

KENNEDY CATHOLIC ♦ SAINT MARY'S

THE GAEI

SPRING 2021 • VOLUME 32

How Kennedy Catholic And My Faith Prepared Me To Thrive During A Pandemic

*Inspirational
stories from
alumni, students
and staff*

Virginia Capellupo '20



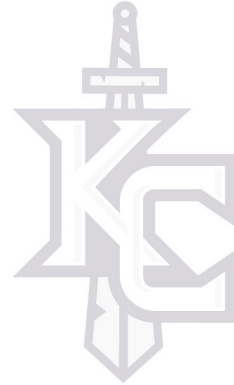
President's Message



Dear Friends of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School,

As always, we here at Kennedy Catholic take great pride in who we are, where we have been, and to where we are going. This year, however, has been extra special. We have survived COVID, weathered the pandemic and pressed forward with continuous in-person instruction for our students since we opened our doors in September. We especially honor the graduating Class of 2021 and all those who worked so hard to educate them during these unprecedented times – our dedicated faculty and staff! May God continue to bless them for their hard work and dedication to our school.

As you might know, our school began as the parish high school of St. Mary's in Katonah. It is with great fondness and joyful expectation that I will be returning to St. Mary's as its pastor while remaining the head of our wonderful school. Life is filled with challenges, and I am certainly looking forward to taking on this one. With this new assignment, St. Mary's and Kennedy Catholic are



reunited again after a half century of separation. Many thanks are also due to our health team, and all those who worked so hard to keep us safe. In this regard I am especially indebted to Mark Girolamo, Class of '71, whose leadership on the team was recognized at this year's President's Dinner with the bestowal of the prestigious Sr. Christopher's award. The whole team truly was a "Gael Force" for the health and safety of our school community.

So, congratulations once again to the Kennedy Catholic Class of 2021. With over 950 college and university acceptances nationwide and abroad, you truly are "strong and committed Christian leaders who are determined to make a difference for Christ in our world and in the lives of others."

As always, here at Kennedy Catholic, our Catholic faith is strong, our future is bright, and thanks to your support — the next generation of Gaels are ready to make their mark on the world!

Sincerely and gratefully yours in Christ,

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

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

Events at Kennedy Catholic

Golf Classic - September 30, 2021

Open House - Oct. 17 and 20, 2021

Auction - December 4, 2021

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UPDATE YOUR ALUMNI RECORDS

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How Kennedy Catholic Remained Open During a Pandemic

By Joshua Baker '20

T*This article was originally written in December 2020 for a class project for Northeastern University, and was printed in Catholic New York. Joshua thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated his years at KCPS, and after hearing from friends how successful Kennedy Catholic was in reopening during the pandemic, when most schools weren't, he wanted to learn more and share the news. "Writing this article was an extremely enjoyable experience. Having the opportunity to return to Kennedy and see how well everyone is doing was extremely gratifying, especially after my senior year was ended prematurely by the pandemic," Joshua said. Thank you to Joshua for updating this article for The Gael.*

Over the last year, COVID-19 has left the world in a state of disarray, fear, loss and uncertainty. As every facet of everyday life was forced to shut down or adapt in some way, it began to feel as if a return to normalcy would never be possible. How could we ever go back to school or socialize with our peers safely? At times, it felt like we'd be trapped inside forever. At some point, the idea of returning to normalcy became more and more of a fantasy, with the goal being to make the best of the situation at hand. Nine months into the pandemic, schools which had recently reopened were once again being faced with closures at alarming rates. Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, however, was still working like a well-oiled machine, and has delivered on its mission to keep its students in the school environment that they so greatly need and missed.

On March 13, Kennedy Catholic held in-person classes for the last time of the 2019-2020 school year. For the next three months, students finished out the third marking period and the entirety of the fourth in a completely virtual setting. While grades did not slip and measures to maintain academic integrity were implemented, there was clearly a gap between remote and in-person learning. Paul "P.J." Wu, a current senior and a member of this year's Student Council, shared that by staying home for so many months he realized the importance of an in-person education. For him, there are much less distractions [in the building] than there are at home and being able to interact with teachers and classmates makes the learning experience more interesting. The sentiment was echoed by Chairperson of the English Department Ms. Susan Willis, who looked forward to the day when all the students would be back in person. While three months of virtual learning worked from March to June of last year, it was clear that Kennedy Catholic needed to open its doors to students in September.

In order to successfully reopen, many measures needed to be put into place to ensure the safety of not only the Kennedy Catholic community, but the many communities that students come from. Students travel to Kennedy from 58 districts, which greatly increases the risk of a major spread of COVID-19 through the

school and then into multiple other counties. In the early months many argued if opening schools at all was a good idea. At Kennedy Catholic, the question wasn't whether to open or stay remote, it was how to open safely while still delivering an authentic educational experience.



As soon as the doors closed in March, President and Principal Father Mark Vaillancourt - with the help of Board of Directors member Mark Girolamo - enlisted a team of doctors, security advisors, health officials and engineers to ensure that students would be able to safely travel to Somers from those 58 districts and return to school. Mr. Girolamo, a graduate of the class of 1971, spearheaded the re-entry effort, and felt that in order to reopen successfully they needed "to reverse engineer a student's day at Kennedy Catholic...to make this a productive year." By understanding each and every facet of a typical student's day, these elements can be adapted under the influence of COVID-19.

Father Vaillancourt explained the committee adapted the school through changes made to the building. Screens are present all across the library dividing chairs and tables, desks are taken out of classrooms and replace cafeteria tables in the lunchrooms, and signs directing the flow of traffic can be found at every turn. Food is now served through a window in packages by attendants in masks and gloves. A new HVAC system is working constantly to purify the building's air, and a cleaning team works rigorously and constantly to sanitize the building. In the event of a COVID-19 scare, rooms have been sectioned off as quarantine zones. Anyone who enters the building is screened daily for symptoms, contact and a fever. The entire building has been altered to combat COVID-19, while also suiting the wants, needs and comforts of the students and teachers. The school has been rewired to combat the virus from a technical standpoint, however the human element has been vital to maintaining a safe environment and staying open.

In a school built around almost 700 students, it is important to get everyone on board with any initiative intended to be tackled on a large scale. Any plan laid out by the re-entry committee may

work on paper, but in order for it to be effective those within the building must follow along. Tom Foltin, a member of the re-entry team and Kennedy's head of security, noted that security has not had to enforce many COVID-19 restriction infractions at all and that "the general feeling here is to help one another, so when we put restrictions in place to protect everyone, the students stepped right up and took care of it." It is a testament to the culture of Kennedy Catholic, its sense of compassion, commitment and community.

The alterations made to the building and the commitment of the community have been key components of the continued success of Kennedy Catholic's reopening; however much is to be said of the staggered scheduling system that has been adopted. The "cohort" system separates the student body into two even collectives, the Sister Christopher and Sister Barbara cohorts, with each cohort coming to the building for five days at a time. This system has allowed for students to have a structured school week that involves a consistent in-person schedule. In the event that a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19, only half the school will be affected, and the other half will be able to resume normal in-person activities the following week that it is slated to be in person. When one cohort is in the building, the members of the other are following along with their class through the use of Canvas conferencing and Zoom. Thus, classes are able to continue at a typical pace, without having to reteach students who are off campus for a week. In fact, Father Vaillancourt disclosed that all curriculum goals are being met, including for the student population in China. Virtual learning has allowed these students to still participate in class and be active members of the Kennedy Catholic community while they await the ability to return to the United States. While the idea of not seeing half of your class and students is upsetting, the students and teachers have bought into the cohort system and so far it has worked.

This past year, all the athletic teams were able to return to the fields and courts. Athletic Director Dominick Tassone delved into the planning process that allowed for many athletes to play. Since April 2020, Athletic Directors and Principals all across the CHSAA have come together to lay out guidelines for safe and successful sports seasons. Coach Tassone noted that the student-athletes go through health screens and temperature checks in order to participate, and that throughout the year there was great success and cooperation enforcing this policy. "Parents, student-athletes, coaches and staff all bought in and together we made it through a full school year," he said. Not only were teams able to return to play, they picked up right where they left off, with the Boys Varsity Soccer Team winning its third consecutive CHSAA Class A Championship. In comparison to other schools, Kennedy has been able to offer not only the opportunity to play, but the opportunity to return to a semblance of normalcy while still performing



at a high level. Kennedy Catholic athletics has taken its on-the-field persistence and used it to overcome COVID-19 due to the hard work of the school, Athletic Director, Principal, coaches and players.

Another key extracurricular event at Kennedy Catholic is the annual auction, a chief fundraising event that takes place within the school every winter. This year, Director of Advancement and Alumni Affairs and Head Auction Coordinator Fred Compton had to get creative in order to host what has become the school's most prolific event. Instead of cancelling, the event was turned into an online event where participants were able to look at the same items and bid on them remotely; the successful auction raised \$26,000 for the school.

Mr. Compton also works closely with the Student Council, who planned and hosted modified events such as the Powder Puff touch football game and a Spirit Week that works in unison with the cohort system. He makes it known that while the path laid out for the Student Council - and the student body as a whole - is not an easy one, they approached it with rigor, focus and determination. Even with all the successful planning, Mr. Compton is adamant that the continued success of the school's reopening is due to the families and students who have taken things seriously, especially as countless other schools have been forced into virtual learning only. Other schools are not at fault because they've had to close, realistically it could be anyone, however much is to be said of the commitment of the Kennedy Catholic community to staying safe and remaining open.

Transitioning into a new school is never an easy process, however for the class of 2024 it comes in an unprecedented time. The entirety of the grade has yet to attend school together, and many of the introductory events have been completely altered in order to follow COVID-19 guidelines. Thus, it has fallen on teachers and older students to look out for new students like never before. Brian Bruder has been the Director of Admissions at KCPS for the last seven years, as well as a freshman history teacher. In discussing how his job serving freshmen has changed, Mr. Bruder explained that video conference apps such as Zoom and Canvas conferencing have been used by teachers to bridge the gap between those in the building and those at home. The new-look cafeteria has also been set up to abide by COVID-19 guidelines while still maintaining a safe and distanced environment through the use of desks instead of round tables. Sports have allowed for freshmen to

branch out; however the next step Mr. Bruder wishes to take is the restarting of clubs in whatever capacity possible. Thankfully, feedback from freshmen and their parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Things are challenging for everyone in all different ways; however, Kennedy Catholic has provided avenues and resources so that people can overcome these challenges. Whether it be academic, athletic or socially, COVID-19 will not hinder the Kennedy individual.

On the other end lies the seniors, who had to make their college decisions during the pandemic. From Father Vaillancourt's perspective, what has most driven Kennedy Catholic's transition from high school to preparatory school - along with faith - is a "homegrown type of recipe" that has

that forward thinking vision is applied from day one of freshman year onwards, and the current pandemic has served as a reason to adapt and improve communication more than it has served as a roadblock.

Word on Kennedy Catholic's success had already spread only a quarter way into the school year. Not only did registration jump with the announcement of the transition to a preparatory school, but Registrar Mr. Chico Generoso has in fact seen an uptick in transfer applications since the beginning of the school year. Not many other schools have had the type of authentic in-person experience that Kennedy Catholic offers and thus students yearning for a return to normalcy are flocking to the school. It is an ultimate testament to the suc-



elevated KCPS students within the college circuit. This formula owes much to previous college counselors Christine Gerrity and Meaghan Carnevala and to new Director of College Placement Kyle MacDonald, who has been put in an unprecedented position in his first year at Kennedy. Mr. MacDonald noted the difficulties facing this year's seniors, who were mostly unable to go on real college visits and have had to engage with prospective universities almost entirely virtually. He has worked with Kennedy Catholic's tech department to ensure that every student has access to any resources they need in order to undergo their college process online. With the new distinction as a preparatory school, Mr. MacDonald explained that they are focused on "building a student body that is future-looking while staying active in the present;" he follows with the sentiment that the students that step foot within this building have the aspirations and ability to impact the world. As a preparatory school,

cess of the re-entry plan and its implementation that not only is the school running smoothly, but it is exceeding most other schools at such a rate that people chose to transfer during such a difficult time.

With all of these precautions, Kennedy Catholic was able to successfully manage any minimal COVID-19 spread. This level of success insofar - and continued safety going forward - is near irreplicable and a testament to the hard work being done to maintain a top tier education accompanied by an authentic experience. The evolution from high school to preparatory school could not have come at a better time, as Kennedy has taken this moment and proven its worth. In the wake of their successful reopening and reinvention, the school has taken its place in the elite educational company within New York State by gifting its students with not just a normal education, but with a high quality one that is built upon a winning formula.

VIRGINIA CAPELLUPO

Kennedy Catholic and My Faith Prepared Me To Thrive at College During a Pandemic

The Class of 2020 faced an unprecedented event: concluding their senior year during a pandemic that affected them in every way possible. They then had to face the unknowns of attending college during unusual, and scary, times. Virginia "Ginny" Capellupo '20 shares how Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, and her faith, helped her succeed during a very unique freshman year at Northeastern University, where she is double-majoring in criminology and psychology with a minor in neuroscience.

Virginia Capellupo, who goes by Ginny, was one of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School's seniors who abruptly saw their routines and lives change when COVID-19 began its nefarious spread in the country in March 2020. Faced with school suddenly switching to all remote learning, and the pause or endings of activities she enjoyed as well as the loss of daily contact with beloved classmates and teachers, Ginny also had to continue with her college selection journey wondering if she could even attend in person in the Fall of 2020.

Ginny credits her faith and education and experiences at KCPS as reasons why she was able to remain positive and go on to have a successful freshman year at Northeastern University during unusual circumstances. "Throughout my four years at Kennedy Catholic, the faculty and student body greatly enhanced my academic and social abilities for my future educational endeavors, as well as my self-confidence," Ginny said. "In middle

school, I knew I needed something different, and as soon as I visited Kennedy Catholic I felt it was somewhere I could plant my roots and build upon my foundation of faith and education, and I was right," she added.

"During our Spring semester, when the pandemic started, Kennedy Catholic worked tirelessly to provide the necessary education and faithful counseling while recognizing students' struggles through the change in our normalcy," Ginny said. Kennedy Catholic was able to pivot quickly and successfully to virtual learning daily as the school already had used on-line learning during bad weather days, and teachers were already skilled at providing an engaging online experience for students. "The teachers love to talk to the students and make their lessons lively, so during the pandemic this helped keep our special connections and helped us not to feel alone, that we were still unified," she said. "KCPS' integration of the virtual Canvas learning management system to post homework, as well as holding classes virtually, showcases Kennedy's familiarity with ever-changing technological evolutions present in colleges like mine," Ginny added.

To keep the school community engaged in faith, Father Vaillancourt began daily emails to the students about the feast day of a particular saint, which also helped them feel connected spiritually. Ginny found that her commitment to practice her faith was even more important during this time.

"During the entire pandemic, my mom always emphasized us going to Church as much as possible, and attending Mass provided a calming sense of normalcy that helped me get through the craziness," Ginny said.

As a Student Council member, she and her Council peers were able to help keep their fellow students unified by holding Zoom calls to discuss ways to make the best of their last few months of senior year and discuss what challenges they were all facing together. And the Guidance Department still worked with each student to help them with the college search and application process, providing Ginny

with the advice and information she needed.

Pre-pandemic, Ginny credits Kennedy Catholic's offering of advanced placement classes — paired with "amazing" teachers — for preparing her for the workload, responsibilities and time management skills crucial for college. Ginny also recognizes the important things provided to her at KCPS besides academics and technology advancements that helped her prepare for college, with or without a pandemic to deal with. "Each staff member provided me the courage and support to begin new chapters in my life without an anxiety-filled cloud hanging over my head. Specifically, I was provided the beautiful opportunities to speak as a panelist at the Archdiocesan Catholic Lens Event as well as the prayerful Invocation Speaker at graduation to explain my application of faith in my daily life. Although I battled with immense public speaking anxiety, people such as Father Vaillancourt, Ms. Meaghan Carnevalla, Mr. Fred Compton, Ms. Elizabeth Turner and Ms. Noelle Torre helped me realize my own potential for leaving my mark on the world," she said.

Some of Ginny's fondest memories include visiting staff and teacher offices after school to discuss goals and receive life advice, which ended up helping her even more while attending college in a pandemic. She also believes that she learned how to form stable relationships with peers, to properly allot her time between work and fun, and most importantly to trust in her faith to bring her happiness. "Kennedy Catholic gave me some of the best memories and lessons of my life," Ginny noted. "Usually nothing is ever perfect, especially when there is a pandemic involved, but as I learned from Kennedy Catholic, with God anything is possible."





KCPS Robotics Team

Are State Robotics Champs!

Repeatability is a robotics term that means how consistently the robot does the same thing over and over. High repeatability can mean it is working great, just like the Kennedy Catholic Gaels Robotics Team repeatedly performed well in competitions this school year.

Case in point, the Kennedy Catholic Gaels Robotics Team are the VEX Southern New York State Robotics Champions! The Gaels paired up with a Harvey School team and together competed against six teams in eight matches in a live-remote competition and won 154-141 over two other paired schools. The Gaels were the top-ranked squad at the event, and just before the finals asked the #4 Harvey team to join them for the rest of the competition as the two teams have worked together in the past. This win earned each a spot at the Vex World Robotics Championships, where the Gaels advanced to the quarterfinals but lost by only one point.

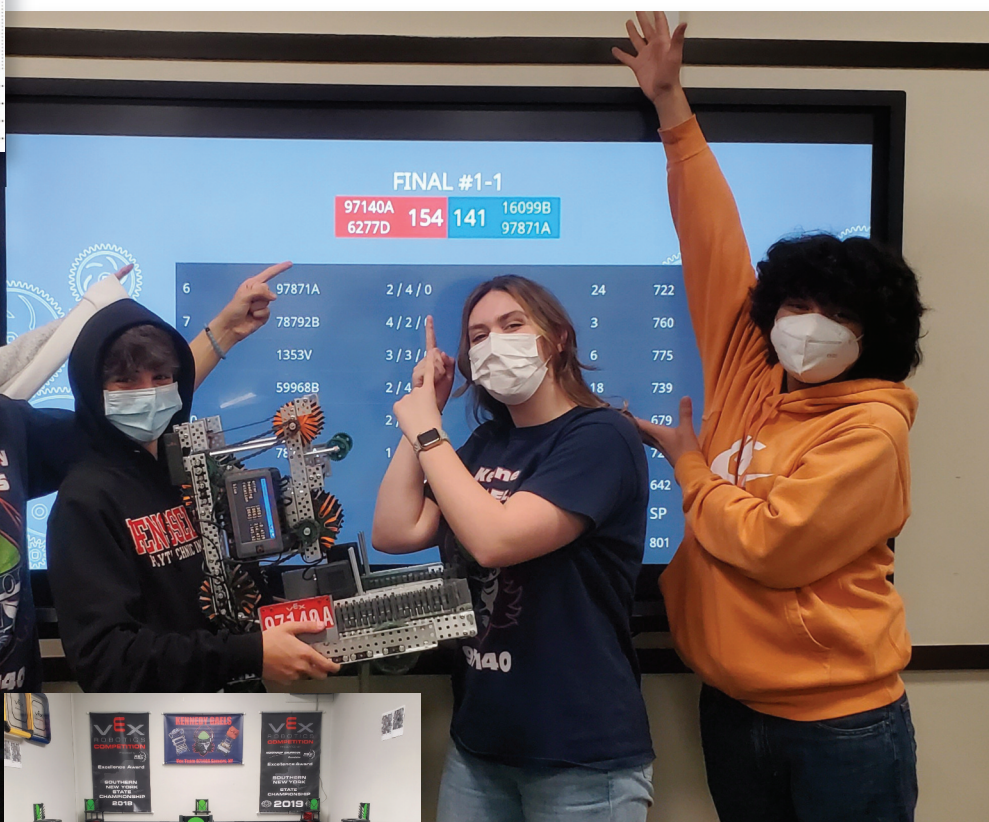
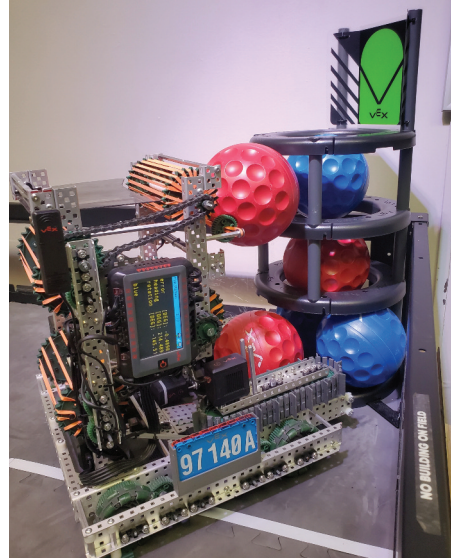
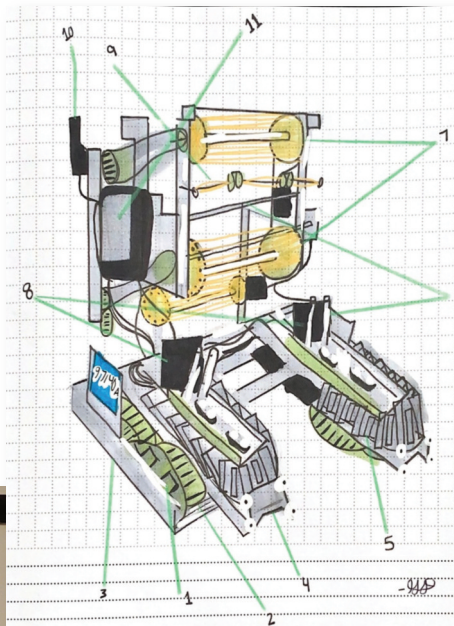
The small Kennedy Catholic team of five, including senior Grace Dillon, sophomores Bart Casabona and Gabriel Hidalgo and freshmen Matthew Achim and Andres Silva, met most Saturdays for six-hour stretches and some days after school in KCPS' Robotics Room to build and program their robot and practice. Father

Vaillancourt set up this special room for them, having a platform built with a 12' x 12' square field for practice and competitions and a workshop with tools that allows the team to build their robot.

The students had to code/program the robot to move autonomously for 15 seconds and then they have a minute and 45 seconds to drive the robot and place balls in goals and connect rows, hoping to earn more points than the other alliance (it's two robots vs. two robots) in a competition.

"We are so grateful to Father Vaillancourt and Miss Antonia Jenkins for their support. The experience for the students is invaluable; not only does this help advance their STEM education, they learn how to problem solve, be creative, work together, grow leadership skills and so much more," said Robotics Team Coach Jennifer Achim. She noted that the team participates in the Vex Robotics Competitions, presented by the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation, with more than 15,000 teams from 50 countries.

This year all of the tournaments were virtual, allowing the team to compete in more than 25 competitions (compared to a normal season of about 6 or 7) with teams from all over the world. They won 15 awards including the Excellence Award



twice (the highest award a team can win) this season. "The team is successful because they are passionate about robotics and the competition, similar to the way a sports team is successful – they share ideas, work together, rely on each other – everyone has a job (or many jobs)," said Coach Achim. "They make iterations to their robot continuously to meet the challenge, they persevere (it can be frustrating when your robot program doesn't do what you think you programmed it to do), they focus on the goal and at the same time they are having fun," she added.

The Kennedy Robotics Team has been very successful in the past, qualifying and participating in the World Championship four times in the last five years, winning the highest award at the Southern New York State Championship three times and winning 45+ awards in the past five seasons.

Mrs. Achim volunteers to mentor and coach the Robotics Team

with her husband Andrei, who has a Master's degree in aerospace engineering and works in the technology field. "We have been involved with the team for the past five years and became the coaches three years ago. Our oldest son, Christian '20, went to Kennedy Catholic and was the programmer and driver for the team for four years. There is no doubt that attending Kennedy Catholic and being successful on the robotics team helped him earn a large scholarship at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where he now attends," Coach Achim said. Their youngest son Matthew, '24, who competed in robotics since he was in middle school, is now on the Kennedy team.

Honors, Awards and Other Notables

Father Vaillancourt Appointed Censor Librorum By Cardinal Dolan

President/Principal Father Mark G. Vaillancourt, Ph.D. will share his sagacity and vast knowledge of our faith to benefit the entire Catholic community by serving as a censor librorum, an ecclesiastical authority appointed by Cardinal Dolan to review and evaluate theological texts for “accurate expressions of Church teaching.”

Canon law states that the censor librorum is charged with reviewing texts such as prayer books and catechetical textbooks for doctrinal accuracy and can offer the declaration of nihil obstat, meaning that nothing stands in the way of the work being published. Father Vaillancourt is one of four censors librorum appointed by Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, in March 2021.

In his appointment letter, Cardinal Dolan wrote that “This favorable declaration (nihil obstat) is given by an individual who has the knowledge, orthodoxy and prudence necessary for passing moral judgment on a publication.” In this role, the censor librorum is of special assistance to the Archbishop, who gives his imprimatur, the call to proceed to print, based on the advice of the censor librorum.

“I am truly humbled by the appointment by His Eminence and see it as an opportunity to serve the Church. Ours is a teaching church and orthodoxy is at the heart of sound doctrine,” said Father Vaillancourt. “Orthopraxy or ‘right practice’ in the Christian way of life is built on orthodoxy or ‘right teaching.’ I believe that in order for us to live in a way that is pleasing to Christ we need to know what He taught. That teaching is what comes to us through the Church’s magisterium, and what a censor librorum serves,” Father Vaillancourt explained.



2021 President's Dinner

Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School was grateful to honor those who are true examples of Christian Service and testaments to the values of Catholic Education at its 2021 President's Dinner. Those celebrated at the event on June 3 at the Villa Barone Hilltop Manor were:

- Mark Girolamo '71, Sr. Christopher President's Award for his leadership on the KCPS health team and dedication to keeping students and staff healthy and safe during the pandemic.
- Dr. Michael A. Alfultis, Lux Christi Award for his dedication to Catholic education and continuing contributions to Kennedy Catholic.



Dr. Alfultis is the President of Maritime College - SUNY.

- Ms. Virginia Vettoretti P'11, '14, Divine Compassion Award for her dedication to Christian Service and Kennedy Catholic.
- Mrs. Arlene O'Rourke, Teacher of the Year, who was chosen by her fellow teachers as exemplary in the education of students during the past year. Mrs. O'Rourke began teaching math at KCPS in 2008, and



is Chairperson of the Math Department.

- Students of Excellence, presented to members of the Class of 2021 who best represent the qualities of courage, compassion, service and academic accomplishment while attending KCPS: Juliana Balzano, McKayla Boyd, Anna Brown, Elly Carpenter, Grace Dillon, Dylan Flynn, Sophia Frantzeskos, Robert Havner, Brendan Herbstritt, Luciano Hoinkis, Jillian Jones, Jinseo Lee, Maggie Mahoney, Abigail Mascia, Lynn Mendez, Clare Noone, Thomas Nunziato,



Michael Oddo, Larry Padilla, Jessica Petruccio, Michael Piotrowski, Thomas Raynor, Caroline Rowland, Brendan Sullivan, Tabitha Tatusko, Grace Terceira and Paul Wu.

Thank you and congratulations to our honorees for their never-ending faith and support of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, and to our students who exemplify all the best that a Kennedy Catholic Gael can be!

Jinseo Lee was named a Finalist in the The National Merit® Scholarship Program, conducted by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, an annual academic competition for recognition and college undergraduate scholarships. He was also named a National Merit Commended Student, as were **Luciano Hoinkis**, **Maggie Mahoney** and **Brendan Sullivan**. Additionally, **Jinseo**, **Luciano**, **Dylan Flynn** and **Brendan Sullivan** received the National Merit Rural and Small Town Award for their high scores on the PSATs.



Over 1.5 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®).

The goal is to identify and honor academically talented U.S. high school students and encourage them to pursue rigorous college studies. The nationwide pool of Finalists represent less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors and are the highest-scoring students in each state; only about 34,000 students are named Commended Students for their high SAT Scores.



Lynn Mendez '21 earned a full scholarship to Vassar College after she was accepted to become a QuestBridge College Prep Scholar. She received one of only 17 QuestBridge National College Match Scholarships from Vassar through the non-profit program which aids exceptional high school juniors from low-income backgrounds in their goal to attend top colleges and universities. Over 18,500 students apply for scholarships through the QuestBridge program; only 1,464 finalists are recognized as Match Scholarship Recipients.

Seniors **Brendan Sullivan** and **Maggie Mahoney** were appointed to attend the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Maggie was also appointed to the United States Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs, Colorado. Maggie will attend the Naval Academy in the Fall and Brendan decided to attend Georgia Institute of Technology.

Jinseo Lee and **Maggie Mahoney** received the St. Michael's College Book Award, an international award that recognizes students' academic success and exemplary community service involvement.



Senior Michael Oddo experienced several special honors and opportunities this year. He received the Yale Book Award, which is presented annually to outstanding high school students for their "character, leadership, scholarship and intellectual promise." His writing talents allowed him to place as a second-round finalist in the National JFK Library Foundation's Profile in Courage Essay Contest.

Another unique accomplishment for Michael was the ability to present a TED Talk in front of a limited audience and to thousands of people around the world in a live-stream. His inspiration for the Talk "Leading With Courage and Compassion" took root during his research for the Profile in Courage Essay Contest. "I had begun reflecting on Kennedy Catholic's own mission statement on cultivating courage and compassion. Delving deep into the question of how to lead in the modern world, I discovered the importance of unconventional leadership and knew I wanted to share my analysis with others," Michael said. "I'm incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to share Kennedy Catholic's core values with others!" To view his TED Talk, go to <https://youtu.be/FsWdsEQr-OU>.

Michael will attend the University of Pennsylvania and study international relations and public policy this Fall. He said that interning for the New York State Attorney General's Office last summer inspired his passion for law and politics, and he hopes to pursue a career of public service. Michael also earned acceptances to Georgetown University, University of Notre Dame (Honors Program), University of Virginia and Villanova University.



CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2021

The Beginning and the End, Always a Gael

On June 12 the Class of 2021, thanks to the Grace of God, the support of their teachers and parents and their hard work and perseverance in challenging times, triumphantly graduated together in person. It was a beginning, and an end, for these valiant Gaels. The day marked the beginning of new adventures and soon-to-be accomplishments. The graduates also celebrated and ended their physical journey at KCPS, although spiritually and emotionally we will always be connected.

The ceremony was held at St. Joseph's Church in Somers, NY, and speakers included Valedictorian Luciano Hoinkis, Salutatorian Maggie Mahoney and Invocation Speaker Michael Oddo.

Congratulations to the 170 seniors who are now valued alumni! Remember to always remain courageous and compassionate, and that you are forever a Kennedy Catholic Gael!





College Admissions for the Class of 2021

Despite unplanned interruptions, cancellations of SAT and ACT dates and increasing stress about what the “new normal” was, our seniors unwaveringly marched forward and received extra support from dedicated Kennedy Catholic staff to receive Accepted Early Status into prestigious higher-education institutions such as the University of Virginia, University of Notre Dame, Georgia Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Villanova University, Vassar College, Fordham University and Purdue University College of Engineering. The addition of Mr. Kyle MacDonald to lead the Kennedy Catholic College Placement Services also allowed us to break new ground in college admissions. And our seniors’ combined median SAT math and reading score of 1224 places us at number 9 out of 51 Westchester school districts!

Some of the Colleges & Universities Seniors Were Accepted To:

Babson College
Binghamton University
Boston College
Boston University
Bucknell University
Emerson College
Georgetown University
Georgia Institute of Technology
McGill University
Northeastern University
Purdue University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Syracuse University
United States Air Force Academy
United States Naval Academy
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Miami
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
University of Notre Dame
University of Pennsylvania
University of Rochester
University of Toronto
University of Virginia
Vassar College
Villanova University



Class of 2021 By The Numbers:

Merit Aid Awards: \$35.7 million
Christian Community Service Hours:
3,202 hours since September 2019
Letters of Intent for NCCA: 9
Nat'l Merit Scholarship Finalists: 1
Members of National Honor Society: 38
Members of National Art Honor Society: 13

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Once a Gael, Always a Gael! Kennedy Catholic Prep School is proud of our alumni and all they accomplish. We would love to hear from you! Please send us your updated contact information, a note about what you have been up to since graduation, and any good news you have to advancement@KennedyCatholic.org or call (914) 232-5061. Check out the special alumni page at www.KennedyCatholic.org/Alumni and keep up with us!

ALUMNI PROFILE:

Natalie Burke '13 Shares The Gospel With College Students

And He said to them, "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Mark 16:15

Kennedy Catholic Prep School's foundation in Catholic faith is deep and solid. Students are encouraged to practice their faith at daily morning masses and more, President/Principal Father Vaillancourt is a priest, and faith formation classes are mandatory all four years. Giving to others and compassion are important tenets, and the school strives to instill a deeper love of Christ and understanding of the faith. Many alumni have gone on to do the Lord's work, including Natalie Burke '13. Natalie's devotion to the Lord led her to become a Varsity Catholic Missionary at George Mason University.

"I graduated from Kennedy Catholic in 2013 with a solid Catholic formation due in large part to Kennedy and the integration of faith and academics that I received during my time as a student there. As I went to college to pursue a degree in Speech Pathology, I began the deeper quest into the meaning and purpose of my life. I was confronted with the world's wisdom on success and happiness and was ultimately left unsatisfied," Natalie said.

While she enjoyed her time as a student-athlete in college, pursuing excellence in sports, academics and faith, she still had a deep longing for more. "It wasn't until I began to search my Catholic faith that I discovered the answers to many of life's questions. I started going to daily Mass and began to uncover His desire for a personal relationship with me. Slowly, I began to experience a shift from my faith being just a part of my life to it being at the center. As I came to know God's love and mercy for me in greater ways, I became more and more convicted of the need to share this with others, especially those on a college campus," she explained.

After graduating with Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Marywood University and working for a year as a speech pathologist, Natalie felt the Lord calling her to "radically dedicate my life to Him by becoming a FOCUS missionary." The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) is a Catholic collegiate outreach whose mission is to share the hope and joy of the Gospel with students on campus. Through Bible studies, mentorship and outreach events, missionaries aim to embody the love and truth of Christ and the Catholic Church and to send out those whom they serve to reach others on campus. Varsity Catholic, a part of FOCUS, works to serve college athletes who are searching for Christ by mentoring athletes within their demanding schedules and teaching them to glorify God in their sports and daily lives.

"I believe reaching the future leaders while they're still in college will create a long-term impact on the culture and help renew our Catholic parishes. My life has been completely transformed by Jesus and I want nothing more than to bring this joy to others and introduce them to the life-changing message of the Gospel. I never could have imagined my life would be the way it is now and I am so grateful that He has led me here on this wild and profoundly joyful adventure," Natalie proclaimed.

For more information and support for Catholic college students and student-athletes, go to focus.org and varsitycatholic.org.



Natalie and her FOCUS team



Ciarra in one of her school's mascots "the Ramblin' Wreck."

ALUMNI CHECK-IN:

Ciarra Ortiz '19

Ciarra Ortiz '19 was awarded one of only 43 Patti Grace Smith Fellowships for Careers in Aerospace. The program provides internships, jobs, mentorship, cash grants and community for extraordinary Black undergrads seeking aerospace careers. Ciarra was part of the inaugural class and went through a rigorous three-round selection process in which each candidate was thoroughly vetted by aerospace industry professionals and corporate employers.

What are you doing after graduating Kennedy Catholic?

I attend the Georgia Institute of Technology, majoring in Biomedical Engineering with a minor in Aerospace Engineering.

Why did you choose this path?

My passion for biomedical engineering comes from my respect for prosthetics and different medical devices that often save so many lives. My love for space exploration comes from Sci-Fi shows like Star Trek and The Expanse because I was always curious about what was beyond Earth. I never knew how I could combine the two to create the perfect career for myself until I saw unique medical advancements on The Expanse that helped them survive in the cold unknown. Despite the far-fetched basis of the show, my father told me that I could do something like that, help astronauts survive in space. This was a driving force for me making this life-changing decision to work towards a future with more humans in space.

What are your ultimate career plans?

After graduating with my Bachelor's degree I would love to work towards obtaining my Ph.D. with a concentration in Bioastronautics. Long term, I would love to work with spacesuit development or life support systems at a space exploration company. I will see where my degree will take me!

Any advice for current KCPS students?

Do well in school, and look for outside opportunities, camps or programs at different institutions to help facilitate your passions!

The Fine Arts Are Alive and Well at KCPS

Nothing can stop people from being creative, and at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School students were provided with creative instruction and outlets even during a unique school year. From displaying original artwork, to presenting a musical and live band and choral performances, students shared their talents and creative passions with the community. "We believe in live performances so that students can get the feedback and joy of performing they need after working so hard all year," said Mrs. Ines Wilhelm-Boston, Fine Arts Department Chair.

Luckily, the Spring Musical 2020 "Young Frankenstein" was performed in front of live audiences just a week before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the school to go virtual. Reviews were fantastic and everyone was especially grateful for such a wonderful opportunity, especially considering what was to come.

More than a year later and well into having to conform to pandemic safety regulations, and thanks to the efforts and dedication of Director/Choreographer Barbara Rue and President/Principal Father Vaillancourt, the Kennedy Players were able to stage "Legally Blonde" live for participants, families and a limited number of members of the Kennedy Community.

The Spring Recital 2021 for the performing arts at KCPS, including band, string ensemble and chorus, highlighted the musical development journey for juniors and seniors by allowing them to perform their favorite pieces for the allowed-for 100 member audience. The musicians and singers were able to practice in small groups in class and on Zoom, honing their skills and preparing them to perform together at the recital.

"During the year, music and art teachers were able to focus a lot more on music theory and music and art history; this was a bit of a gift, as we often don't have the time to teach this information as in-depth as we would like," said Mrs. Wilhelm-Boston.

As the local hills were alive with music, the halls were awash with colorful and original art showing the students' efforts. On display were paintings, drawings, block prints and all kinds of creative art for the KCPS community to enjoy.

"Thanks to the faith and dedication of our staff, volunteers, students and so many more, Kennedy Catholic provided all the usual opportunities to our students, and we are planning for so much more

in the 2021-22 school year," Mrs. Wilhelm-Boston noted.



One of God's greatest gifts is the gift of song. Sharing this gift is a real blessing, and a lot of fun too. Gianni Bove '23 was able to share his special musical gifts by performing on the NBC Today Show with Hoda and Jenna's segment Tomorrow's Talents Today. After sharing his backstory and interviewing him virtually, Gianni sang and played piano for his original composition "Holding Back My Tears" for a national audience on the August 20 show.

Gianni got his lucky break when a friend of his late grandfather saw him performing an original song online and enjoyed it so much he shared it with his daughter, an executive producer for NBC Today. He was then invited to perform for the program and share his talents with the world. As you will see in the video clip, Hoda could not say enough about Gianni's talent. Hear Gianni's story and amazing talents by going to <https://www.today.com/video/incredible-15-year-old-singer-makes-national-tv-debut-on-hoda-and-jenna-90366533884>





Ralph Waldo Emerson once said that "Every artist was first an amateur." KCPS believes in encouraging budding student-artists to explore their creativity and develop their artistic skills. We are proud to share their art with the world whenever possible. Happily, 14 talented student-artists were able to let their talents and skills shine when they were invited to display their original work at the Garrison Art Center's SITE exhibition in March. SITE, the School Invitation Theme Exhibition, is a school-based program that supports student artistic confidence by encouraging teachers to engage students in theme-based art projects for exhibition at the Riverside Galleries at the Garrison Art Center.

This year's exhibition was called "Let's Get Elemental!" and invited student artists to explore the seven most common elements of art: line, shape, texture, form, space, color and value. KCPS is proud of our student-artists whose work was displayed: Briana Araujo, Nicole Benros, Samantha Falco, Maia Forssman, Dan Caracappa, Valeria Acierno, Sophia Frantzeskos, Grace Dillon, Julia Apap, Maggie Gordineer, Gabriela Beyrer, Jinseo Lee, Skye McGovern and Elissa Romero.



Boys Soccer Wins CHSAA Class A Title...Again

For the third consecutive year of play, the Kennedy Catholic Gaels won the CHSAA Class A boys soccer championship title! Perhaps divine intervention had a hand in it as they say a special, original prayer before each game, but no doubt the boys learned from their mistakes as the team started their season with two losses to Monsignor McClancy Memorial High School only to defeat them in the championship game in overtime 3-1 in penalty kicks. Overall the Gaels kicked their way to a 9-3 season.

"The championship game began at a hectic pace and had all the excitement of a big game. It was a very physical, fast and exhilarating game. Both teams created chances and had offensive forays into each other's attacking third, and both keepers were on point making saves," said Coach Desmond Morris. This is Coach Morris' first season coaching soccer at KCPS; he has coached soccer for 16 years, most recently working with the LA Galaxy and LA Wolves.

After losing their first game to McClancy, they won four games scoring 21 goals and conceding only seven, five of those lost in a second match against McClancy. "The Gaels were not undaunted -- the true leadership, camaraderie, bond and team chemistry were exemplified for the next five games," said Coach Morris. He noted that the three captains, Brian Kazinduka, Brendan Liddy and Liam Mulholland "displayed their leadership on and off the field."

Determined to get back on their winning streak, the boys let loose their talents and won their last five games, including defeating St. John's High School to go up again against McClancy in the championship match. "We were well prepared for the game tactically, mentally and physically and we put a plan in place to negate McClancy's strengths," said Coach Morris.

"It was a cold night at Randall's Island, too cold to go home with a loss. Our main focus was to not be scored on first. The ultimate goal and plan was to end up in penalties. Our team had prepared for it, we practiced our penalty-taking every practice during our preparations to the final," Coach Morris explained about the strategy.

The first half ended with McClancy 1 vs. KCPS 0; in the second half the team was on a mission to pull one back and they did just that in about 17 minutes into the second half. "We then made the tactical adjustments to play the low press and a 4-5-1 formation with Brian Tolan as the lone striker. Our focus defensively was to deny penetration, stop the play, frustrate the opposition, don't chase balls, and take the ball into the corners to waste time," he noted.

The excitement continued into double overtime and Luke Gerstner had to come up with some big saves. When the whistle blew at the end of the second five-minute overtime, the score was still 1-1. That meant penalty shots would determine the end of this exciting match. "Just as I had predicted, the other team was not as mentally ready/prepared for penalty opportunities as we were. The Gaels had been training for this, especially Luke Gerstner, our stalwart 'Guardian of the Nets.' Per the

Penalty Shootout in the final, Eduardo Tinoco and Liam Mulholland were still 'on deck' to kick their penalties," Coach Morris explained.

In the Penalty Shootout, Luke Gerstner had two saves, McClancy scored once, and Gaels Brendan Liddy, PJ Wu and Paul Duggan all kicked to score and ended the game in Kennedy Catholic's favor 3-1 in penalty kicks. During the whole season, the boys soccer team scored 34 goals and conceded only 12.

"All of our players elevated their game and contributed to the overall success of the team. A few players went over and beyond and had an exceptionally consistent high standard of play, including Senior Captains Brian Kazinduka, Brendan Liddy and Liam Mulholland, as well as Paul Duggan, Luke Gerstner, Aidan Kelly, Jack McInemy, Andrew Rivera, Eduardo Tinoco, Brian Tolan and PJ Wu," noted Coach Morris. "The team was also successful thanks to help from Carolina Dominguez, AD Tassone and parents Kim Mulholland and Kathleen Liddy; we truly appreciate them."

While the team loses ten amazing seniors next season, Coach Morris has high hopes for all those players coming up and looks forward to seeing what the Gaels can do next.





Feeling Grateful and Blessed to Play

Just as Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School was able to get students back into the building this year, the school was able to get student-athletes back on the fields and courts. This was through no small efforts; President/Principal Father Vaillancourt, Athletic Director Dominick Tassone and all of the coaches had to constantly review State and CDC safety guidelines and regulations, adjust accordingly and gauge the safety for the student-athletes on a daily basis.

Even as the pandemic closed many events down, Kennedy Catholic student-athletes were able to practice together and play outside teams, either in regular season or modified competition.

Football was a double win, as Kennedy Catholic provided more football to their student-athletes than any other school in New York State. In the Fall, the team competed in a 7 on 7 season, and the team also had a full Spring schedule. In fact, Kennedy Catholic Preparatory



School was the first varsity football program in the NY archdiocese to compete in a 2021 game and defeated St. Dominic High School of Oyster Bay 34-0 on March 12. Senior quarterback Clayton Proctor was quoted in an article in Catholic New York as saying that "It was really exciting to get out there. It meant a lot to us." (See article at www.cny.org/stories/high-school-athletes-safely-returning-to-action.)

The other highlight of the season for the team led by coach and Athletic Director Dominick Tassone was their David vs. Goliath effort against powerhouse Long Island's Kellenberg Memorial High School. The team was tied into the fourth quarter but ended the game with a 48-34 loss. "Kellenberg had 75 varsity players while we had 18 varsity players and 22 JV players -- we gave the Firebirds all that they could handle and didn't make the win easy," said AD Tassone. The Gaels were led by seniors James Brown, Louis Cardillo, Brendan Liddy, Liam Mulholland, Thomas Nunziato, Ikenna Ononaji, Clayton Proctor and Aidan Tobin and had a great season.

- Four players will go on to play college football: Clayton Proctor at SUNY Cortland, Louis Cardillo at St. Anselm, James Brown at Utica College and Ikenna Ononaji at Post University.
- Jaden Watkins will play college basketball at SUNY Ulster and Donovan Ramgahan committed to play at Wells College.
- Gabe Astrologo '21 received a scholarship to play NCAA baseball next year at Manhattanville College.
- Louis Marinaro '22 received a full scholarship to play D1 baseball at St. John's University. Nick Mazzotta '22 received a full scholarship offer to play D1 baseball at Fairleigh Dickinson University. Adam Agresti '23 received a full scholarship offer to play D1 baseball at St. John's University and was recently ranked first in NYS for catching, 38th for this position and 295 among all 2023 baseball players in the country.
- Matt Santos '21 will play Division 2 lacrosse for Post University.

Alumni Athletes in the News

Former Kennedy Catholic standout Elijah Hughes was selected in the second round of the NBA Draft by the New Orleans Pelicans. The Utah Jazz quickly acquired the rights to Hughes in the trade. See the story at www.nba.com/jazz/news/jazz-acquired-draft-rights-elijah-hughes. Hughes helped bring the Gaels to the 2015 CHSAA City Championship and to the



CHSAA State Finals, and then led the ACC in

scoring his junior year at Syracuse University. • Liam McManus '17, who majors in Marine Transportation with a U.S. Coast Guard Deck License at SUNY Maritime, was named



ability...and demonstrated strong leadership and citizenship." Liam was one of only 199 student-athletes from across all divisions of college football to be named a semi-finalist. • Kelly Brann's '18 athletic talents earned her the ability to play NCAA D1 volleyball for Siena College.

a semi-finalist for the National Football Foundation's 2020 William V. Campbell Trophy, football's premier scholar-athlete award. The trophy is known as the "Academic Heisman," and candidates must have at least a 3.2 GPA, "out-



2020 Kennedy Catholic Golf Classic

*Annual Golf Outing
A Hole In One*



The 17th Annual Kennedy Catholic Golf Classic was held in honor of John Viniello, a beloved former KCPS teacher and track coach. John was a devout Catholic and advocate and supporter of our school, helping with the track upgrade just a few years ago. His daughter Stacy is a graduate of the Class of 1998.

The sold-out event was held at Mahopac Golf and Beach Club on October 1, 2020. Thank you to all the sponsors, underwriters and golfers who made this KCPS Golf Classic such a success. Together, we were able to raise \$35,000 for student programs. Be sure to save the date for the 2021 Kennedy Catholic Golf Classic on September 30.



2020 Annual Auction a “Virtual Success”

For the first time in 39 years, the Kennedy Catholic Annual Auction had to be held virtually. This is KCPS’ oldest and most important fundraiser, allowing participants to provide the gift of a Catholic Education. But holding it online didn’t stop the fun or make it less successful, as the Lakeview Room, the Bridge and the Commons were still transformed into beautiful display areas for dozens of wonderful and upscale items, and people enjoyed the auctions (and the friendly competition) from their homes on December 14-19. The auction raised over \$26,000 for Kennedy Catholic, and showed that our community’s support never waivers! Congratulations to Ms. Julie Salicrup and Mrs. Jane MacLeay who won the First and Second Place Christmas Raffle Prizes. Thank you to our program book sponsors and to everyone who donated items. Be sure to attend the 2021 (hopefully in person) Annual Auction on December 4.



Office of Advancement
54 Route 138
Somers, NY 10589

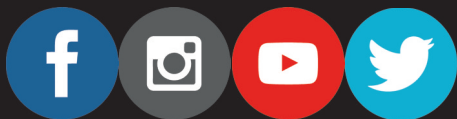
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If your son or daughter no longer maintains permanent residence at your home,
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(914) 232-5061 ext 110 or Alumni@KennedyCatholic.org.

**SAVE & SHARE
THESE DATES FOR
IMPORTANT
UPCOMING
KENNEDY CATHOLIC
EVENTS!**

Golf Classic:
September 30, 2021
Open House:
Sunday, October 17
from 1-4pm &
Wednesday,
October 20 from 7-9pm
Auction:
December 4, 2021

To learn about these events
and more, visit our website:
KennedyCatholic.org/calendar



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