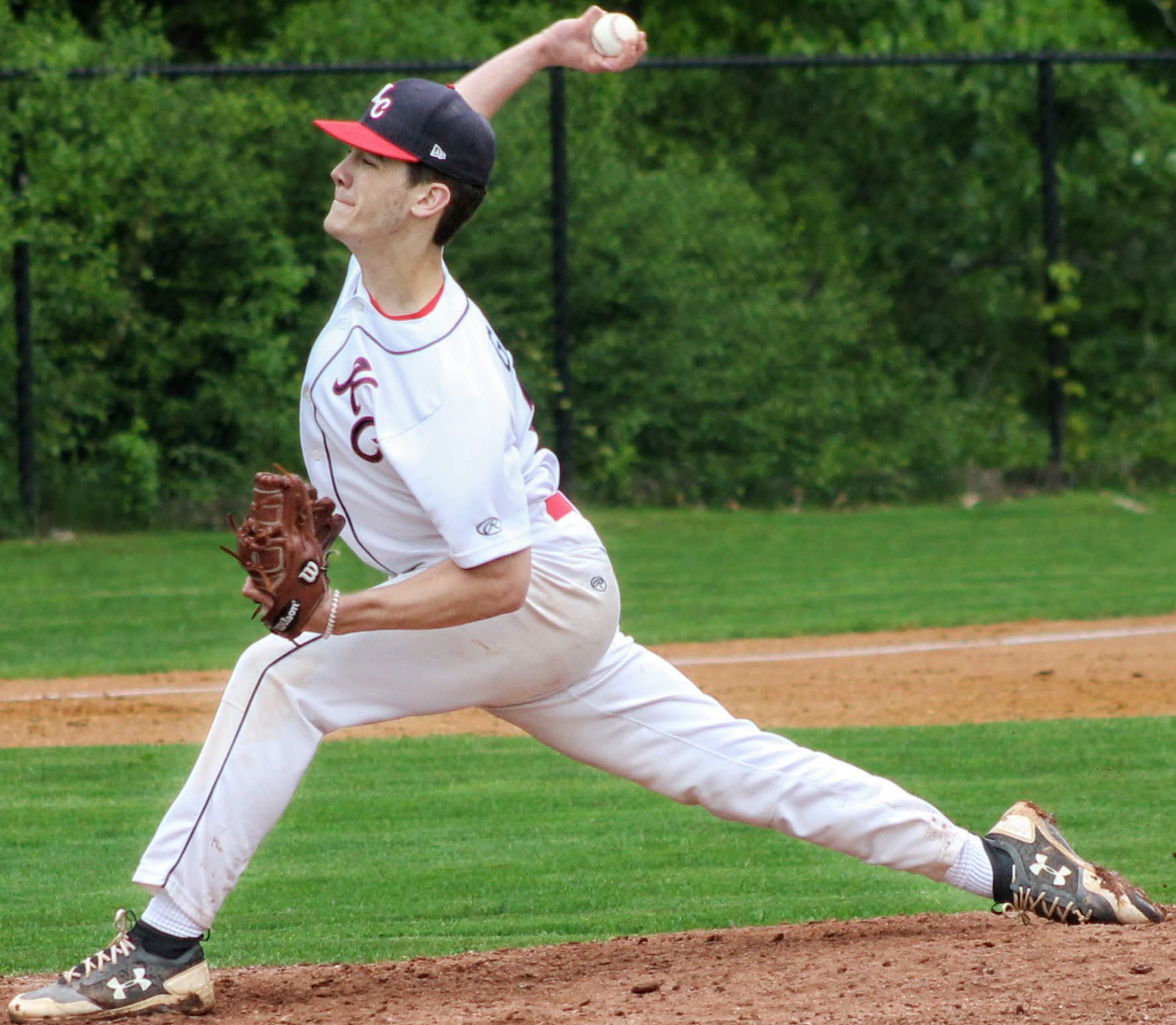


THE GAEL

KENNEDY CATHOLIC • SAINT MARY'S
SPRING 2019 VOLUME 29



IN THIS EDITION

BRENDAN MAGUIRE DAY
STUDENTS OF DISTINCTION
KENNEDY'S NEW BUSINESS PROGRAM
BACKSTAGE WITH THE KENNEDY PLAYERS



Congratulations to our newly elected Student Government. From left to right: Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, Cameron Crane, Zifeng (Romes) Luo, Joshua Baker, Giuliana LaPorta, Virginia Capellupo, Joanna Longest, 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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Cover Photo:

Senior David Galvao pitching during this year's Brendan Maguire Day. Read more about it on page 21.

President's Message

Dear Friend of Kennedy Catholic,

It will be close to the end of the school year when you read this, and that's typically a time for both reflection and also bravely looking ahead to the next gauntlet of challenges. In that spirit we will be looking back at the lessons our basketball, winter track and swimming teams have learned this past season, and ahead to the trials the pro-life movement is facing. We'll even have you looking up — 19,341 feet exactly — at one alumna's conquest of the tallest mountain in Africa.

We've made a point in *The Gael* recently to introduce our readers in the Kennedy Community to the choreographers, directors, conductors and other impresarios who guide our students through their artistic paces, but we have been remiss in not speaking with the artists themselves. We fix all that this time around when we give you the opportunity to find out what went into the making of Kennedy's most successful musical ever, 2019's "West Side Story," from the mouths of some of the actors, singers, dancers and stage crew who put it together.

Kennedy Catholic has made an investment in some new video technology that is already paying off, and our new business school collaboration with Pace University is also showing dividends in more ways than one. For all of these successful new initiatives — and the even more exciting ones we have in the late stages of development that we can't quite discuss yet — we have our generous alumni to thank.

...and we must be doing something right (or really, really, mediocrally, wrong!) to get a visit from a papal nuncio. But in March, Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Holy See's Permanent Observer at the United Nations became a "Gael for a Day." Kennedy students were surprised to learn that among his many languages, the archbishop is notably fluent in basketball...

Also in this issue you will meet robotics whiz Emily Lavelle and National Merit Scholarship Finalist Trish Curtin, both of whom are not only fiercely bright, but could give time management lessons to Jeff Bezos.



If it seems like we are using New York Governor Andrew Cuomo for a punching bag in our article on Kennedy's Pro-Life Club... good! He has signed into law the most heinous pro-abortion bill in the nation. If it is true, as historians say, that a civilization can be judged by how they treat the most helpless among them, then New York State has just slipped into barbarism.

Although *The Gael* attempts to entertain and inform, we've never printed any narrative anyone could term "epic." That changes now, with the amazing story of alumna Julia Mee's journey up Mt. Kilimanjaro. It's a thrilling tale, and a reminder of just how far the achievements of the Kennedy community extend beyond the classroom, athletic field, stage or boardroom.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D.

President and Principal

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

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED:

New Screens, Everywhere, at Kennedy

Kennedy Catholic's commitment to providing state-of-the-industry classrooms, made possible by the generosity of its alumni, is keeping the AV Squad hopping this spring.

Smartboards, which debuted not too long ago and made your father's chalk and blackboard arrangement look like so much stylus and papyrus, are being hip-checked into obsolescence by the latest in classroom presentation tech: interactive televisions.

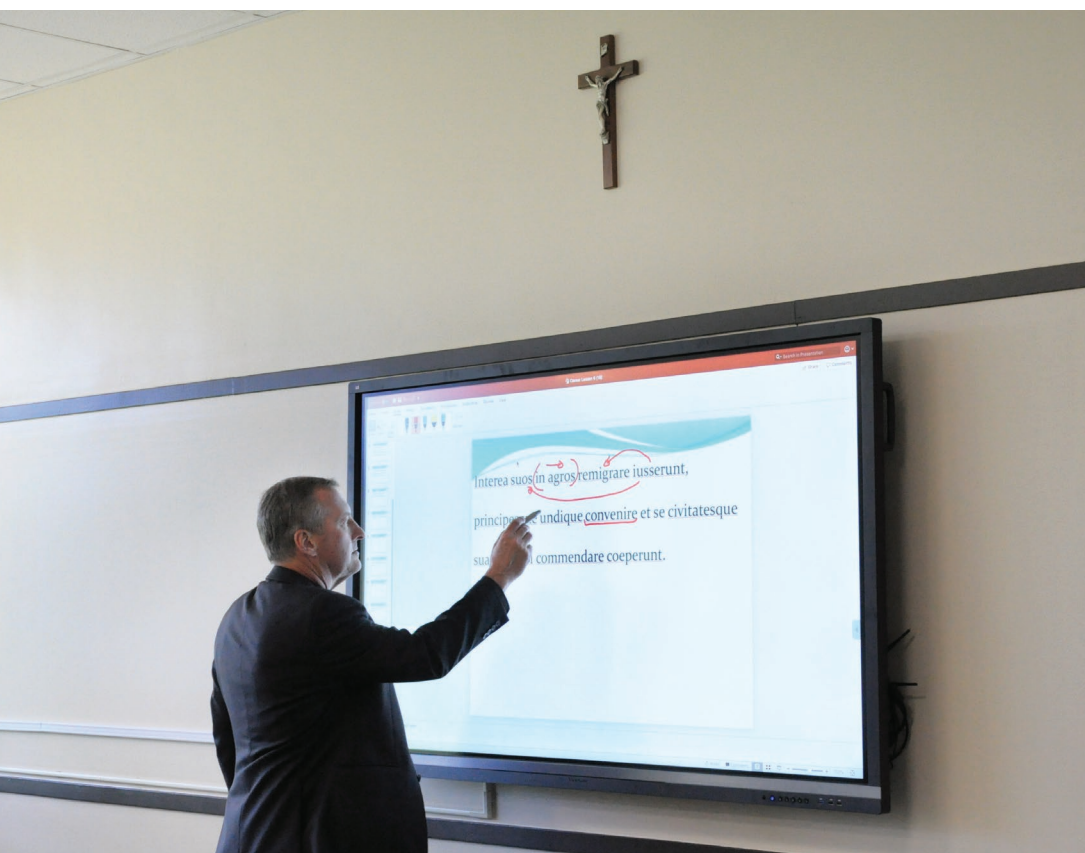
Rather than use a projector to throw an image onto a white screen that a teacher could annotate, the interactive TVs have the same technology built right into them. The TV image is back lit, and not washed out on a bright spring or snowy white winter day as would happen so often with smartboards. More importantly, teachers may beam what's on their screens directly into the TV screen, without needing any additional hardware.

"Whether you have a PC or whether you have a Mac or whether you have an iPad, the teacher can project their lesson on to the screen and control it," said Jacob Bergmeier, who

teaches Spanish at Kennedy. "The beauty of the iPad allows the teacher to become mobile in the classroom. They can walk around, keep an eye on what the students are doing and all the while the lesson is being presented from the teacher's iPad onto the board in the front of the classroom. Or the teacher can draw on the board itself with a digital marker."

The first five classrooms were being wired up in February as we write this, with more scheduled for a spring installation.

Proving it may be nearly as obsessed with screens as the smartphone-clutching students that roam its halls, Kennedy has also announced it will be investing in a network of large video displays sprinkled throughout the building. The new LCDs will be a platform for all manner of announcements, pictures, videos, and news of what's going on in the building at that moment, what's coming up, and greatest hits from the archives. On big occasions such as Open House and Registration, the programming delivered on the network will keep guests informed and entertained.



Words by Rich Kirby • Image by Jacob Bergmeier

Vatican Ambassador Visits Kennedy Catholic

Words by Rich Kirby • Image by Jacob Bergmeier

THE VATICAN SENT ONE OF ITS HEAVY HITTERS to Kennedy Catholic, and by all accounts he liked what he saw.

Archbishop Bernardito Auza, the Holy See's Permanent Observer at the United Nations, spent a day hanging with the student body, faculty and administration on March 25, 2019.

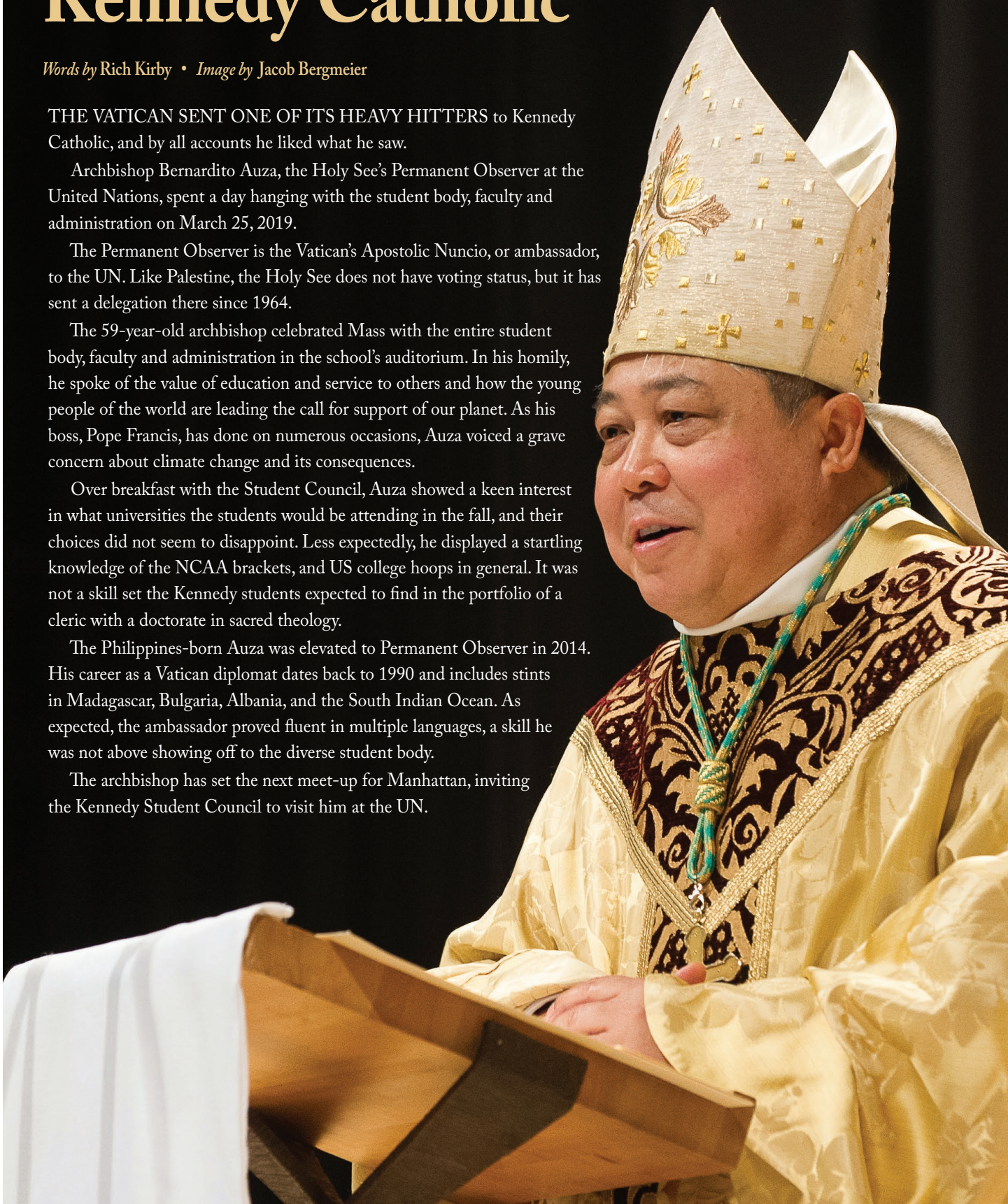
The Permanent Observer is the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio, or ambassador, to the UN. Like Palestine, the Holy See does not have voting status, but it has sent a delegation there since 1964.

The 59-year-old archbishop celebrated Mass with the entire student body, faculty and administration in the school's auditorium. In his homily, he spoke of the value of education and service to others and how the young people of the world are leading the call for support of our planet. As his boss, Pope Francis, has done on numerous occasions, Auza voiced a grave concern about climate change and its consequences.

Over breakfast with the Student Council, Auza showed a keen interest in what universities the students would be attending in the fall, and their choices did not seem to disappoint. Less expectedly, he displayed a startling knowledge of the NCAA brackets, and US college hoops in general. It was not a skill set the Kennedy students expected to find in the portfolio of a cleric with a doctorate in sacred theology.

The Philippines-born Auza was elevated to Permanent Observer in 2014. His career as a Vatican diplomat dates back to 1990 and includes stints in Madagascar, Bulgaria, Albania, and the South Indian Ocean. As expected, the ambassador proved fluent in multiple languages, a skill he was not above showing off to the diverse student body.

The archbishop has set the next meet-up for Manhattan, inviting the Kennedy Student Council to visit him at the UN.



All Singing, All Dancing:

Backstage with the Kennedy Players



Words by Rich Kirby • Images by Jacob Bergmeier
and Jennifer Vespucci '89 P'19, '23



When *The Gael* decided to take a behind-the-scenes look at “West Side Story,” the Kennedy Players musical production that debuted this past February, we dropped by a few days before opening night. That placed us smack dab inside the charmingly named “Hell Week.”

This won’t be remembered as our smartest editorial move.

There really is no corresponding Crazy, anywhere else, at any time, at Kennedy Catholic that compares to Hell Week for the Kennedy Players. Sports teams may have the run-up to their championship games, and there is certainly no shortage of academic deadlines and pressures, but nothing quite matches the seven days of sustained frenzy leading up to the big show.

Freshman Michael Di Graci, who played A-Rab in “West Side Story,” was warned about all this by his older sister, a Kennedy Players veteran who served as stage manager for this show. She told him Hell Week was “just working non-stop until the endless hours of the night.”

But don’t go calling Child Protective Services just yet. First, the cast, crew and orchestra will typically punch out closer to 11 p.m., and secondly, there is a certain mitigating

magic at work during those final rehearsal days and nights.

“Because in Hell Week, when the show is approaching, you feel so much more connected to everyone around you, to everyone in the cast, you realize that it’s an entire production, there’s not just one part,” senior Olivia Astrologo, who played Anita in the show, explained. “You have sports, you have teams, but theater is more of a family bond.”

Sophomore Juliana Balzano, who played Francisca and was a featured dancer in the show, agreed. “Definitely during Hell Week we all come together as a family. And you are never going to lose the bonds you make at this time. I am so happy that I met everyone this year.”

A little less romantic and a smidge more practical, Di Graci found the show a great way to meet a lot of new people and socialize: “I don’t think I would have met any of these people had I not done the play. Also, it’s a great physical workout!”

Right. All that dancing. Choreography in the Kennedy Catholic shows has amped up considerably under Mrs. Barbara Rue, now in her second year as director/choreographer of the spring musical. (“She’s amazing!” was the enthusiastic consensus from all the students with whom we spoke.)





Balzano has danced in previous shows, but “it has never been as intense as it is this year. ‘The Addams Family’ (last year’s musical) was a step up for me, but this year is a really big step up.”

Dancing is not for everybody, of course, but Terpsichore can be a particularly persuasive Muse, and resistance is futile more often than not.

“Dancing was definitely a struggle for me,” Astrologo said. “I went into this show thinking, ‘no, I don’t want to dance, I’m not going to audition for a role where I have to dance, no dancing!’ and here I am playing Anita! It was definitely a challenge, so I hope I look like I know what I’m doing.” (Editor’s note: It did, and she does.)

Sitting in the audience, every minute of dance practice (the cast was in rehearsal since mid-November, every day after school) could be seen and felt throughout all four performances. What may have been less evident was how much work it took to master the singing.

“The timing for these songs is so annoying!” Astrologo said. “The time signatures change from measure to measure. It’s all written in tritones, so that’s also a little hard to sing, but I enjoy the challenge, I love singing.”

Di Graci didn’t sweat the singing that much, but then, he’s an old hand: “I don’t think the singing is too hard, but I’ve been singing my whole life. In my old school, it was a requirement to be in a choir. But some of the songs: The timing! Definitely, the ‘Tonight’ quintet, there’s no way to know when it’s your turn to sing!”



For the stage crew, Hell Week is “a lot more comfortable” than it is for the cast, according to junior Ashley Campise, who is a runner on the crew and worked on the set construction. In fact, the toughest part, she says, is just working around the cast.

That doesn’t mean the crew hasn’t had to up their game this year as well. Campise has worked tech every show since her freshman year, but says it got much more challenging last year. “We had to use techniques that I have never been exposed to before, like we had to melt Styrofoam to make gravestones. But this year we had to make brick walls out of Styrofoam and I think they ended up really looking like brick walls.”

Tough challenges, and family, are the recurring themes that weave not only through Hell Week, but throughout the whole theater experience at Kennedy. What you don’t hear, are regrets.

“Throughout the process there may be a lot of struggles, but it’s always worth it in the end, when you see the finished project,” Campise summed it up.

For Balzano, the theater at Kennedy “has given me a place to actually express myself and open up a bit more. I was very shy before I started theater, and with this I have become more outgoing, and I have made so many new friends that I am happy to call my family.”



See how **Kennedy Catholic** compares to other public school districts in Westchester County.
 Public school information can be found on WestchesterMagazine.com. Other private schools' information is not listed publicly.

District	Mean SAT Scores: Reading	Mean SAT Scores: Math	Comb R&M
Scarsdale	634	658	1292
Horace Greeley (Chappaqua)	627	637	1264
Blind Brook (Rye Brook)	623	638	1261
Edgemont	609	645	1254
Bronxville	607	635	1242
Byram Hills (Armonk)	599	638	1237
Kennedy Catholic	605	617	1222
Briarcliff	603	616	1219
Rye	592	614	1206
Irvington	596	597	1193
Ardsley	585	607	1192
Pleasantville	590	586	1176
Hastings	588	574	1162
John Jay (Katonah-Lewisboro)	566	572	1138
Pelham	564	567	1131
Mamaroneck	565	562	1127
Croton-Harmon	558	567	1125
Somers	553	554	1107

North Salem	543	561	1104
Yorktown	533	558	1091
Fox Lane (Bedford)	535	550	1085
Hendrick Hudson (Montrose)	536	548	1084
Rye Neck (Mamaroneck)	536	546	1082
Eastchester	524	554	1078
Dobbs Ferry	542	534	1076
Harrison	514	545	1059
Lakeland (Shrub Oak)	516	517	1033
Walter Panas (Cortlandt Manor)	516	517	1033
Valhalla	509	522	1031
Westlake (Mount Pleasant)	510	517	1027
Ossining	506	500	1006
Tuckahoe	503	501	1004
Sleepy Hollow (and Tarrytown)	491	489	980
White Plains	487	491	978
New Rochelle	474	486	960
Port Chester	451	475	926
Alexander Hamilton (Elmsford)	465	458	923
Woodlands (Greenburgh)	452	464	916
Peekskill	451	455	906
Mount Vernon-Mount Vernon High	413	399	812
Yonkers-High	402	397	799

SWIM AND WINTER TRACK TEAMS CONTINUE TO GROW

Words by Brendan Sullivan '21 • Images by LifeTouch



The Kennedy Catholic Swim and Track teams have been continuing to build their programs through their 2018-2019 seasons. It has been a focal point to progress each team. Being competitive and enjoying the sport was important to keep in mind for all of the athletes competing in both the sports' seasons.

Coach Rishel and Coach Tassone have helped grow the Kennedy Swim Team over these past two years. As an independent swim team, it's important to keep your focus on only the things that you can control. Their team goal has been to compete as hard as they can and to stay organized. As Coach Tassone stated, "We want the girls to feel confident when being a part of the team, organization helps that." Organization in practice helps the girls work hard constantly and it only better prepares them for their meets. The senior captain leadership of Erin Wolter and Taylor May helped the Gaels all season long. They were both strong and consistent swimmers that offered great leadership to the team. Their goal for next season is to continue to grow and get stronger.

On the other hand, the Kennedy Winter Track team's season was a great stepping stone that will lead into a spectacular Spring Track season. Ten new members were added to the team, which put a little more pressure on the captain's role in leading the squad. However, seniors Aidan Kounios, Liam Gerrity and Cassandra Joseph all kept the team in check and helped organize their meets. Coach Tassone believes that it was their effort in practices and ability to hold each other accountable that gave them some success. Competitions in practices also helped keep everyone lively and motivated to do the best they can. The Gaels competed in a challenging CHSAA League and ran competitively at the Sectional Championship.



GIRLS BASKETBALL LOOK TO **RIISING STARS** FOR REBUILDING

Words by Brendan Sullivan '21 • Images by LifeTouch

The Kennedy Catholic Girls Varsity Basketball team ended their 2018-19 season with a 9-11 overall regular season record and 4-7 league record. The Gaels had the 3rd place seed in the GCHSAA "A" Playoffs, but suffered an early quarterfinal loss to Notre Dame Academy. However, a great season can never be defined by only one loss.

Coach Len Yearwood has continued to push the Gaels towards greatness year in and year out. He believes that you must give your players something to look forward to, in order for them to achieve the goal that you're looking forward to. Coach Yearwood does so to keep his team focused and driven for their task at hand. "We don't start the season thinking about playoffs or championships. We just want to play everyday like it's our last, whatever happens, happens," says Coach Yearwood. The Gaels don't focus their attention on looking ahead, but rather working together, and thus winning together.

Senior captains Alexis Suarez and Julia Ennis have been great leaders for Kennedy and do so by example. They have been building the culture for Kennedy basketball and the only way is up. Every player is dependable in game situations because they all put the time in on their own. Also, they all believe in each other because of their team camaraderie. Coach Yearwood especially believes in sophomore Abby Mascia, whom he thinks has taken a great leap in her basketball ability by putting in the extra work and now seeing results. Coach Yearwood thinks that



the out-of-league and out-of-state games have been great confidence builders and experiences for his team.

Senior Alexis Suarez, who has signed to play with Dominican College in the fall, led the Gaels in points, steals, and assists, where junior Erin Brann led the team in rebounds. Due to graduation, the loss of Alexis Suarez and Julia Ennis will be felt, but the Gaels have several rising stars that can prove to be the next great players for the team. Off-season work will help prepare the Gaels for the season that lies ahead.



BOYS BASKETBALL FIGHTS AND GRINDS THROUGH 2018-19 SEASON

Words by Brendan Sullivan '21 • Images by LifeTouch

The Kennedy Catholic Boys Varsity Basketball team ended their 2018-19 campaign with an overall record of 3-22. The Gaels had a tough loss to Lasalle Academy in the first round of the CHSAA "A" Playoffs that led to their elimination. Although the Gaels didn't have a deep playoff run for championship contention, they continued to represent Kennedy Catholic and kept their focus on what's at task all season long.

In Coach Morales's 7th season as head coach of Boys Varsity Basketball, he knows how to bring the team together and to work as hard as they possibly can. Confidence, effort, enthusiasm, and energy have been the focal points for the Gaels all year long. Coach Morales believed that for his team to get better they must simulate game situations in practice six days a week. Coach Morales said, "To play hard you have to practice hard." That stayed with the players and they realized that this season was going to have a "fight and grind" mentality.

The senior leadership has glued Kennedy together all season long. The four returning seniors Aidan Spillane, Luke Rossiter, Gabe Gojcay, and Cole Esposito,



have used their experience from the previous year to help the team and themselves. They have led by example day-in and day-out to guide the newcomers, who are Brendan Lebitsch, Michael Cohen, Connor O'Reilly, Jaden Wilson and Lou Hoinkis. Working together as a team helped them overcome the adversity that they faced throughout the season. By playing as one they were able to nearly upset the number one team in the league, All Hallows. The game

went down to the wire and the Gaels lost by 8, but it was a statement to the league that they are ready to make a rumble in the near future, whether it was this season or the next.

Over the course of the season, senior Aidan Spillane led scoring for the Gaels with 15 points per game and was third in the league for 3-point shots made, which helped him become a CHSAA All-League Player. He was the key player for Kennedy all season, where each team had to pay extra attention to him on the perimeter. Although the Gaels didn't end the year on a positive note, Coach Morales stays optimistic and believes that the off-season will help prepare and dictate next year's journey.



BRENDAN MAGUIRE

14

BULLPEN

KENNEDY CATHOLIC CELEBRATES 'BRENDAN MAGUIRE DAY'

Kennedy Catholic scholar-athlete Brendan Maguire battled against osteosarcoma, a particularly vicious form of bone cancer that usually targets men under the age of 25. He struggled for 14 months before losing the battle on August 20, 2018, at the age of 17. Maguire would have been a proud member of the Kennedy Catholic graduating Class of 2019.

On May 14, the school honored Maguire's memory at the first "Brendan Maguire Day."

The challenge when putting together such an event was one of scope. Maguire was a larger than life presence at Kennedy, so a celebration of his life needed to be big as well.

"He was someone who really cared about other people, who showed himself to be a leader of others," Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, Principal and President of Kennedy Catholic, said. "I think he embraced our school virtues of 'Courage' and 'Compassion.' Compassion because he cared about other people especially teammates who weren't doing well, and courage because he met his terminal illness with bravery."

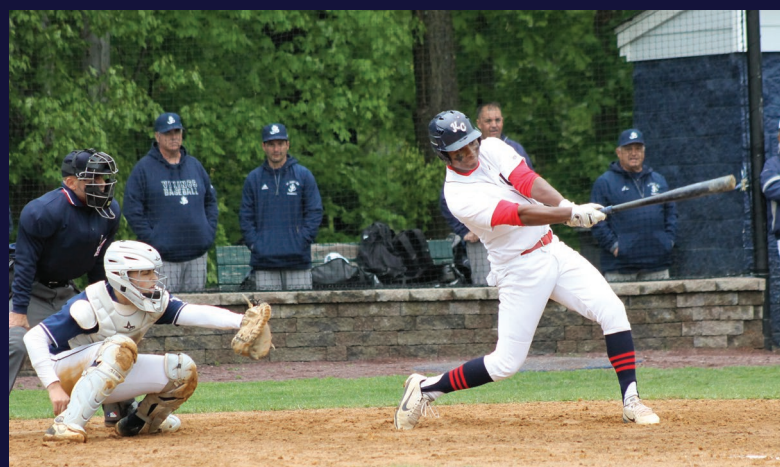
The day began with a community Mass celebrated in the school auditorium, and dedicated to Maguire. The Mass later spilled out onto the baseball field, where the visiting bullpen was dedicated in Maguire's name.

Fr. Vaillancourt remembers how the scholar-athlete joined Kennedy from St. James the Apostle Elementary School and immediately became very involved in the baseball and basketball programs.

"He became pretty much a leader in baseball," Fr. Vaillancourt said.

That's why the focal point of the Brendan Maguire Day celebration — after an all-student, all-hands barbecue — was a double-header. The JV and varsity squads both participated, and opposing teams from St. Joseph by the Sea brought their full Student Council along as well. The Maguire family joined the teams on the field, and Brendan Maguire's father, Rory, threw out the first pitch.

It was big, and it was baseball, and Brendan wouldn't have wanted it any other way.



The Over-The-Top Adventures of Julia Mee

Words by Rich Kirby • Images by Julia Mee '14

“The sales guys like to say that an education at Kennedy Catholic will prepare a student for anything. Happily, they now have Julia Mee and her exploits to back that platitude up.

Mee graduated Kennedy in 2014, and went on to Quinnipiac University. There she rocketed through the school’s accelerated business program to earn her bachelor’s with a minor in international business and her master’s with a concentration in analytics in just four years. Upon starting her dream job and moving to New York City shortly after graduation, Mee had every reason to pause, take a deep breath, bask in the moment – only she didn’t.

She had bigger hills to climb.

My first desire to climb Kilimanjaro was when I went to Tanzania on a service trip the summer before senior year of high school,” Mee told *The Gael*. “Two girls in my group had just finished their climb and raved about the experience.

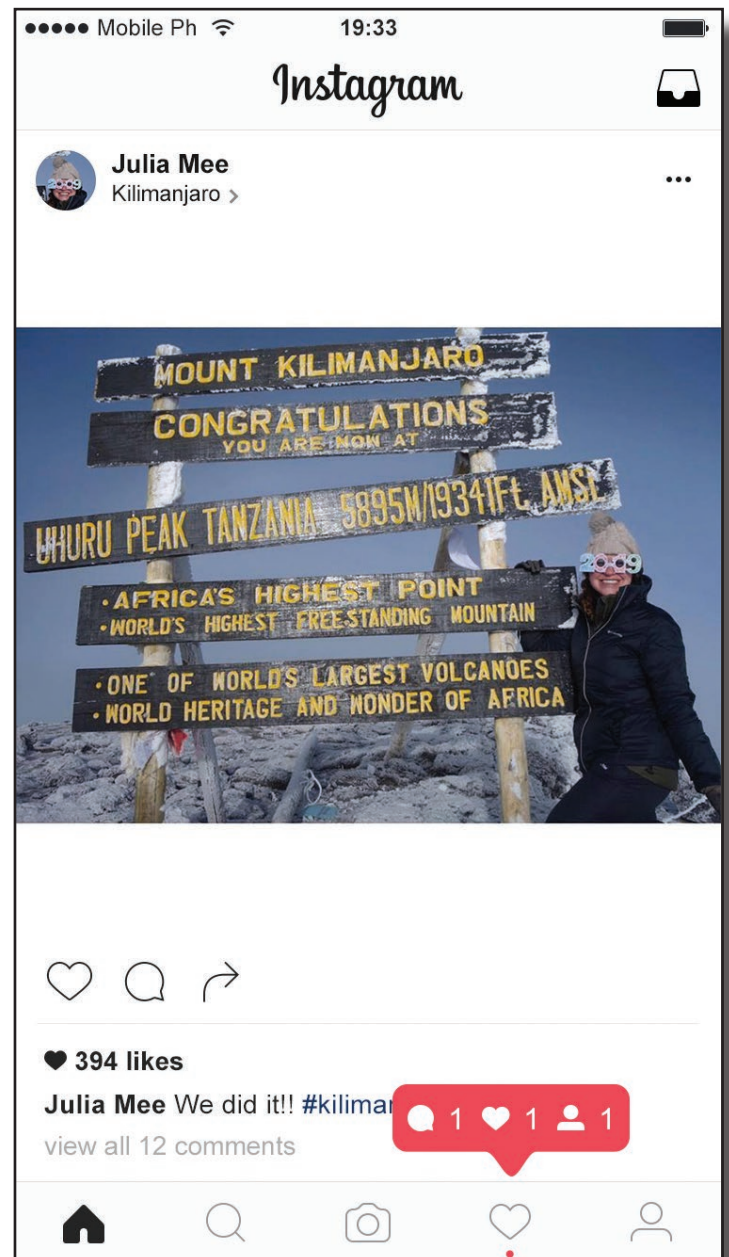
“During my search for my next endeavor, I stumbled across my old friend who posted a ‘throwback’ picture of her climb from all those years ago and I knew that’s what I wanted to do. I spent weeks researching tour companies and settled on Ultimate Kilimanjaro’s New Year’s expedition. 2018 had already been a big year for me, and I couldn’t think of any better way of ringing in the next.

“I grew up playing sports and hiking in the Adirondacks, but had never attempted anything like Kilimanjaro.”

Join the club. So how does one even begin to prepare to conquer the highest mountain in Africa?

“My training for Kilimanjaro began with basic cardiovascular and weightlifting exercises to build a baseline endurance and strength level,” she said. “Over the course of four months I steadily increased my workouts and added in weekly yoga to prevent injury.

“Obviously the best way to train for a hike, is to hike. I planned weekend trips to the Adirondacks in upstate New York and Salt Lake City, Utah to test out my legs and start breaking in





my boots. The hike in the Adirondacks was mainly for distance; I hiked 14 steep miles up and back from Mount Colden. In Utah, I was mainly focused on elevation gain and monitoring any signs of altitude sickness. I hiked eight miles up Mount Baldy up to roughly 12,000 feet, with a total elevation gain of 3,000 feet.

“With a little over one month to go, I continued my training, which thankfully seemed to be working, and tried to avoid any activity with a possibility of injury.

“In terms of the training experience, it was long and hard to build up the discipline to make it to my workouts and eat the nutritious foods my body needed. I literally slept with a poster of Kilimanjaro at the foot of my bed so it was the first thing I saw when I woke up in the morning, and the last thing I saw at night. Having that end goal in mind made it all worth it.”

Lau Tzu famously said that a “journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.” But Lau Tzu never climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, and likely neither will any of us. What does such an endeavor even look like?

“I left New York on December 23 and arrived at Kilimanjaro airport roughly 19 hours later on Christmas Eve,” Mee said. “After spending Christmas adjusting to the time difference and getting to know the group, we left for our first day of hiking on the 26th. Getting from the entrance gate to basecamp took six days. While we only hiked 6-10 miles a day, we walked ‘pole pole’ – ‘slowly slowly’ – to allow our bodies to properly adjust to the altitude.

“We arrived at basecamp in the afternoon of the 6th day. After settling in, we ate lunch around 2 p.m. before heading back to our tents for a nap. I managed to sleep for about 45 minutes before we

were called out around 5:30 p.m. for dinner and our pre-summit meeting. We were already full from lunch, but we somehow managed to eat some soup and a plateful of spaghetti before heading back to our tents to get some sleep.

“The howling winds and overwhelming excitement kept me wide awake until our wake-up call at 10:30 p.m. Not even a half an hour later we joined the hundreds of other hopeful climbers on the steep path toward the summit. A grueling seven hours later, we arrived at Uhuru Peak at 19,341 feet. About an hour later, we began the steep descent back down to basecamp, arriving just before 11 a.m., a total endeavor of roughly 12 hours. After a quick nap and lunch, we again packed up to hike down another four hours to our last campsite. After an incredibly good night’s sleep, we hiked a final four hours down to the exit gate. Ultimately, it took us six days to get to the top, and two days to get down.”

Mee doesn’t do “pause for reflection” very well, so when she was done with Kilimanjaro all she knew for certain was that she was done with Kilimanjaro. The road ahead of her is wide open, and could go just about anywhere.

“I don’t think I would climb Kili again simply because there would be no reason to do so,” she said. “I had a perfectly imperfect experience where everything that could go wrong for me went wrong, yet I can still say it was the most incredible experience of my life (so far). I have a lot of plans for the future, but don’t have anything set in stone at the moment. I just ran my first half marathon in Central Park last weekend and signed up for my first triathlon for over the summer, which are both things I’ve been wanting to do for a while. After that, I am just going to keep trying to find new experiences while I’m still young and able.”

How ‘bout you? Climb any mountains in Africa lately? If so, *The Gael* wants to hear from you. Please email us at advancement@kennedycatholic.org.



STUDENTS OF DISTINCTION:

Trish Curtin & Emily Lavelle

Words by Rich Kirby • Images by Jacob Bergmeier

ONE OF THE GREAT FEATURES about *The Gael* is that, article by article, readers get to meet Kennedy students and alumni who are excelling in their chosen sports, arts, community service, or academic pursuit.

Sometimes, admittedly rarely, we get to see all those different types of excellence and achievements embodied in just one or two students. Such is the case in this issue, with “Students of Distinction” Emily Lavelle and Trish Curtin.

Lavelle was honored by the National Hispanic Recognition Program, and that accolade numbers her among the top two percent of the Hispanic students who take the PSAT. She also impressed the Powers That Be over at the Hispanic Heritage Foundation Youth Awards. Those were founded in 1988 and “honor Latino high school seniors

who excel in the classroom and community, and for their excellence in various categories including: business and entrepreneurship, community service, education, healthcare and science, media and entertainment, and technology and engineering.” She received the group’s Silver Award in the technology and engineering category.

Curtin was named a National Merit Scholarship Finalist, which is pretty much the brass ring on the high school academic merry-go-round. The accolade is handed out by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation and is based upon PSAT and SAT scores, as well as a written essay. It’s a huge door opener, as well as a scholarship magnet.

What’s most impressive about the students is not that they’re so smart, well-spoken and charming – they are – but



the extraordinary way that they manage their time.

Curtin has played soccer for Kennedy all her four years, as well as run spring track for the same period. She has performed every year in the musical, and most recently for “West Side Story” she was named dance captain and an assistant to the director. She is co-editor of the yearbook, and also leads the group Answer for Cancer, which raises money for cancer research – specifically for those affected by childhood cancer. Outside of Kennedy, Curtin volunteers for the Midnight Run at her parish, and is one of the leaders of its Youth Group.

“I am very fortunate to have learned from my extracurriculars and teachers at Kennedy how to work my time around what I want to do,” Curtin said. “One of the most important things I have learned is how important it is to manage your time. If I don’t, I lose sleep, and sleep is very important to me. I am the type of person to not go to sleep until I know I can handle the workload of the next day.”

Lavelle is a member of the Latino Club and plays percussion in the concert band. She is also co-captain of the robotics team, and designed and manages their website and social media. Off-campus, she is a Girl Scout who, for her Silver Award, renovated the Putnam Community Action Partnership soup kitchen, replacing their old residential appliances with larger, commercial-grade facilities. At the Brewster Public Library, she helps young children (and their parents) struggling with English with their homework and reading.

“Being on the robotics team has taught me a lot about the field that I want to go into, mechanical engineering,” Lavelle said. “I’ve learned how to solve problems both slowly at meetings and quickly at matches. In competitions, I’ve met many other students from different teams, both locally and from around the world. At last year’s Vex Robotics World Championship, I actually spoke to two girls from a team in Kazakhstan. Robotics has taught me leadership, sportsmanship, and how to present myself, alongside how to work with machinery and how to design robots with very specific functions. It helps me visualize the lessons that I learn in my math and science classes and I love being able to learn in a hands-on way.”

Trish Curtin (left) and Emily Lavelle (below)



Lavelle has her sights set on Manhattan College; she likes its small size and strong engineering program. Curtin will be attending the University of Notre Dame in the fall, and plans on majoring in physics with a concentration in chemical principles or chemical engineering with a minor in Spanish when she gets there. She hopes to become a doctor, preferably a pediatric cardiologist or oncologist.

Our only hope is that after they make it big they drop us a line here and let us write about their newest achievements, which are certain to be spectacular.



Words by Rich Kirby • Images on next page courtesy of Carol Morris
Image above courtesy of Pexels.com

When the contingent of pro-life protesters from Kennedy Catholic joined their hundreds of thousands of colleagues January 18 on the National Mall in Washington DC for the 46th annual March For Life, they had a lot to be proud of.

It was the largest crowd in the event's history, making it the world's largest pro-life event ever. It was also the biggest crowd that Kennedy had ever fielded to the March, a credit to the school's Pro-Life Club under the leadership of school Chaplain Fr. Adolfo Novio, and club president, senior Lexi Vespucci.

But despite the crowd and its enthusiasm, Vespucci came home from the rally feeling unsettled.

"The pro-life movement is losing its drive in the country to those who are supportive of pro-choice," she told *The Gael*. "This is most clearly seen with the recent passing of laws that push for legal abortion in specific states."

Nowhere is that more apparent than in our own state of New York. Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the ironically-titled Reproductive Health Act, his signature piece of abortion-embracing legislation, into law

on Jan. 22, 2019. The law expands the type of healthcare practitioners who can perform abortions (Read: you no longer have to be a medical doctor to be an abortionist in New York) and allows for late-term abortions, right up until birth. The law put New York into a very exclusive club of questionable company: it joins only six other states which do not ban abortions at one point or other during a pregnancy.

As if making a point of signing the law on the anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling wasn't a perverse enough brand of showboating, Cuomo ordered One World Trade Center and other landmarks to be lit in pink that day to draw attention to the bill's passage. Yes, seriously.

Vespucci believes that in his zeal to appeal to that lowest of lowest common denominators in New York politics, the governor has overplayed his hand.

"These laws have enraged even those who are pro-choice," she said. "An unborn baby can feel pain at 20 weeks, but can be aborted after that in New York. This is something pro-life and pro-choice alike believe is wrong. We are hopeful with these insane laws which disregard what science has said, more and more people



will realize what abortion truly is, and work to eliminate it.”

More irony. Self-styled “progressives” like Governor Cuomo are veritable Champions of Science when they think it gives them an edge in an argument with people of faith, but ignore it conveniently when it comes to the basic biology of the unborn.

Still, despite the best efforts of Cuomo and company to turn the Empire State into the Infanticide State, the numbers have actually been trending on the side of the angels. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which has been tracking abortion statistics since 1969, shows the procedure has been on a steady decline in New York since 2007.

As difficult as it may be for Vespucci to watch laws that target the unborn get passed in New York, it becomes downright mind-numbing seeing commonsense legislation which protects the newly-born get shot down.

“The Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act was voted against,” Vespucci said, “meaning that the attempt to protect individuals who are born alive despite a failed abortion was denied. With these discouraging and violent laws being put into place, it is so easy to feel like everything we have been working for is going to waste.”

Fr. Novio is a bit more optimistic — that’s part of his job, of course. He notes with more than a little satisfaction that the annual March for Life crowds have been getting larger, and significantly younger, since he has been attending the rallies.

“Everything ‘for life’ is gaining momentum,” Novio said. “Young people here today see the support from Vice President Mike Pence, and from President Trump himself, and this gives them courage.” Pence made an appearance at the latest March, and last year, Trump made the first-ever live-appearance at the rally by a sitting president addressing the group via satellite. He promised to veto any bill that “weakens the protection of human life.”

By contrast, Cuomo has categorized those who oppose abortion as “extreme conservatives” who “have no place in the state of New York,” casting whatever Catholic faith he might have had into the same wind into which he raises a finger to decide his politics.

Like that other famous apostate, the Roman Emperor Julian, Novio is confident history will show the governor backed the wrong side. Even Vespucci, although disheartened, can still see a path, albeit obstructed, to victory.

“The best way for us to move the process along and reach the ‘finish line’ is to continuously voice our opinions on this issue,” she said. “The March for Life is a great event and always has a tremendous attendance, but it only occurs once a year. We as Pro-Lifers should send letters to the government, post on social media, assist pro-life supportive organizations, hold assemblies and other gatherings, and anything else we can do to show our support all year round. With daily prayer and speaking out, we may one day be able to win over Roe v. Wade and truly become ‘the Pro-Life Generation.’”

Carol Morris P’01, ’02, ’09 and Shannon (Morris) Zawiski ’02 attended the New York State Right To Life March in Albany on June 3, 2019



<https://www.factcheck.org/2019/03/the-facts-on-the-born-alive-debate/>

<https://www.heritage.org/life/report/the-necessity-the-born-alive-abortion-survivors-protection-act>



LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN BUSINESS

KENNEDY OFFERS NEW COLLEGE COURSE

The latest college-level course at Kennedy, Contemporary Business Practice, is by all accounts a hit.

The class of 33 students meets every Tuesday after school in Room 128 for two hours. Another hour of independent work is assigned weekly, to meet the requirements for a 3-credit college course.

The course, which is Business 101 at the Pace School of Business, follows similar college-level offerings from SUNY Albany, Iona and St. John's made available at Kennedy. The big difference in this current go-round is that Business 101 is taught by a Pace professor on site.

The lesson plan is a survey of the nature of business in America, using business models from a few different manufacturing and service industries to illustrate business principles and practices. But that doesn't mean the course isn't "hands on."

Students use the business simulation software Biz Café, in conjunction with their texts, to run and grow a virtual coffee shop.

They are required to make business decisions as they scale their enterprise, and the choices they make as a start-up will impact the options available to them as they challenge Starbucks for global Frappuccino domination.

"It is important for Kennedy to prepare students to participate in the economy, and the sooner they have a feel for the 'real world' the better off they will be," said Kennedy social studies teacher Mr. Robert Santini, who has been tasked with monitoring the program and recommending any changes to the flightpath.

Santini says the new course has been embraced enthusiastically by students, their parents, and even the parents of many school-shopping prospective students who recognize there is really no program in the area comparable to it.

But for Santini, Business 101 is less a foray into fancy new educational territory, and more a hunkering back down upon traditional educational values and definitions of success.

"In recent years, and even for decades, students have been encouraged to attend college and study subjects rather than careers, which does not support the thinking that young people must prepare to participate in the economy," Santini said. "Hundreds - even thousands - of students leave college with degrees that do not prepare them to solve problems or generate a reliable living for them and their future families. Re-emphasizing the basic notion that they need to prepare to participate in the economy, and then giving them the options to begin doing so at the high school level is a worthy goal, and one that benefits the students, our school, and ultimately society at large, since a more productive working population is better for everyone."



JOIN US FOR AN OPEN HOUSE EVENT

**Sunday
October 6
1-4 pm**

**Wednesday
October 16
7-9 pm**

**Rising 7th and 8th graders are invited to attend a
fall Open House event at Kennedy Catholic.**

Learn more on our website: KennedyCatholic.org/Admissions



Office of Advancement
54 Route 138
Somers, NY 10589



CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

LINKS CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE: KENNEDYCATHOLIC.ORG

SAVE THE DATE

**JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL
KENNEDY CATHOLIC HOMECOMING**

**Graduates of any year are invited to attend
the Alumni Reunion on the new Alumni Patio,
a gift of the Class of 2019**

Kickoff @ 7:00pm on Friday, September 27