

KENNEDY CATHOLIC ♦ SAINT MARY'S

THE GAEIL

FALL 2019 • VOLUME 30

Kennedy
Alumnus Soars!

KENNEDY Arts
Theater Program
Expands

MIKE
McDONNELL
New Era for Basketball

STEM Days
Huge Success



♦ **IN THIS
EDITION**

2019 Graduation
New Training
Facility Debuts
2019 President's Dinner

President's Message



Dear Friend of Kennedy Catholic,

It's spring and that's supposed to be the season of growth and renewal, Easter hope and new beginnings. Yet here we are in the fall, growing faster — and feeling more hopeful — than we have felt in over half a century.

The final curtain had barely hit the stage concluding the final performance of "West Side Story" — the Kennedy Players' most successful production yet — when I was giving the go-ahead to *double* the theater program. Beginning this semester we will be presenting musicals in both the spring and the fall. In this issue we will talk to the Arts Department's director/choreographer and learn not so much how this happened, but why we just couldn't stop it.

Every sports team that has had a few tough seasons say they are "rebuilding," which is usually a euphemism for "we're crossing our fingers and hoping for the best." Gaels boys basketball has had some tough sledding of late, but we think it's in for a dramatic about-face. Kennedy Catholic has just hired Coach Mike McDonnell, a 30-year hardwood veteran whom we think will spark more than just a turnaround, but a renaissance. You can read up on his plans in this issue.

That renewed basketball team will be getting into shape in Kennedy's new training facilities. A long time on the clipboard of Athletic Director Dom Tassone, Kennedy's new state-of-the-industry weight room finally debuted over the summer. It makes me fatigued just looking at it, but the football team has been working out there all summer, and it shows. This issue, we'll take you inside the torture chamber.



It turns out that Kennedy's science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program is growing faster than the pace of colleges graduating STEM majors, which is actually declining. In this issue, chemistry teacher Elizabeth Turner explains how Kennedy keeps the STEM fires burning brighter here each year by doing deep dives into local Catholic elementary schools for our "STEM days."

The Class of 2019 had absolutely perfect weather — and everything else! — for their graduation this past June, and we'll revisit some of that magic in a pictorial this issue. We'll also remember the night we fêted the crème de la crème of that class at the 2019 President's Dinner. Ever grateful, the Class of '19 gifted the school with a magnificent new patio that we have taken to calling the "Alumni Porch" in anticipation of how we will be using it. You'll get a sneak peek in this issue.

Two members of the Class of 2018, cheerleaders both, dropped in over the summer and told us everything we didn't know to ask about cheer at the college level. How's it different, what's the same, and did Kennedy do a decent job of preparing them? Find out in this issue.

If you feel as though there is so much going on at Kennedy that it's almost impossible to keep up, you're not alone. That's why we hired a new communications director. You'll meet Noelle Torre of the Class of '14 in this issue. She has come on board to ride herd on all of our news, public relations, social media and video initiatives, and we are lucky to have her.

Growth... renewal... and a reinvigorated basketball program! Not so much Easter, but it is beginning to look a lot like Christmas...

Sincerely yours in Christ

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

Events at Kennedy Catholic

Fall Musical - Nov. 8, 9 & 10

Annual Auction - Nov. 16

Christmas Concert - Dec. 4

Spring Musical - Mar. 5, 6, 7 & 8

President's Dinner - May 14

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AS WE GO TO PRESS:

Congratulations to some exceptional seniors,
National Merit Semifinalists Taran Agnihotri
and Lina Ciamei (pictured) and National
Merit Scholarship commended students
Dorrian Cohen, Christopher Lorusso and
Lucy Carpenter

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Building a Better Athlete Kennedy Debuts New Training Facility

What's black, and red, and heavy metal all over? If you answered "Kennedy's new weight room," you're probably one of the many young athletes who have taken advantage of the school's latest facility expansions to get in shape this past summer.

Conveniently located near the gym, the space is packed comfortably with enough racks, cages, barbells, power towers and weight benches to turn a Carlton into a Conan in record time. It's the rare weight room that can be called "simply gorgeous," but this new facility rises to the compliment.

Kennedy Athletic Director and Football Head Coach Dom Tassone said building out a primo training facility was a top-tier priority of his when he took over the sports program at Kennedy two years ago.



The weight room is not just for football players, Tassone told *The Gael*. Athletes from any sport can use it, and it is meant to encourage participation in the off-season.

The new room wasn't just a "nice to have" for Kennedy: All the Catholic High School Athletic Association schools have dedicated weight room spaces, and the Gaels risked falling behind competitively. Now that it's built, Tassone says he will put Kennedy's new weight room up against any other school's training facility.

"We want to try and give our athletes every opportunity to get better at their craft as we can," Tassone said.

The whole build-out of the room was a DIY affair. Members of the football team joined forces with assistant coaches and the school's facilities crew to schlep and assemble really, really heavy pieces of metal into something beautiful.

As the nation groans and perspires through a rejuvenated interest in fitness, driven in part by the CrossFit craze, Tassone says the new room is rarely vacant.

"On the football side, we would have about



"But a project this large is not always easy to just turn around and get done. It's taken longer than expected, but with a lot of hard work and a lot of thought process, we were able to get it done."

It's worth pointing out there would not be a new weight room — or plenty of other quiet but crucial initiatives bolstering the football team's success — if it was not for the Touchdown Club.

"I wouldn't call it a booster club because it's not that large," Tassone said. "It's just a group of parents who has rallied around the football program. They help me raise money if I need it."



10-15 guys come in regularly on the off-season. This year we had 25 to 30 guys coming in to work out — just because they come in here feeling like they own something. It's theirs, and that was the goal, and it's working so far."

Kennedy Taps *Mike McDonnell* To Ignite A New Era of Basketball



Since Kennedy Catholic hired turnaround artist Mike McDonnell as new head coach for the boys basketball team, the Gael's roundball hopes are again riding high.

McDonnell was head coach at Putnam Valley for six years, when the team's record was 102-32. The Tigers became a regular partner in the Section 1 Class B Big Dance under McDonnell, playing in four final fours and two championship games during his tenure. Prior to McDonnell taking over the program, Putnam Valley had just one semifinal appearance in the team's history.

Significantly, McDonnell is no stranger to the CHSAA — in fact, he's a big fan. Before coaching Putnam Valley, he was head coach for Sacred Heart High School in Yonkers for five years. He views the top of the Catholic School Class "B" teams as being equivalent to public school Class "A" squads.

"I'm really excited to work with some of the players we already have in house, I think we have some great players here," McDonnell said, but he knows that rebuilding needs to be a large part of his focus. The Gaels went 2-22 overall last season, following two straight years without racking up a single "W."

"We obviously have to support what we already have by adding more strength," McDonnell said.

McDonnell is playing a little catch-up in the recruiting game as he was only just hired in the middle of the summer, but he says he already attracted "significant interest" from some ace candidates.

"You start with the players," said McDonnell, who has spent time scouting for the WNBA and coaching at

Concordia College. "You don't win without good players. You want to attract players who love the sport of basketball. Then you have to develop those players."

McDonnell has built a huge network of coaches, trainers and other area hoop savants in his 30-year career on the court, and he is intent on tapping into that in his mission to rewire the Gaels.

Looming large in McDonnell's recruiting strategy is the New York Archdiocesan Catholic Youth Organization basketball league.

"I think the CYO base is important," McDonnell said. The typical CYO player is really not being served by many high schools in the area right now."

The coach would have Kennedy change all that. He plans on rolling out the red carpet for CYO players and their coaches, inviting them to Gael practices, and even offering free clinics.

"Your best Catholic schools are not recruiting your best CYO players right now," McDonnell explained. "I want us to be the base, the hub, where the very best CYO player comes, from as far down as the Bronx, White Plains, New Rochelle area, from as far up as Brewster and Danbury, from as far westward as Fishkill. We need to attract the very best CYO players from a broad area, anybody within a 45-minute ride, has to be thinking about Kennedy as a serious place where he can develop academically and athletically."

The varsity basketball Gaels play their first game of the 2019-20 season on Tuesday, Dec. 3 at home against Cristo Rey Brooklyn.

Meteoric Rise Kennedy Theater Program Doubles in Size



The spring production of *West Side Story*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt had some very simple advice on how to grow a business, or a presidency: “Do something. If it works, do more of it. If it doesn’t, do something else.”

Taking its cue from FDR — or maybe just the enthusiastic reviews for last spring’s hit “*West Side Story*” — the Kennedy Catholic Arts Department has decided to do more theater. The Kennedy Players will debut a fall musical in 2019, their first ever two-musical year. Curtains will go up for “*Elf, Jr.*” in the Kennedy Auditorium on Nov. 8 and 9 at 7 p.m., and Nov. 10 at 3 p.m.

The show itself is the scaled-down-for-schools version of the musical based on the 2003 film of the same name, with a score by Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin, and a book by Bob Martin and Thomas Meehan. The musical ran on Broadway during the Christmas seasons of 2010-11 and 2012-13, and toured the country in 2012.

For a generation of kids who have grown up challenging each other with “Feeling strong, my friend?” and fathers challenging their kids to “Make work your favorite!” the story needs no introduction.

“Basically, we chose ‘*Elf Jr.*’ because it is a fun holiday show that we wanted to do for the entire community to enjoy,” Rue said. “It also has many wonderful characters, and great musical numbers. It is a well-loved story complete with holiday cheer, uplifting songs, and most importantly, a meaningful message of the importance of family and the things that matter most in life.”

It’s also a whiplash-ing one-eighty from “*West Side Story*,” the high-body-count Broadway classic that brought down the house this past spring.

“The cast worked hard and long,” Rue explained. “The majority of the boys never stepped foot on a stage before, never danced, sang or acted. I was determined to have adults play the adult roles in the show. It added a great depth to the show and I am forever grateful for Mr. Compton, Mr. Langellada, Mr.

Generoso and Mr. Marsillo for the time, talent and dedication they brought to the production.

“It was definitely a challenge, but the success was because of the hard work the cast and the production staff put into it. The team of women I had the pleasure of collaborating with, Mrs. Boston, Miss Bodt, Mrs. DiGrandi, and Mrs. Cartaya, helped keep the integrity of the production and made ‘*West Side Story*’ the success it was.”



“The idea behind this show was to build the musical theater program by adding a fall production for Kennedy students, and so provide another opportunity to hone their musical theater skills,” said Mrs. Barbara Rue, the show’s director and choreographer. “Many of our incoming freshmen are involved and we are thrilled to have so many interested in theater. It also provides our freshman a great avenue to get acquainted and involved with other students right away.”



For the current and wannabe members of the Kennedy Players, the addition of a new musical in a new season is world-rocking, not to mention schedule-shattering. Auditions were held last June, and rehearsals began Sept. 12, and continue Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays up through opening night. It requires brand new commitments for young people who are often already over-booked with sports, studies, after school jobs and community service.

Commitment has been the signature strand in a Kennedy Player's DNA for as long as the school has been mounting theatrical productions. But ultimately, the great success of "West Side Story" came down to a timeless story, told well.

"I remember saying this to the kids one day at rehearsal, 'We should be able to tell the story, and communicate to the audience these characters and what drives them, in a vacant lot. Without the sets, the costumes, the lights, and all the rest, just tell the story, because that's what actors do. Forget all the other bells and whistles. You just need to tell the story.'"



"Basically, we chose 'Elf Jr.' because it is a fun holiday show that we wanted to do for the entire community to enjoy."



The audiences got the message and now Rue hopes that alumni will, as well. She is mulling the idea of staging an "Alumni Night."

"We've had many students come back on their college breaks and visit rehearsals," Rue said. "Many of them come and see the show and they are always supportive and blessed to see the kids backstage."

Her vision is to produce a musical revue stitched together from recent shows staged by the Kennedy Players. She sees it as a prime opportunity to raise scholarship monies for the school's theater-minded students.

"Additionally, we are thrilled to have opened up our fall musical program to students from the surrounding school districts," Rue said. "Down the road we'd also like to add a summer musical theater program."

Three Kennedy musicals a year? We are so there, for that...

STAFF **INTERVIEW**

Elizabeth Turner

*“What’s special
about
Kennedy is
that we have
all these special
programs,
and STEM
obviously
is huge.”*



CATAPULTS AND SLIME

STEM Days Take Off at Kennedy

It sounds crazy — and runs counter to what Kennedy Catholic has experienced — but the proportion of bachelor's degrees in science, technology, math and engineering (STEM) has actually declined over the last several decades. A report from the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee details a drop from 24 percent in 1985 to just 18 percent in 2009. That's creating a large bottleneck for businesses, according to The Wharton School, despite the fact that our highest paying jobs are largely in STEM fields.

Many high schools are rising to the challenge by reinvigorating or re-inventing their STEM programs. Kennedy Catholic, which is already graduating more than its share of STEM-targeted students by far, is upping its game by starting the process at the grade school level.

The school calls them STEM Days, and holds them several times throughout the year. Kennedy buses 7th-grade students from two local Catholic schools onto its Somers campus for an immersive day of science education and activities.

"We want to get them at 7th grade so they are comfortable coming here in 8th grade for all the Open House and orientation activities," said Elizabeth Turner, a 2014 Kennedy graduate, who is spearheading the STEM Day effort at Kennedy. Turner earned her Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry at SUNY Binghamton. She came on board as a chemistry lab assistant and science tutor last year, and will be teaching chem full-time this year.

"Basically what happens is, you're in 7th grade, the decision on high school is coming up, and you don't know where to go," Turner said. "So we decided to create this program where kids come in and tour Kennedy for a day. But what's special about Kennedy is that we have all these special programs, and STEM obviously is huge."

Turner hopes that the day-long program will spark an interest in STEM that the 7th grader might not even know he had. Of course, once that happens, Kennedy becomes that student's logical choice for high school.

"A lot of these kids are very nervous at the prospect of high school," Turner said. "But once they step into a high school environment, and see what the kids are like, and the kids say

'hi!' to them in the hallways, they are ready to go."

The first event on a typical STEM Day agenda is a demonstration given by the Kennedy robotics team, "which is awesome," Turner told *The Gael*. "The robotics kids love to talk to the new kids. Every demonstration has been a little bit different, so it's actually kind of exciting for me to watch too."

Next up, the visiting 7th graders are split into three groups. One goes to the chemistry lab where they've been concocting ice cream, slime and rockets. Another group makes catapults in an engineering program at the physics lab. At the third, immersive demo, the students learn enough code-slinging from the robotics club to get their 'bots to move around and be useful. All the 7th graders will cycle through all three programs before day's end, and each experience is mentored by a teacher who "provides a little bit of instruction, but then lets the 7th graders pretty much do what they want," Turner said.

All STEM and no play may prepare Jack better for the workforce but it still makes him a dull boy. So after they exit the labs, the students head out for some kickball, and fishing at Kennedy's fully-stocked lake. The sports and BBQ also allow the students from both schools to mingle with each other, and current Kennedy students who are alumni from their own schools.

"For example if we have a group of Seton 7th Graders, we will get a group of Seton alumni to serve as 'familiar faces,'" Turner said.

At day's end, Kennedy president and principal Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, who studied engineering at SUNY Maritime College, always talks to the students about the importance of STEM in "the real world." For many students, it will be the very first time they envision themselves following a STEM career path.

Turner says the STEM Day program hit the ground running two years ago and hasn't stopped or looked back since. "We already have four days planned for September and October, and we only have plans to make it bigger," she said. "We have kids coming in from all different districts, and we'd only like to grow this."





Bigger Than Yourself: **Becoming a Fighter Pilot**

When John Davin, Kennedy Class of 2013, graduated the U.S. Naval Academy, he made the decision to enter the Marine Corps. Only about 30 percent of Naval Academy graduates go that route, but one hundred percent of his brothers (Joe '05, Jim '07, and Jason '11) who went to the Naval Academy went on to the Marine Corps, so this likely cut down a bit on the thinking. Davin's father and grandfather are also former leathernecks.

"I think there is more prestige in being a Marine," Davin said. "And that's also the reason I wanted to be a jet fighter, I wanted to be the best at everything, I wanted to see how far I could go." At this point, 1st Lt. Davin has gone as far as Naval Air Station Meridian in Mississippi, and is training inside a T-45C Goshawk.

Davin's career as a Marine fighter pilot started in the classroom, as they all do. But after only three weeks of classroom instruction Marine trainees find themselves in the air inside a Cessna or Piper, according to Davin. These are (relatively!) inexpensive, small civilian aircraft on which the pilot will start solo'ing after 10 hours of in-cockpit training. If all this seems rather accelerated, it is. The rides "only get more expensive as you go" Davin said, and the USMC is anxious to screen out any candidate who lacks the right stuff to pilot their pricey aircraft, as quickly as possible.

The Marines require another three to four years of training in these lesser birds before a pilot will see the inside of a fighter jet. Davin has a year left in his Goshawk before taking control of what is certain to be one of our nation's most expensive military assets – an opportunity that only a small percentage of Marine pilots will be afforded.

"Some people think they want to be pilots, then they get into an aircraft and start flying it, and they realize they are going to be the only one in the aircraft, and the only one responsible for it, and it scares them."

But not Davin. He says what has most impressed him about the USMC is how highly focused it is on training. When his instructors believe him to be ready, he knows he'll be ready.

A surprising amount of Davin's time learning to fly has been spent in the water, as the Corps trains him how to survive worst-case-scenarios when plane and pilot both end up in the ocean. He's been taught how to get out of an upside-down helicopter, which includes learning how to detach his harness while being dragged through the water by his parachute.

The Gael asked Davin, c'mon, who wants a job where they are dragged through the water by their parachute?

"The underlying premise as to why you want to go through all of this is, you want to become something bigger than yourself," he said. "You want to be part of a team. And that echoes back to Kennedy. I was part of a team in every sport."

Davin excelled in three varsity sports, to be exact. He also wrote for the school newspaper, appeared on Kennedy Live, worked on the stage crew for the school plays, and managed the school bookstore, all while taking more than his share of AP and Honors courses. "Kennedy helped me best with time management," Davin said, an understatement.

What he also learned from Kennedy was a commitment to service, something that is woven prominently and tightly into the fabric of the Corps and the DNA of each Marine.

"A lot of people think that being a fighter pilot is the coolest job. (*Ed. Note: It is.*) But in reality we are taught that we are not being trained so we can go out there and be on our own and do our own thing," Davin said. "It is so we can support Marines on the ground. My job as a pilot is to provide support and to direct help to Marines on the ground."

Kennedy Catholic High School

CLASS OF 2019



Bishop Byrne



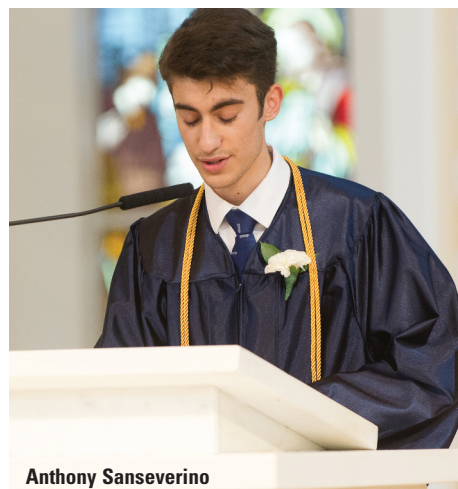
Fr. Vaillancourt

Kennedy Catholic held its Commencement on Saturday, June 1st at 11 a.m. at St. Joseph's Church in Somers, graduating 144 students.



Patricia Curtin

Following the familiar strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" and an invocation delivered by Anthony Sanseverino from the graduating class, Salutatorian Patricia Curtin, of Hawthorne, took to the podium. Curtin, a National Merit Scholarship winner who is now attending Notre Dame University, delivered an alternately whimsical and moving speech that lit upon the transience, and importance, of memories made in high school.



Anthony Sanseverino



Fred Compton

Kennedy maintains a very active and invested alumni community, and the school wastes no time in bolstering its ranks. Fred Compton, director of advancement and alumni relations, formally inducted the Class of 2019 into the Kennedy Catholic Alumni Association just before the newly-minted grads filed out of the church.





Diplomas were conferred by The Most Reverend Peter Byrne, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York, and Rev. Mark G. Vaillancourt, Ph.D, president and principal of Kennedy Catholic.

In her valedictory speech, Ossining native Eileen Cooney thanked the school's faculty for their focus upon developing her "moral compass." Cooney, now a freshman at Providence College, was also the recipient of a NY State Scholarship for Academic Excellence.





In addition to a number of awards from local civic groups for both their scholarship and public service, the Class of 2019 pocketed nearly \$42 million in merit-based college scholarships. Their future is so bright, no wonder so many of them wore shades!





KENNEDY CHEERLEADERS

Triumph at College Level

Cheer at Kennedy Catholic has grown at the same pace as cheer everywhere, which is crazy fast. Once a uniquely American experience, back when it was known as “cheerleading,” Hollywood’s new-found obsession with tumbling and thigh-stands took the sport from the sidelines and into the spotlight as a global phenomenon.

Lauren Dellbrugge, ‘18, is now studying at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia, majoring in interdisciplinary health services. She was made cheer captain at Kennedy as a senior after three years on the team.

Shelby Bakker, ‘18, is studying international business at Quinnipiac University. She only got started with cheer in her senior year at Kennedy. She said she “had a lot of pressure and anxiety about joining cheer, but I should have just thrown all that away, as I enjoyed my senior year so much.”

Cheer looks a lot different for both women in college. Neither school fields a football team, but that hasn’t made the spotlight any less bright, or the fans less loud, or the rigors less rigorous.

Division I basketball is the big sport at Saint Joe’s, and Dellbrugge and her crew cheer at every Hawk game. If that seems like a lot, it is, but they also manage to squeeze in dancing at games of Philly’s professional National Lacrosse League team, the Wings, which is pretty spectacular. Still not impressed? The team is scheduled to appear this season at Citizens Bank Park to cheer on the Phillies. In just her freshman year, the program has taken Dellbrugge from Vegas to Scranton, and points in between. She says she is now dancing “24/7, all year ‘round.”

Quinnipiac is only the second team in the country to have a cheer team for ice hockey, and it was way overdue. The Bobcats are ranked sixth in the nation, and have been regular ECAC champions and NCAA Division 1 “Frozen Four” competitors.

“It’s all very exciting,” Bakker said. “You get to travel, have fun, ice skate and cheer.”

about, and then there is capital “S” Spirit. They know something about that, as well.

“I go to a Jesuit school so that Spirit is on campus. We have a church, we have clubs, we have retreats, we have everything we could possibly need,” Dellbrugge said. “We had a Mass during our orientation, and, coming from a Catholic school, I felt that

Shelby Bakker and the Quinnipiac cheer squad



Sign us up. But that combination of ice skating and back hand-springs sounds like a match made in chiropractor heaven.

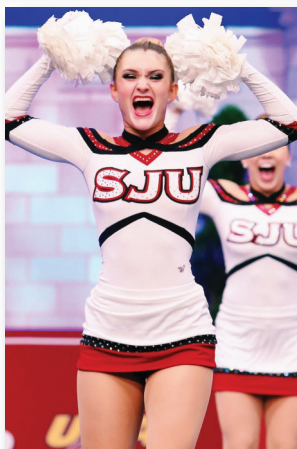
Turns out it’s not as dangerous as it sounds, but it is just as exhausting. Half the women are skaters and half are dancers, according to Bakker, who is both. The Quinnipiac squad does a “pre-ice routine” which is performed on the ice. “I really enjoy the ice portion, because you get to be on the ice with the players, during the National Anthem, the lights are down and it’s very performance-based. Then we go into the stands and we dance.”

Both women say that Kennedy more than conditioned them for the college cheer grind. Dellbrugge credits the “spirited environment” at Gaels’ games for priming her pump for the crazed Division I/Atlantic 10/Philly Big 5 basketball fanatics at Saint Joe’s. Bakker says that most of the cheerleaders at Quinnipiac were dancers before they started cheering at the college level, and there was a lot she could teach them, from what she learned in just her one year of cheer at Kennedy.

More importantly, according to Bakker, Kennedy laid the proper groundwork for their college academic work: “I feel that Kennedy definitely prepared us for what finals week was going to be like, what mid-terms were going to be like.”

That said, Bakker feels that the transition to college life was not easy. Her advice for KCHS seniors is “give yourself time to adjust.” Shelby made the Dean’s List last semester, so it seems she is adjusting just fine.

There’s school spirit, which the women know more than a little bit



Lauren Dellbrugge

was just such a perfect fit for me.” It permeated cheer as well. “We feel we needed God with us, we prayed before every game, before every performance, we prayed.”

The experience is a little different at Quinnipiac, where Bakker says it helps to have the right friends.

“I came out of (Kennedy) with a very strong faith, I was very connected,” she said. “But I didn’t go to a Jesuit college, and when you get out of that bubble, and you meet other people who believe differently than you do, you have to find common ground. But I have

really stuck with my faith, and I have a friend at college, Caroline King, who also went to Kennedy, and we go to Mass together, we get our ashes together.”

Sometimes a good school can make you a better cheerleader, and sometimes cheerleading can make the whole school experience better.

“If I didn’t cheer in high school, I wouldn’t have the sense of spirit and performance that I have now in college,” Dellbrugge said. “Cheer helped me through all my four years, I enjoyed high school so much more because of it, I gained so many more new friends, I got that sense of leadership in my senior year, being the captain of the team. It just taught me so many things.”

“I also think it’s special to cheer for your high school team,” Bakker said, reflecting on the difference between cheer at the different levels. “It gives you a sense of pride, walking through the halls with that uniform on. You can cheer for any other team, but I don’t think you’ll get the sense of pride that you do when you cheer for Kennedy.”



Awards to Students of Excellence were presented to members of the Senior Class who best represent the qualities of courage, compassion, service, and academic accomplishment.





The Divine Compassion Award was presented to Mrs. Dawn Tinger for her support of Catholic Education, and as an ambassador to Kennedy Catholic.



The Lux Christi Award was presented to Mr. Neil Braun for his dedication to Catholic Education and continuing contributions to Kennedy Catholic.



Ms. Sarah Kelleher was honored as "Teacher of the Year." The award is presented to the faculty member recognized by fellow teachers as exemplary in the education of students over the past year.



Pragmatic Elegance Class of '19 Gifts School with Alumni Porch

Leave it to Kennedy Catholic to gentrify its loading dock.

The latest capital improvement at the school was to hit that dirt hill that lay between the dock and the window looking out from the Faculty Lounge, and convert it into an exterior event space.

"The Student Council and I were meeting in the conference room brainstorming ideas for what the class gift could possibly be," Kennedy Director of Advancement Fred Compton said. "While we were looking out the windows at this undeveloped area, one of the students suggested, 'Why don't we put a little barbecue, a fire pit, outside and we can have our meetings out there,' half as a joke."

Nobody laughed, and the Student Council set about developing that area into what is now known as the Alumni Porch.

The new outdoor lounge and event space is dripping with pragmatic elegance. The beautiful benches that line its perimeter are strategically placed to minimize the risk of party-goers accidentally pitching themselves into the dumpsters below. And its proximity to the Faculty Lounge means that Kennedy teachers will be able to easily take advantage of it to dine al fresco during the day.

Compton estimates the new space's size to be about 250 square feet. It will accommodate 50 to 75 people comfortably, and a little bit more if you were going for that rush-hour subway car look.

The class raised \$16,400, after expenses, and construction on the porch began in early spring of 2019. The build got sidetracked with an especially rainy few months, and the last slab was dropped in mid-July, Compton said.

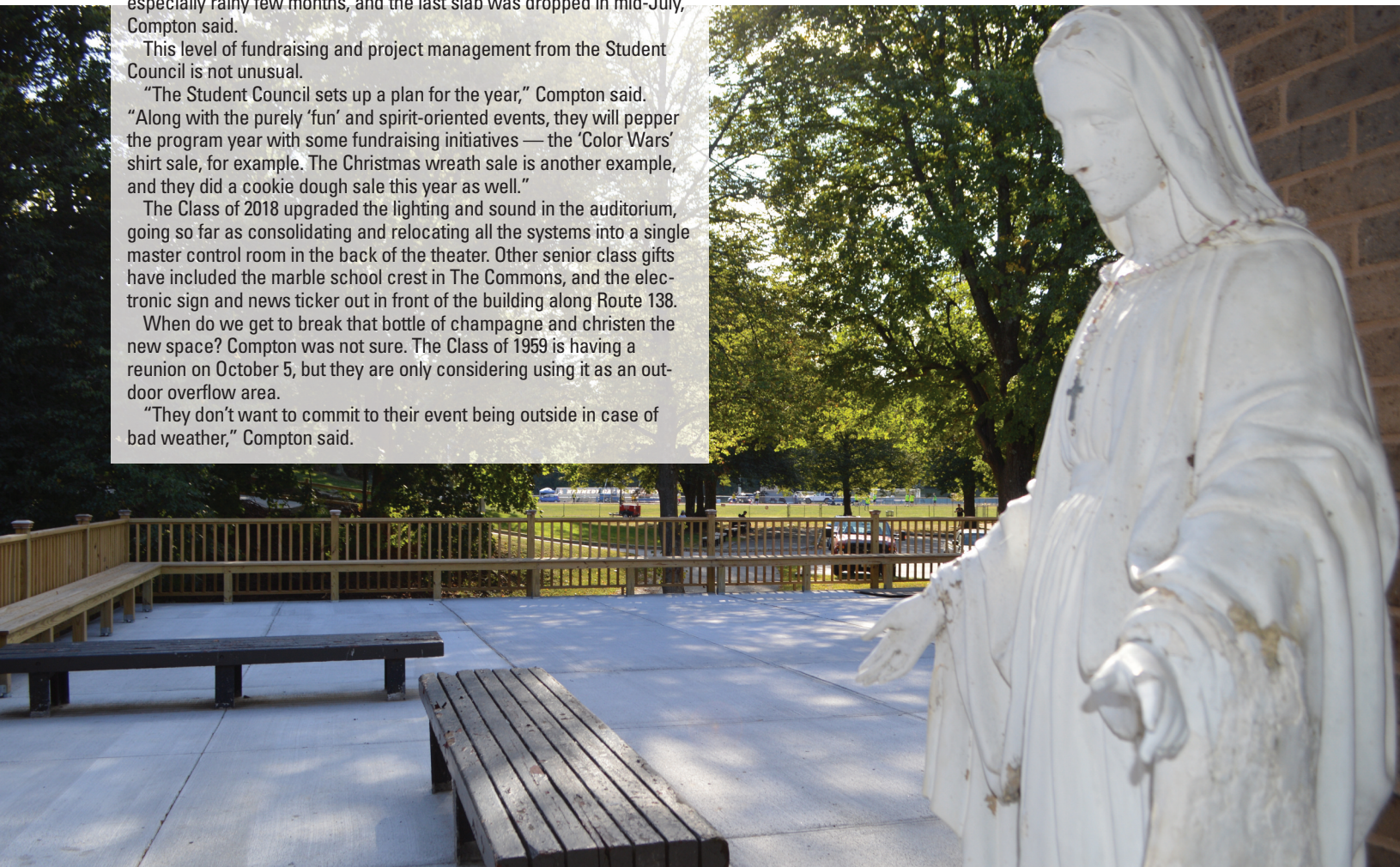
This level of fundraising and project management from the Student Council is not unusual.

"The Student Council sets up a plan for the year," Compton said. "Along with the purely 'fun' and spirit-oriented events, they will pepper the program year with some fundraising initiatives — the 'Color Wars' shirt sale, for example. The Christmas wreath sale is another example, and they did a cookie dough sale this year as well."

The Class of 2018 upgraded the lighting and sound in the auditorium, going so far as consolidating and relocating all the systems into a single master control room in the back of the theater. Other senior class gifts have included the marble school crest in The Commons, and the electronic sign and news ticker out in front of the building along Route 138.

When do we get to break that bottle of champagne and christen the new space? Compton was not sure. The Class of 1959 is having a reunion on October 5, but they are only considering using it as an outdoor overflow area.

"They don't want to commit to their event being outside in case of bad weather," Compton said.



QUEEN OF ALL MEDIA

Kennedy Names New Communications Director

The path of Kennedy alumna Noelle Torre has twisted back, as these paths often do, to her alma mater in Somers, NY. She has just taken a position as the school's director of communications. Torre graduated Kennedy in 2014 and went on to study English and philosophy at Union College in Schenectady, New York. While there, she was the assistant administrator of, and a tutor for, the Writing Center, a resource that offered writing help to students campus-wide.

Back here at Kennedy, in addition to serving as the school's contact point for all the local and national press and getting the word out through press releases and social media, Torre will be guiding students through the modern media maze as well.

"My goal for Kennedy news is that students find their voices, become better communicators, and are more prepared for the rigors of collegiate writing and speaking," Torre said. "Granting students access to multiple media platforms is imperative to the development of their writing and speaking skills."

One of those media platforms that figures prominently in Torre's strategy is video. She plans on giving students greater access to the school's television studio, a tremendous resource that does not get to see much daylight beyond in-house network broadcasts of the morning Kennedy Live program. She aims to editorially link the daily video news show, Facebook/Twitter/Instagram and the school newspaper into a single media empire.

"Integrating social media, Kennedy Live, and Gael Winds will not only help to broadcast the wonderful things our students are doing, but it will show them how seemingly separate ideas and disciplines interact and expand one another," Torre said. "Students will see how social media can be used to announce news, video to create an interesting presentation, and journalism to explore the story thoroughly."

Torre says that Kennedy principal and president Fr.

Vaillancourt has been a huge advocate of weaving video more tightly into all the school's communications efforts, advising her that "people connect with people better" through that medium.

"The use of video naturally slows the process of sharing ideas or news, demands a greater deal of thought, and improves the quality of the message being conveyed," Torre

said. "By increasing our use of video in telling Kennedy students' stories, we will make Kennedy news more exciting and help students become more well-rounded thinkers."

...and all that's the easy part. Running communications for an outfit like Kennedy gets tricky when you are tasked with conveying the spiritual aspects of student life.

"Kennedy creates its own unique community by gathering students from different areas, backgrounds, and strengths, and uniting them in not only faith but pride," Torre said. "Kennedy students have a distinctive identity that introduces them to a very similar culture they will find at college. They choose to gather out of their hometowns to study, compete, and explore their interests, they make friends with students from different places, who have different perspectives, experiences,

and hobbies, and form one body, one Kennedy Catholic."

You can keep up to date with Noelle's new bag, and all the other news at Kennedy, by following



Twitter: @kennedygaels

Facebook: @kennedycatholic

Instagram: @kennedycatholic

Youtube.com/KennedyCatholic1967

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Nov. 8, 9 & 10

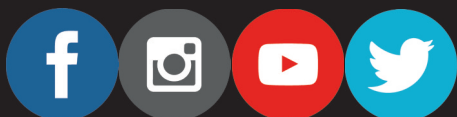
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