
Byram Hills Central School District	56	1220	609	611
Haldane Central School District	60	1207	614	593
Pleasantville Union Free School District	73	1200	593	606
Hastings-On-Hudson Union Free School District	40	1199	612	587
Croton-Harmon Union Free School District	62	1195	608	587
Rye Neck Union Free School District	66	1188	597	591
Somers Central School District	148	1188	596	591
North Salem Central School District	64	1171	594	577
Irvington Union Free School District	53	1169	579	590
Rye City School District	110	1167	589	578
Yorktown Central School District	153	1154	578	576
Bedford Central School District	219	1146	572	573
Arlington Central School District	338	1144	574	570
Pawling Central School District	77	1141	571	569
Putnam Valley Central School District	122	1141	568	573
Mamaroneck Union Free School District	138	1135	571	563
Hendrick Hudson Central School District	148	1129	572	557
Harrison Central School District	175	1127	561	566
Millbrook Central School District	54	1101	562	539
Mount Pleasant Central School District	121	1100	553	547
Carmel Central School District	279	1098	555	542
Lakeland Central School District	381	1096	557	539
Brewster Central School District	182	1094	552	542
Valhalla Union Free School District	100	1093	551	542
Mahopac Central School District	234	1090	549	541
Wappingers Central School District	486	1087	548	538
Ossining Union Free School District	207	1080	552	528
White Plains City School District	305	1047	526	520
Pine Plains Central School District	41	1043	535	508
Beacon City School District	118	1042	526	516
Dover Union Free School District	61	1017	515	502
Tuckahoe Union Free School District	31	1014	505	509
Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District	150	1006	509	497
Peekskill City School District	76	978	489	489
Poughkeepsie City School District	115	907	461	447

CORE VALUES:

Fr. Michael Connolly '10

By Rich Kirby

Fr. Michael Connolly, Kennedy Catholic class of 2010, newly ordained on May 26, says he found the whole experience of receiving the sacrament of Holy Orders “pretty surreal.”

“I walked away from the Cardinal saying to myself, ‘Oh my gosh! Am I a priest now?’ That absolutely breathtaking cathedral, the music, the amount of people there and priests supporting you, the presence of the Cardinal – such a joyful presence! I was just so overwhelmed.”

The ride hasn’t slowed down much since then, either. A priest typically celebrates his first Mass, that of Thanksgiving for Holy Orders, at his home parish, the place where he grew up. For Fr. Connolly, that was St. Augustine in Ossining (“Another beautiful church, and filled with people who are really my family.”) and the celebration was the very next day after his ordination.

It may be a no-brainer where priests celebrate their first Mass, but where they get their first parish assignment? That’s an enigma, wrapped in a crap shoot. But Fr. Connolly believes he has some insight into why the Archdiocesan powers-that-be chose St. Columba in Hopewell Junction for his first flock.

“It’s certainly a busy place, with so many wonderful people, so active in their faith. The Cardinal told me on the phone, ‘It’s a big bustling parish, and we need you there.’” Fr. Connolly credited the “the newly ordained energy and zeal” that he still feels as a big part of the reason His Eminence stationed him in the challenging parish.

But what the Cardinal didn’t tell Fr. Connolly was that his new boss, St. Columba pastor Fr. Michael McLoughlin, is another Kennedy alumnus, from the class of 1973.



“He’s such a wonderful priest,” Fr. Connolly said. “I can’t imagine being assigned to anyone else, he is really showing me what it means to be a parish priest.”

Working these past months side by side with another Kennedy cleric (Really! What are the odds...?) has opened the new priest to an epiphany about Kennedy – and Catholics – that he is still just wrapping his mind around.

“What is so integral to the Kennedy identity is the Catholic identity,” he explained. “There is no such thing as Kennedy High School, there is only Kennedy Catholic High School. I think my fellow alumni will agree with me that not a day would go by in that school that you are not reminded that this is a Catholic school.”

But outside that Catholic school, and outside the environs of St. Columba, there is no shortage of forces arrayed against people of faith.

“We find ourselves in a world that is trying, violently, to tell us that we don’t need God in our lives,” Fr. Connolly said. “And that if you sin, that’s it, you’re cut off from God, don’t even try to pray, don’t even try to put God back in your life.”

“But what Kennedy offers, what we all need to be reminded of, is the mercy of God. Despite what the world says, we need God in our lives and we can have God in our lives. He is constantly there, waiting for us to just turn to him. That, I think, is the core of the Kennedy Catholic experience.”



Honorees: (*Lux Christi*) Dr. Terrence P. Murphy, (*Sr. Christopher Principal's Award*) Ricard J. Davin, (*Teacher of the Year*) Jacob Bergmeier, (*Divine Compassion Award*) Sally Cartaya and Annette Di Grandi, *Students of Excellence*: Dominick Basilone, Noah Beck, Rachel Beisswenger, Anne Burns, Tomás Cartaya, Megan Cleary, Lisa Cristiano, Vanessa Duarte, Sarah Duggan, Jillian Flynn, Ava Gallo, Kelly Gebman, Carley Gilmore, Joseph Gullotta, Braeden Hecht, Marie Hull, Michael Kastberg, Michael L'Abbate, Courtney Manbeck, Emily May, Caroline O'Brien, Jenna Piscioti, Rebecca Rendich, Brian Szpindor, Bowei Tang, Nicholas Tinger, Olivia Tota, Margaret Tolan, Hannah Tracey, Breanna Trainor

SELLING HIGH

Kennedy Sets Sights on New Business Center



By Rich Kirby

Kennedy Catholic is now in the business of business education.

Beginning in the upcoming spring semester, Kennedy will be offering Contemporary Business Practice as a senior elective. This course is Business 101 at Pace University's Lubin School of Business, and required for all business majors there.

Unlike the other college courses taught at Kennedy – in partnerships with U Albany, St. John's and Iona College – Pace professors will be teaching Contemporary Business Practice to students right inside a Kennedy classroom.

In addition to the professors, Pace will bring in two business speakers per semester. The university will also provide Kennedy students access to a series of proprietary corporate governance videos on such topics as “compliance” and “secrecy.”

Teaching business is not completely new at Kennedy. Last year the school began offering AP Macroeconomics as a senior elective. Contemporary Business Practice and that course now form the foundation of the school's new program.

Big ideas require a big space in which to execute them. Room 128 at Kennedy, formerly the “Technology Room,” is currently undergoing a transformation into the Kennedy Business Center. It currently houses about 30 computers and the plan is to replace a portion of those with Bloomberg terminals.

If you work on Wall Street, you're no doubt familiar with these screens. You may have even seen them if you've never been downtown. Bloomberg terminals have been fixtures on the desks of traders and the corporate business elite everywhere since they were first rolled out in 1981. They now sit atop over 325,000 desks worldwide, providing professional traders and finance professionals a real-time window onto both the raw market data as well as analytics. They are not inexpensive by any stretch of the imagination, so the opportunity being afforded to Kennedy students to become proficient with them is truly a rare one.

This wouldn't be a Kennedy project if it didn't have at least one over-the-top feature: The plans for the Business Center call for the installation of an electronic stock ticker running along its outside walls. The giant LED will provide

students – and anyone else walking past the room – a constantly updated glimpse into the Wall Street trading day.

As significant a step it may be for Pace professors to teach on the Kennedy campus, the relationship between the two schools will go even further than the classroom. Pace is inviting Kennedy business students to attend their “One Day of Immersion” in New York City on November 2. The annual event features top business speakers from many areas, such as finance, telecomm, entertainment, and technology. Last year's speakers included Jeff Bewkes, then president and CEO of Time Warner.

With the economy booming, Fr. Vaillancourt believes more students will be thinking hard about careers in business, and believes the school's new Business Center will have businesses thinking hard about Kennedy:

“It's going to get businesses to look at us, and realize, ‘hey, I want a Kennedy kid working for me!’”

MEET FATHER NOVIO

Kennedy Catholic's New Chaplain

By Rich Kirby

When we asked Fr. Adolfo Novio, Kennedy Catholic's new chaplain, if the Kennedy community was in good shape, spiritually, we had meant the question as sort of a puff-ball icebreaker, and were unprepared for his answer:

"I have no idea."

The priest is not given to espousing flattering platitudes, no matter what kind of set-up he's given. In fact, he doesn't do 'puff-ball' well at all. As any of the seniors in either of his theology classes might tell you, "Fr. Novio does not 'play.'"

When he tells you, fervently, that Kennedy is "one of the best Catholic schools in the state," unspoken but clear within the glint of his eyes are the words, *and you can be absolutely sure it will stay that way if I have anything to say about it!*

And he will. In addition to teaching those two senior classes, Fr. Novio will be celebrating Mass every day, hearing confessions, and directing the new, enhanced retreat program (see "A New Chapter for Kennedy's Convent & Retreat Program" in this issue). He will also be in charge of Holy Hour, and plans on introducing some new devotionals, as well.

"Most likely to Mary," he confided.

Possessing the kind of steel and fire we're more accustomed to finding in an archbishop, it was a bit of a shock to learn that Fr. Novio, 39, has been a priest for just three years.

Before coming to the U.S. he was a missionary in his homeland of the Philippines. Fr. Novio entered the seminary there in 1996. Nine years ago he came to this country, and made a bee-line to Dunwoodie. He studied theology at St. Joseph's Seminary where he was awarded his master's, later to be ordained by His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan. He is now working full-time at Kennedy Catholic after serving as a parochial vicar at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Shrub

Oak.

The build-up for that was neither typical, nor easy. Fr. Novio was born in the convent where his mother worked as a cook. Orphaned shortly thereafter, he was raised by the Daughters of Charity there. All this was going on during the repressive regime of Ferdinand Marcos.

Fr. Novio has no preconceived notions of who the Kennedy students are, but he has a clear vision of what they can, and should, be. He did have some preconceived notions about how the school conducted much of its day-to-day business, but those got shattered right away.

"What is very exciting to me, is that when I first came here I expected to find my desk filled with books," Fr. Novio said. But instead I was introduced to this new technology we use here: Everything here is on an iPad! This is really new to me. I am used to the traditional way of teaching, so this makes it exciting for me."



HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

THE GOLDEN AGE OF KENNEDY LACROSSE





By Rich Kirby

If you were one of the many members of the Kennedy Catholic community who was in the stands last May when the varsity lacrosse team won their fourth straight CHSAA championship, you know it was anything but a done deal. Monsignor Farrell High School took an early lead, and Kennedy trailed 3-1 at the half. The situation was pretty grim.

The Savastano brothers, Nick and Vinny, have coached varsity Gaels lacrosse through all their recent championships. They remember the game best as a fitting end to rollercoaster-esque season.

"Nobody realizes how lucky you have to be down the stretch, how you have to be healthy going down the stretch, you have to be

mentally tough down the stretch, and these kids were all that," said Vinny. "They were so beaten up at the end of the year, they could have folded when Farrell took the lead on us, but they weren't going to let us down, and they didn't."

Still down 5-4 at the start of the fourth quarter, the Gaels scored three more goals to win 7-5.

Mid-fielder Greg Brann, now studying communications at Loyola University Maryland, had played on all three of the previous championship teams. He was really looking forward to a fourth plaque.

"I was just not going to allow us to lose to Farrell in our last game. There was just no way. But we were down early, and coach said: 'You won three years in a row. Don't blow the fourth one!' And I was like, 'You're right. We gotta step it up.' We really came alive in the second half."

So did the team's eleventh man. "Rabid lacrosse fans" is not a phrase you'll hear tossed around much in sports pages outside of those covering the Kennedy Gaels. Four championships in a row will do that to a community.

"At Kennedy, everybody supports each other," Nick explained. "The way the state championship was... parents, kids, waving the towels, there was faculty in the stands, the student body came out in droves..."

"...and the most impressive thing was our alumni!" Vinny chimed in. "A lot of the kids who have played for us before, all came back, they were all on the sidelines."





"It's huge," agreed attacker Aidan Dooley, currently a marketing major at Providence College. "The alumni are the guys we looked up to, when we started playing in this program. So to see them come back and support us is huge. It just shows how much they care about the program. And it gives you that much more of an incentive to go out there and win."

Win, of course, they did, but that won't make nabbing a fifth championship any easier in the 2018-19 season. Although the team will be getting most of its defense back, they have lost their leading scorer as well as 3 mid-fielders to graduation.

The Savastano brothers, and their assistant coach James Wilson '11, aren't as concerned as some might be. Besides having a strong JV squad coached by Mike Chiappa, Gaels lacrosse has something of a farm system. The brothers also coach the Westchester Warriors youth lacrosse teams, covering grades five through 11. All of the warriors' practices are held at Kennedy's own state-of-the-art facilities. It's a symbiosis that has not only served the lacrosse program well, but the Admission Department.

"The more people we get on campus to see the great campus that we have, the better,"

Vinny said. "One night Fr. Vaillancourt made a presentation to our 7th and 8th graders, and a lot of parents came out of that blown away by how great the school is."

The school, and the schooling, loom large throughout the lacrosse season.

"In the 4 years I went to Kennedy, there were certainly days I got home and said, 'I definitely do not want to do my homework right now,'" Brann said. "But then you think about the team. Because if the the team needs you, and you are failing 2-3 classes, and you can't play, you are letting the team down. And that's what you need to drill into your head, no matter what your sport: 'If I am not doing my schoolwork, I am letting the team down.'"

Nick pointed out that in the other schools where he coaches and has coached, students can be failing three subjects and still play. At Kennedy, he is comfortable "stressing the importance of academics over everything."

Although they both named lacrosse as their "main" activity while at Kennedy, Brann (football) and Dooley (soccer) played other sports in the off-season. This was crucial to their success.

"Lacrosse is a kind of blend of all these other sports," Dooley explained. "The main thing is

conditioning, to stay in shape. We preach that if we can outrun the other team, out-hustle them, get more ground balls, we can win the game."

Neither these basics, nor much else with the actual sport of lacrosse has changed since a 19th century Canadian dentist shortened the game and civilized some of its Iroquois excesses. The internet, however, has had a big impact on the coaching. Not too long ago, if you wanted to get some insights into how well your rival was playing, you needed to drive out to Staten Island. Now, online services such as HUDL make the stats and game videos of other teams in the league available to everyone.

That's a double-edge sword, Nick explained:

"We always made a big effort to scout out the opposition wherever they were playing, and not many other coaches bothered. Now, technology has made it easy, so every other coach knows what you know. Everything – video, stats – is online."

Technology may be trying its best to level the playing field, but the Gaels don't alter their Old School approach. In fact they have taken that warm-and-fuzzy notion of 'legacy' and weaponized it.

"Every year we put this pressure on each team: 'How do you want to be remembered?'" Vinny said. "We put together a tough schedule -- we were under 500 at one point this year. And at those low points, we ask the kids again, 'How do you want to be remembered?' And they rally, and they come back. And every year, that final game -- usually against Monsignor Farrell -- it's like a dog fight. They're tough, they're athletic, they hit us... but we just strive to do better."

A NEW CHAPTER FOR KENNEDY'S CONVENT & RETREAT PROGRAMS

By Rich Kirby

The convent on the grounds of Kennedy Catholic's lush 63-acre campus hasn't had any nuns living there for a while, but the community has still managed to keep the joint jumping. School retreats, third-party retreats – even the lab and practice field for the school's competitive robotics team – have all called the serene multi-story building home.

Now the Archdiocese of New York has claimed it as a regional Retreat Center, and is promising to amp up the activity there even more.

"The new Retreat Center will be the core of our spiritual life program at the school," Fr. Vaillancourt said. "It enhances it, strengthens it, gives us a beautiful place for worship where our kids can go on their retreats."

Kennedy has traditionally convened about 14 retreats a year (although that could change under new retreat director and chaplain Fr. Novio). Juniors went to nearby St Joseph's, seniors to the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Garrison, while freshmen and sophomores used the convent.

Throughout the year, the school regularly hosts a number of youth ministries who organize their own retreats in which Kennedy students are often eager participants.

Fearless Ministries Retreats, out of Dutchess County, has taken over the school grounds for three-day weekends during the school year. The retreats are an extension of Camp Veritas, a weeklong summer camp with the mission of mixing fun and faith to strengthen the relationship of teens with God.

The Hard as Nails Ministry, begun in 2002 and based out of Syracuse, is another Catholic apostolate that has made a big impression at Kennedy.

"They are going to be more involved with our student body," Fr. Vaillancourt told The Gael. "They will be working to develop our retreat team, getting more and more students involved, working with Fr. Novio."

The convent has always been a sort of spiritual mothership for the school, and Fr. Vaillancourt believes that with the Archdiocese now very actively involved, that ship is about to go into warp drive.

"It enhances the Catholic identity of northern Westchester, because now you are going to have a beautiful Retreat Center located adjacent to a beautiful parish, St. Joseph's, and on the grounds of a terrific Catholic school."



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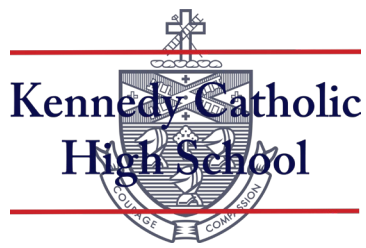
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Annual Auction - Nov. 10, 2018

Christmas Concert - Dec. 5, 2018

Spring Musical - Feb. 28 - Mar. 3

Spring Concert - May 1, 2019

President's Dinner - May 23, 2019

Annual All-Classes Alumni

Evening - Jun. 22, 2019

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