

Pirates' Treasure



**When spring 2020 brought
changes, we adapted**
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ON THE COVER: Monica Cichon and Greg Cichon represent the classes of 2020—Monica graduating from St. Mary's in June, while Greg '16 finished his bachelor's degree at the University of Notre Dame in May. Graduation ceremonies and celebrations for both the St. Mary's class of 2020 and our former Pirates who were graduating from college were nothing like they had imagined as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across our country. (photo: Beth Cichon)

The *Pirates' Treasure Magazine* is published twice a year. Letters, comments and article submissions are always welcome. The SMHS Development Office may be contacted by mail at 2501 East Yampa St., Colorado Springs, CO 80909, by phone at 719-635-7540 ext. 38, or by email at development@smhscs.org.

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From the President



Faith. Knowledge. Community.

Those three words appear again and again in our St. Mary's community. Perhaps they have never been as true as they were over the last five months.

As the COVID-19 crisis began to unfold in the United States, we started to plan for the possibility of transitioning to teaching in an environment where students were not present for in-person instruction.

On the morning of Thursday, March 12, Catholic school leaders across southern Colorado were told to prepare for a possible transition to distance learning "in a few weeks." Six hours later, almost every school and district in the state announced that as of the following Monday, March 16, they would close for two or three weeks.

St. Mary's did not close. On March 13, we prepared our students and staff to begin distance learning. The morning of March 16, our classes were online. The transition was painful at times, the lessons learned were many, but we navigated the challenges successfully.

Faith. Shortly after we migrated to distance learning, we began daily online gatherings as a school. Each morning we faithfully prayed the Memorare (a powerful prayer to our Patroness, the Blessed Virgin Mary), recited the Pledge of Allegiance, and shared student announcements.

Knowledge. Nearly everyone agreed that they would MUCH rather be in the classroom, but we delivered knowledge, regardless of location. Furthermore, when the educational results told us that 95 percent of students in the WORLD were struggling in distance learning situations, we were pleased with our results; as were 84 percent of our parents, according to a May survey of current families.

Community. We got creative and we stayed connected, via daily e-mail communications with the community; weekly, sometimes bi-weekly leadership videos; live video classes with teachers; online Google Hangouts sessions with groups of students, etc. When restrictions started to ease up, students rediscovered simple joys like hiking, playing games with their family, and just hanging out with friends at a park.

Challenging times create opportunities and can also help us see more clearly the good around us. Catholic schools across the country are concerned about the future, as are we. However, our community has again shown its amazing commitment to St. Mary's in the last several months. Despite the fact that we had just a month to transition a live Gala to a "virtual" experience, it ended up being one of our best Galas ever. In honor of our graduating class of 2020, our community donated almost \$100,000 to our Emergency Relief Fund. We are living in interesting times, and we are more aware of our blessings than ever before.

The St. Mary's family continues to lead with FAITH, strive for KNOWLEDGE, and stay connected in COMMUNITY.

Respectfully,

Deacon Robert J. Rysavy II
President, St. Mary's High School

Suthers '70 Speaks to Students

In early March, Colorado Springs Mayor **John Suthers '70** spent part of the morning at St. Mary's talking with the Students 4 Life Club.



EDD Class Visits Titan Robotics

In March, six students in the Engineering Design and Development (EDD) course visited Titan Robotics. EDD is the final course in our Project Lead the Way STEM program. The students spend the year working on an innovative product that is presented to a panel of experts each spring. The team of **Brennan Belei '20**, **Ben Bodnar '20**, **Caitlin Cairns, '20** and **Katie Morales '20** was working with Titan Robotics to build their capstone innovation for the course. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the capstone presentations were handled differently this year.

Forensics Continues National Qual Streak

In early March, the St. Mary's speech and debate team qualified for its 16th consecutive National Speech and Debate Tournament. **Ben Bodnar '20** and **Daniel Zill '21** competed at

the virtual national competition in June, placing in the top 60 overall. **Sydney Taylor '23** qualified for nationals as an alternate in humor. At state qualifying in February, the team received the Traveling Trophy in recognition of outstanding congressional debate over the past several seasons. State qualifiers were: **Veronica Hennessey '21** and **Jonathon Lee '22** in Congressional Debate, **Bodnar and Zill** in Duo Interpretation, and **Zill** in Extemporaneous Speaking. State alternates were: **Lisa Ward '21** in Extemporaneous Speaking and Duo Interpretation and **Ayden Hernandez '21** in Duo Interpretation.

Staff Changes, Biondini Returns as Principal

Mike Biondini '66 returns as principal this year, following David Hyland's retirement after the graduation of the class of 2020. **Brigid Jacques** has assumed the role of dean of students, as **Archie Malloy** took a dean position at Rampart High School. We also said goodbye to **Kim German**, who retired, and **Anna Sanzo** in June. Joining the St. Mary's faculty are **Kim Will**, who returns as a teacher in the English department, and **Maxine Hennessey**, who will teach science.

Winter, Spring Pirate Sports Updates

Boys Basketball

In early March, the boys basketball team ended their season with a loss in the regional championship game, finishing 19-6 on the season and 10-2 in league.

Girls Basketball

Late on March 12, our Lady Pirates' run for their third consecutive state championship came to an end. The CHSAA email stated: "On Thursday evening, the CHSAA office was informed by the University of Denver that the school would no longer be able to host the Class 3A state basketball tournament.

"With uncertainty at all additional sites, including a state of emergency declaration by the City of Denver, the difficult decision has been made to cancel the remainder of all state basketball tournaments in all classes."

The girls were two wins away from their historic title. They finished 24-1 on the season, 10-0 in league play, with their only loss of the season coming to 2019 5A state champion Cherry Creek. Earlier on Thursday, March 12, they had won their state championship Great 8

game by a score of 54-24 over Vanguard. They were set to face Pagosa Springs on March 13 in the 3A Final Four game.

Three Lady Pirates made first- or second-team on CHSAA's All-State list. **Josephine Howery '20** and **Seneca Hackley '20** were named first-team All-State and **Catherine Cummings '20** was named second-team All-State. Howery was also named CHSAA's Player of the Year for 3A.

Cummings, Hackley and Howery were also named first-team by Gazette Preps 2019-2020 3A-1A Girls Basketball All-Stars, while teammate **Brooklyn Valdez '20** received an honorable mention.

And Howery was also named Gazette Preps 3A-1A Girls Basketball Peak Performer of the Year.

In April, girls basketball coach **Mike Burkett '77** retired after 21 seasons as our girls basketball coach. Assistant coach **Kyle Burkett** assumed the role of head coach for the girls team.

Swimming

Caitlin Cairns '20 won the state 50 free-

style title with a time of 23.09 breaking the 3A state record, the school record, and claiming an automatic All-American status. She also won the 100 butterfly with a time of 55.27, breaking her own school record, which also placed her up for All-American consideration.

Cairns was named 3A Swimmer of the Year and *The Gazette* honored her as a Peak Performer of the Week. She was also named first team on the Gazette Preps 2019-2020 Girls Swimming and Diving All-Stars for the 50 freestyle.

Wrestling

In its first year back at St. Mary's, Pirate wrestling just missed having a team member qualify for the state tournament. **Anthony Isek '23** finished fifth in the 106-pound bracket at the 3A Regional Wrestling Tournament in Lamar. The top four go to state.

Spring Sports

On April 21, the high school spring sports season was officially canceled due to the pandemic. While not unexpected, our hearts were heavy for our spring sports athletes.

Adapting

2020 brought unusual changes

When the 2019-2020 school year started, no one in the St. Mary's community could have fathomed how the spring semester would unfold. In August 2019 it would have been unthinkable that the week before spring break, the entire school would move to distance learning from home as schools closed statewide in an effort to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 corona virus.

Looking Forward

Once the 2019-2020 year finished in an unprecedented way with a delayed commencement of the class of 2020, focus shifted to the coming school year. With the virus continuing to spread across the US, preparations for the 2020-2021 school year required administrators to create multiple plans for the coming year. The plan, as of this writing, was for students to be on campus for in-person learning five days a week to start the year.

However, contingency plans were also made for both hybrid learning, in which students attend both in-person and through online classes, and full online learning, if dictated by the unfolding situation. As a precaution, faculty and staff have attended advanced training over the summer to learn new ways to develop and implement effective distance learning plans.

In mid-June, Mike Biondini, who took over as principal after the 2020 graduation, informed parents that the in-person learning plan would cap the number of students

per classroom at 25, as required by the order of the Colorado governor.

"Our philosophy must always be to ask 'What is best for the students?' It is our strong belief that attending in-class instruction five days per week is what is best for students," Biondini said. "We will implement aggressive cleaning and sanitation procedures throughout the day and will remind students of proper hygiene and social distancing."

A Sudden Shift

In early March, then St. Mary's Principal Dave Hyland began preparing teachers for the possibility of moving to distance learning. At that point, the thought was that it could happen as early as the first week of April. Instead, on the morning of Thursday, March 12, St. Mary's administrators heard that schools could close in late March, and then six hours after hearing that timeline, St. Mary's President Deacon Rob Rysavy was told that starting the following week Colorado Springs schools were closing for two weeks and Denver schools were going to close for three weeks.

Rysavy and Hyland met on the evening of Thursday, March 12, and decided that St. Mary's would NOT close. They informed the teachers on Thursday night that Friday would be a distance learning preparation day, and Monday, March 16, would be St. Mary's first day of distance learning. Instead of having "a couple weeks" to further prepare, St. Mary's teach-

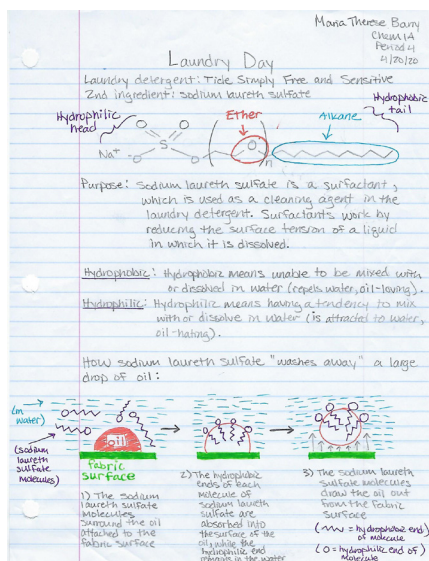


Adam Bayer, a member of the St. Mary's facilities department, wipes down desks with bleach water. Daily deep cleaning will be a procedure moving forward.

ers had less than 12 hours to prepare for the change.

"It was not a hard decision that we would not close; it was important for us to implement distance learning as quickly as possible," Hyland said. "We wanted the students to understand we were serious about continuing their education; we were not going to just check a box. No break. The parents needed to understand that St. Mary's was fully committed to the education of their children."

As distance learning continued through the end of the spring semester, the process of how the material was presented continued to evolve as faculty and staff listened to parents and students and adjusted their online learning plan. Parents and students asked for consistency in the platform used to deliver the online classes and more structure in the day, both of which St.



When distance learning made labs challenging, Suzanne Tibbitts had her chemistry 1A class practice organic functional groups by researching the ingredients in their laundry detergents. They also learned a very important skill for college... how to do laundry!

classroom.”

Although virtual presentations were less than ideal, Jelinek said the creative ways her Theology I students completed their Old Testament research project will likely be incorporated into the unit in the future, even during times of in-person learning.

“It was remarkable to observe their creativity as students submitted digital projects of Solomon’s temple, Holocaust concentration camps, and remote slide presentations about Old Testament foods and kosher laws, Daniel and the lions’ den, and weapons of the Old Testament,” she said.

“It is a new venue and I will be

Mary’s responded to.

“That first week of distance learning gave us many lessons learned,” Rysavy said. “When we sent the students home on March 13, we told the teachers, ‘Deliver education next week, we don’t care how you do it, we’ll standardize later.’ That’s what we did, school stayed in session, but things were non-standard across the school. We then took the next week, which was spring break for us, to standardize, and we continued to improve.”

Students admitted the situation was stressful as they missed their friends, teachers, sports and extracurriculars; yet overall, they adapted well. Since many St. Mary’s students attended one of the four Colorado Springs K-8 Catholic schools (Corpus Christi, Divine Redeemer, St. Paul, St. Peters), they had previously been exposed to online learning tools like Google Classroom.

“At least two-thirds of our students had some basic structure in online learning that they brought with them from our great Catholic partner schools here in Colorado Springs,” Rysavy said. “That previous experience meant the transition to distance learning was not as challenging as it might have otherwise been for our students.”

Opportunity for Growth

While there is little doubt that the shift our nation has experienced has been difficult on everyone, positives have emerged from the trying situation.

Math and engineering teacher Mike Kloenne said he feels St. Mary’s biggest accomplishment was how rapidly everyone adapted and persevered in providing a quality education.

“While many schools and districts were talking about education losses that may be difficult to make up, I don’t think that’s the case for St. Mary’s students,” he said. “The biggest loss in my mind is the loss of human connection and hearing the students’ heart songs. My classroom, one of the loudest in the building, went eerily quiet in the online environment.”

Kloenne said that while he was able to deliver his lessons via the online platform, his challenge over the summer was to identify ways to restore and invigorate online learning with the human connection that the in-person classroom provides.

Theology teacher Tena Jelinek also missed being in-person with her students.

“I missed the synergy of class discussions,” she said. “Video discussions didn’t always flow as organically as those in the

able to integrate many of these ideas into future class projects both in and out of the classroom. That is exciting!”

Kloenne said, for him, the biggest reward of the spring 2020 semester was the same as past semesters—watching his students grow.

“My biggest rewards this semester were as they have always been, centered on the successes of my students and watching them grow, learn and master new concepts,” he said. “I truly enjoy being their biggest fan and supporter.”

He also enjoyed mastering the new technologies required for online learning, and felt that regardless of how classes are offered in the fall, what he’s learned will make him a better teacher.

Jelinek agreed, and said learning new skills and seeing the support the community members gave each other were rewards garnered during the challenging semester.

“We not only got through a difficult time together, but we succeeded in a rather frightening time and in a crisis mode,” she said. “As a life-long learner, I had the opportunity to gain, and hopefully will continue to gain, new skills. That is exciting and continues to motivate me.” •



Unconventional Ending

The class of 2020 finished their high school career during a global pandemic and their graduation at The Grace Center was the first of its kind for St. Mary's. This extraordinary class of 67 seniors earned more than \$13 million in college merit scholarships and will attend colleges across the country.

Very little about graduation for the St. Mary's High School class of 2020 was what they had imagined it would be.

Graduation was held on June 13, almost a month later than planned and exactly three months to the day after St. Mary's announced it would move to distance learning as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the country. For some of the seniors, graduation day was the first day they had seen each other since mid-March.

The event, usually held at one of the local Catholic churches in conjunction with a baccalaureate Mass, was instead held on the football field at The Grace Center for Community Service and Athletics. The seniors' chairs were spaced six-feet apart, masks were worn during the marches in

and out, and diplomas were picked up by the seniors from a table, instead of being handed to them by the principal and president of the school.

However, in her valedictorian speech Katie Morales said the class has always considered itself to be special, so it was only fitting that the class go out in a special way.

Morales's speech centered on how high school, classmates, and even the last two months of their senior year have shaped the class of 2020 into the young adults they have become. Morales said at times she would like to pretend that the last two months of her senior year had not happened the way that they did. However, just as each classmate and experience leading up to senior year has shaped the seniors,

of course the experiences of the last two months have also contributed to molding the class of 2020. But Morales she reminded them that each senior has the power to choose how the situation changes them.

"I once heard someone say that when you miss something, you know that you have been blessed with a wonderful gift," she said. "On behalf of my entire class, I think I can say that we did not realize how much we loved going to school everyday until we were no longer able to go. We missed the little moments. I hope that these last few months serve as a reminder for the rest of our lives to always enjoy life, live in the moment, and never take any opportunities for granted."

The St. Mary's class of 2020 missed out on most of the seniors' special events



all graduation photos: Diane Torrence

The 67 seniors in the class of 2020 finished their high school careers in an unconventional manner, including having graduation at The Grace Center for Community Service and Athletics.



The seniors wore masks during the procession and recession at commencement.

including their retreat, camp out, prom, senior breakfast, and baccalaureate Mass. Morales admitted that it was hard to not be disappointed about those losses, but reminded her classmates that high school is made up of four years, not just two months. She encouraged her classmates to focus on the great relationships and memories that were created since their freshman year and never let the disappointments of life define them.

In a similar vein, salutatorians Sarah Connors and Lauren Sauley reminded the class of 2020 that through this unique experience, they have learned not to dwell on disappointment.

“We learned to fly, rather than fall under the weight of the tragedy that has overcome the world. We learned that we desire inner strength more than we desire sympathy from others,” they said. “We, as a class, have been through what many

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Commencement speaker St. Mary's alumnus **Cameron Hickert '12** encouraged the seniors to be mindful of what they remember because what we choose to remember inspires and informs who are we and how we contribute to the world.

Class of 2020 Student Leaders



Valedictorian Katie Morales



Co-salutatorians Sarah Connors and Lauren Sauley



Senior Senate officers were, from left: Ryan Bell, vice president; Adrea Sipalay, secretary; Alexa LaMack, president; and Marc Godec, treasurer.



Senior class officers were, from left: Sam Wahl, president; David Torrence, treasurer; Robbie Muehlbauer, vice president; Annika Noack, secretary.



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people never have, and as our high school chapter comes to a close, our unique senior year has given us an abundance of irreplaceable wisdom and fortitude.”

St. Mary's alumni **Cameron Hickert '12** returned as the commencement speaker for the class of 2020. Hickert is currently working as a cyber security research assistant at Harvard's Belfer Center while pursuing his master's degree. From July 2017 to July 2019, he served as the center's team lead artificial intelligence researcher. Additionally, Hickert was a member of the inaugural class of Schwarzman Scholars, served as a researcher at the Wilson Center's China Environment Forum, and interned for the US State Department in Vienna, where he provided on-site support at the P5+1 nuclear negotiations with Iran. He holds both a bachelor of science in physics and a bachelor of arts in international studies from the University of Denver.

Hickert admitted that the excitement of graduation is partly about being free from the rituals that are established for students during their school years. However, he said one thing he has learned about rituals since graduating is that they help us remember what we choose to remember.

“What we remember drives the things we think about, and what we think about them,” Hickert said. “Even our own ‘personal narratives’ that we tell ourselves, as well as the world, rest in large part on what we choose to remember about our attributes, defining moments, relationships, etcetera.”

Hickert encouraged the seniors to find rituals that prioritize the things that are important to them, whether it be calling a friend or practicing a new language.

Most of the 67 graduates in the class of 2020, which earned more than \$13 million in college merit scholarships, will continue their educational journey in the fall, attending universities across the country. Some have elected to take a gap year in light of the current world circumstances or enter the military. As they enter those next stages of life, Morales encouraged them to remember that life isn't about the destination, but the journey.

“We are designated by so much more than one set of circumstances or one decision,” Morales said. “We are in control of the people we become and the journeys that we travel.”

Also taking part in the graduation ceremony were Paige Indovina, who sang the National Anthem, and Ryan Bell and Katherine Chartier, who had been selected as class speakers. In a normal year, Bell's and Chartier's senior roast, which reflected on the class of 2020's four-year journey, would have been given at Senior Mass in early May. When that event was canceled, it was decided that the class speech should be moved to graduation. •

Evangeline Maria Accornero

Employment / Gap Year

Alex Baburnic

University of Utah

Wyatt Augustine Vigil Barton

University of Colorado – Boulder

Brennan James Belei

University of Colorado – Boulder

Ryan Michael Bell

University of Denver

Erin Elizabeth Berson

Saint Louis University

Benjamin Daniel Bodnar

St. Olaf College

Katherine Marie Briner

DePaul University

Caitlin Anne Cairns

University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Katherine Chartier

Colorado School of Mines

Eva Lisanne Cheatham

Harding University

Monica Rose Cichon

University of Notre Dame

Sarah Renee Connors

University of Colorado – Boulder

Austin Blayke Cox

University of Texas at Tyler

Catherine Grace Cummings

University of Northern Colorado

Corinne Eliese Czeltadko

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

RayShawn L.C. Dearmon

Sterling College

Anita Kay DeBakey

Midland University

Anthony Joseph Depner

Washburn University

Alexandru Gabriel Dudu

University of Tampa

Evan Thomas Faber

Undecided

Marc Anthony Godec

Boston College

Seneca Maya Hackley

Florida Gulf Coast University

Rebecca Diane Heimbuch

University of Northern Colorado

McKenna Marie Horvath

Benedictine College

Josephine Kathryn Howerly

Colorado School of Mines

Dominic John Hughes

Bowling Green State University

Paige Angela Indovina

University of Colorado – Boulder

Isaiah Joseph Kim

University of Colorado – Boulder

Alexa Jayne LaMack

Dominican University of California

Joseph Vincent Lavezzi

DePaul University

Conor Allen Lindsey

Undecided

Jacob Francis Miller

Colorado State University – Ft. Collins

James William Mills

University of Wyoming

Katherine Grace Morales

University of Notre Dame

Lauren Haley Morgan

Colorado State University – Ft. Collins

Jackson Matthew Morse

Southern Utah University

Robert Hans Muehlbauer

Colorado State University – Ft. Collins

Owen Alexander Nelson

Pikes Peak Community College

Annika Grace Marie Noack

North Idaho College

Olivia Marie Nunez

University of Kentucky

Sophia Emmanuele Nutter

Pikes Peak Community College

Mateo Noel Osorio

West Texas A&M University

Matthew Thomas Raskob

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Isabella Soleil Rodriguez

Midland University

Rachel Ann Ruscoe

Franciscan University of Steubenville

Jack Mitchel Rydland

Colorado State University – Ft. Collins

Mark Isaac Rysavy

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Lauren Elizabeth Sauley

University of Wyoming

Mary Adrea Caniban Sipalay

University of Colorado – Boulder

Jack Edward Snyder

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Andrew Wallace Sorensen

Adams State University

Brian Michael Sorensen

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Cassidy Ann Sorensen

University of Northern Colorado

John Joseph Herman Steefel

University of Northern Colorado

Isabella Lynn Thomas

University of Northern Colorado

David Robert Torrence

University of Southern California

Morgan June Trechter

The Catholic University of America

Brooklyn Jean Valdez

University of Colorado – Boulder

Wyatt Asa Waggle

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Samuel Thomas Wahl

University of Southern California

Thatcher James Whalen

University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Rachel Elizabeth Wilcox

University of Northern Colorado

HaYoung (Gloria) Yi

Creighton University

Lydia Minju Yi

Creighton University

BeiChen (Michael) Zhang

University of California – San Diego

James Conor Zygmunt

University of Colorado – Boulder

Pirates in a Pandemic

Alumni across the nation are serving on the front lines of the COVID-19 outbreak

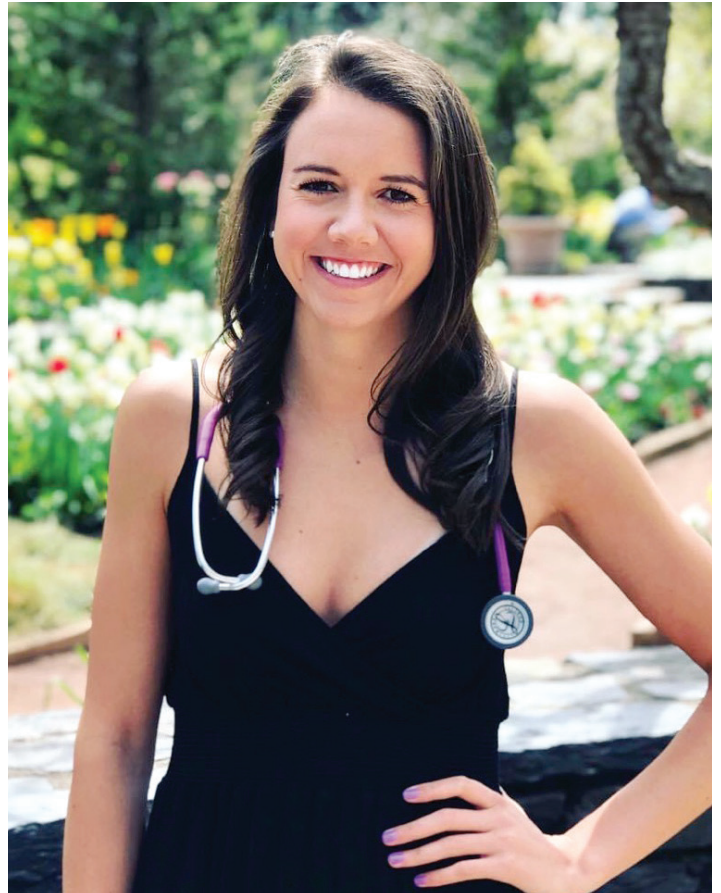
Tenley Barr '11

Tenley Barr '11 served this spring in the COVID intensive care unit at NYU Langone Health in Manhattan. She described her days of caring for COVID-19 patients as “busy and intense.” Challenges come in the form of lack of resources and lack of time, which Barr said has made formulating specific treatment plans practically impossible. The resources needed to keep COVID-19 patients even relatively stable are strained, she said, as is the ability of ICU nurses to give the meticulous care that they are accustomed to providing. Then, she said, the sheer number of critically ill COVID-positive patients in the ICU is overwhelming. All of this results in shifts that are spent racing from one emergency to the next trying to keep people alive, Barr said.

“They crash out of nowhere, and when they crash, they crash fast and hard, often leaving the teams of doctors and nurses helpless to save them,” Barr said. “Honestly, now there are times when I end a shift feeling inadequate and defeated as a nurse. I never felt that way before. I have to remind myself to focus on the big picture—on helping patients stay alive another day. I have to remind myself when I go home that I’ve done everything I can for my patients, that I’ve done my best, but I struggle with it.”

Barr said the biggest lesson she has learned during the COVID-19 pandemic is to not take the people in her life for granted.

“Life is precious, and sometimes it ends abruptly. Cherish your family and friends. Hold them close. Take nothing for granted, and thank God for your blessings daily.”



Sophia Olán '99

Her role as an emergency department (ED) social worker in Denver has put Sophia Olán '99 in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, ED social workers encourage patients who are victims to seek follow-up care and provide resources to help them. During the pandemic, Olán has collected emergency contact information, coordinated video visits, provided emotional support and active listening to family members, and located and placed the homeless in isolated rooms designed for COVID-positive treatment.

“It’s not exactly how I planned to spend 2020, but I remain hopeful and faithful of the blessings God has in store for us,” she said.

Olán said the isolation and loss of routines has taken a toll on the mental health of the Denver community, and resulted in more domestic violence cases.

“What has been tough is witnessing the increase of domestic violence victims, the severity of the new cases of child abuse, the manifestation of anxiety in parties never having experienced mental health issues and the increase in overdosing on drugs and suicide attempts,” she said.



Hannah McReavy '18

In February, **Hannah McReavy '18** was at Providence College in Rhode Island; a month later, she was finishing the semester virtually as a result of the pandemic. With time on her hands, McReavy looked for ways to serve and was drawn to the COVID-19 recovery center for the homeless.

"I'm in the age group that is least at risk and I felt I needed to do something to help," McReavy said.

McReavy is serving 40-hours per week at the center, and the work has changed her—both how she thinks about the homeless and what she hopes to do with her future.

"There is a stigma to working with the homeless; it's not as glamorous as other opportunities, but they are the ones who need help the most," she said. "Taking this opportunity has been one of the riskiest yet best decisions I've ever made."



photo: Jenn Fleming/@jennflemm

Colleen Berenguer '11



Colleen Berenguer '11 had been a nurse for less than a year when the pandemic started. Meridian, Idaho, where Berenguer works, has not been hit hard, but working on the front-lines of COVID-19 has been a sobering experience. The range of reactions to the virus has been surprising, she said, ranging from having no symptoms to patients who seem fine one day only to deteriorate rapidly the next.

Finding a work-home balance has been hard for Berenguer since news of the virus is everywhere. Needing connection outside of her coworkers, Berenguer reached out to her St. Mary's classmates, whom she found eager to re-establish friendships that hadn't been nurtured since high school.

"Using that old network has made me a better nurse. St. Mary's is a tight-knit community, which is such a unique thing. It's so easy to feel isolated. This experience has been a reminder that I need to seek community," she said.

Katie (O'Donnell) Whitt '08

Katie (O'Donnell) Whitt '08 is several years removed from her time spent at St. Mary's High School. Yet, the words of her junior theology teacher, Michael Dillon, still guide her each day. Whitt said that Dillon challenged the members of her class to be the light in a world filled with darkness and pain. It is a statement that she reflects on, especially during times of uncertainty as she serves as a critical care ICU nurse in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

"Mr. Dillon said, 'The world is full of darkness, pain, and a lot of crap. How can YOU be a light in this dark world? The world is full of darkness: be the light,'" Whitt said. "During these stressful and uncertain times in our country and the world, I try to focus on what I can control and ask myself a few questions each day: What can I do to be a light to others? What can I do to stay positive? How can I best serve my patients, family, and friends today? Reminding myself to focus on what I can control, and leaving the rest in God's hands, is reassuring for me."

Whitt recently trained to be the critical care unit charge nurse, which she describes as a challenging, but nice, change of pace. The biggest lesson she has learned through the pandemic is to stay flexible and be thankful for her blessings.



You'll find the full stories on these alumnae, and more, in the News section of our website at www.smpirates.org.

We continue to feature alumni working on the COVID-19 frontlines. If you would like to be featured, contact Amy Partain, director of Communications, at apartain@smhscs.org

Class Notes

..... 1980-1989.....

Dr. Kathy Friel '83 has started Dragonfly Retreats to help veterans of all ages by providing hope, healing, and empowerment over traumatic events. Dragonfly features five-day therapeutic retreats utilizing eastern and western philosophies toward relaxation to help veterans achieve and live a happy relaxed life.

Cathy Berdon '86 has fulfilled a long-time goal to open her own boutique for home decor and beautiful flower arrangements. Cathy opened Carriage House Designs almost two years ago and has been a fantastic partner with St. Mary's providing beautiful center pieces and decor for many of our functions, including our Annual Gala.

..... 2000-2009.....

Will Percy '08 was selected to the Flagler College NCAA Division 2 All-Decade Team. Will was a four-year starter for the Saints and after his senior season received the prestigious ABCA Rawlings Gold Glove Award for the Southeast Region. Will currently works for the Los Angeles Dodgers at their Spring Training facility in Glendale, Arizona.

Stephen VanGamble '08 competed in the 2020 US Olympic Marathon Trials in February. He finished 58th with a time of 2:20:16. His running career started at St. Mary's when he joined the cross country team his freshmen year.

..... 2010-2019.....

Tommy Florek '10 obtained his doctor of physical therapy degree from Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania. There he met his wife, Lindsey, who is also a DPT. After graduation, Tommy and Lindsey chose to return to Colorado Springs, where Tommy is the assistant director of therapy at Life Care Center of Colorado Springs. Tommy is the main physical therapist on the COVID team at the facility.

Gabi Florek '13 completed a dual degree in biology from The University of Dallas and a bachelor of science in nursing from Texas Women's University. Gabi chose to return to Colorado Springs and is an Emergency Department Registered Nurse at Memorial Central.

Michael Bukowski '15 graduated cum laude from the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs in December 2019 with a bachelor of science degree in geography and environmental studies. Michael continues to run Pikes Peak Forestry and Construction, the company he started during his studies at UCCS, and intends to begin work on his master's degree in the fall.

Olivia Florek '17 is in her senior year at Georgetown University. Olivia is working at Children's National Main Hospital in Wash-

ington, DC, in an externship in the PICU. Olivia will graduate in May 2021 with her bachelor of science in nursing.

..... In Memoriam.....

Ted Barth '57 died in March. His sister **Mary Ann Haga '60** had helped care for him.

Darlene Conran '56 of Florissant, Colorado, died in May.

James Conran '56 (Darlene's brother) died in June in Delaware. He is survived by his wife, Suzanne.

May Kelly, widow of Tom Kelly, died on Nov. 8, 2019. Tom and May were 20-year supporters of St. Mary's, starting during the challenging times the school faced in the late 1980's. May had continued to support the Tom Kelly Scholarship Fund, which is part of the St. Mary's Catholic Education Foundation, during the years since Tom passed away in 2010.

Jim Hopkins, a teacher at St. Mary's from 2012 to 2017, died May 31, 2020, after a courageous battle with leukemia.

..... Reunion Updates.....

Class of '80 was planning to hold its reunion in conjunction with Homecoming, which was set for Oct. 16. With the football season moved to spring, plans for the reunion are being re-evaluated.

The classes of 1970, 1975, and 2000 will celebrate with reunions to next summer.

..... Class of 2016.....

Many members of the St. Mary's class of 2016 graduated from college this spring. But, just as the COVID-19 pandemic derailed high school graduations, our former Pirates didn't experience the college graduation they had dreamed of.

Greg Cichon '16 graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a bachelor of science in business science with a minor in anthropology and an emphasis in Spanish.. He started medical school at Creighton University in August.

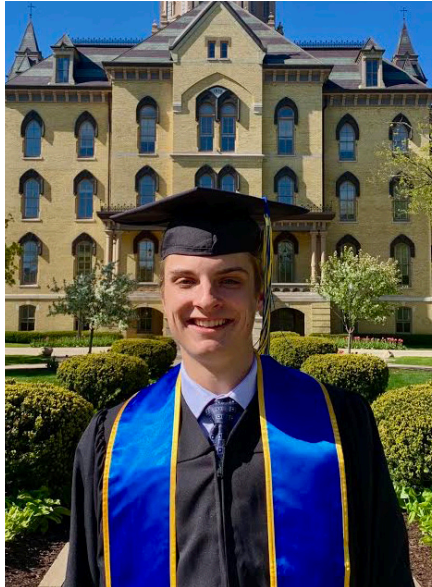
Kaila Baca Delaney '16 is currently in missile training at Vandenberg Air Force Base after graduating from the US Air Force Academy in May. After graduation, she married Ben Delaney of Missouri.

Josh Fowler '16 is in Colorado Springs working for a small tech startup. He accepted a job offer from the federal government in early July, and will begin working in the position as soon as his employment is processed.

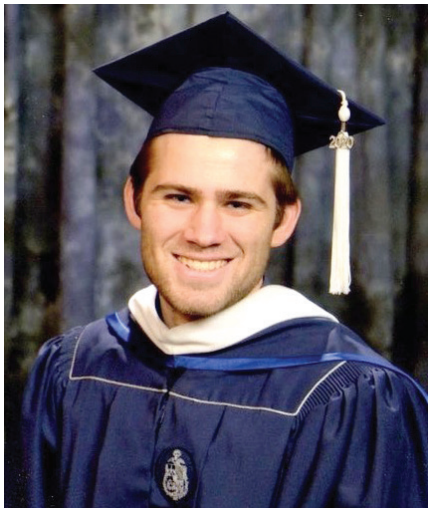
Zoe Jumper '16 graduated from Regis University in Denver, Colorado, this spring with a bachelor's degree in nursing and is now a licensed registered nurse. She is working with



Kaila (Baca) Delaney '16 with her husband, Ben.



Greg Cichon '16 on the steps of Notre Dame. He started medical school at Creighton in the fall.



Josh Fowler '16 is working for a tech startup.



Zoe Jumper '16 is now an RN.



Michael Simmons '16 graduated from Loyola Marymount.



Jimmy Velten '16 will train as a Navy SEAL.



Richard Wallace '16 is working as a software engineer at L3Harris.

Jefferson County as a District RN for several public schools. "I am very excited to start this new chapter of my life and I hope to impact the lives of those I work with," Zoe said.

Michael Simmons '16 graduated from Loyola Marymount University with a bachelor of science degree in computer science and is currently working as a DevOps engineer at Anchore.

Ensign Jimmy Velten '16 was selected for SEAL Training following his graduation from the US Naval Academy this May. Jimmy is one of only about 30 midshipmen selected for this most demanding of service areas.

Richard Wallace '16 graduated in May from the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs with a bachelor of science in computer engineering with special honors. He is currently working full time as a software engineer at L3Harris. "I am doing really well right now since I can take pride in the company and work I do and feel that what I get to do is extremely important," Richard said. He plans to continue his education by starting his master's degree at UCCS this fall. He'll pursue a master of science degree in electrical engineering, with a focus in artificial intelligence in embedded systems.

Partner with Us, for Now and the Future

In the 135-year history of St. Mary's High School, countless supporters have helped sustain our beloved school and witnessed thousands of students flourish and thrive. Whether it was the Sisters of Loretto or Julie Penrose or the hundreds of donors who have contributed to our campaigns over the years, today we truly stand on the shoulders of giants who had the vision and fortitude to ensure our Catholic high school endured in Colorado Springs. We are ever grateful for the legacy of generosity that pervades the heritage of St. Mary's.



Supporters over the years have truly become partners to help further the mission of St. Mary's in a number of ways. Donor gifts typically fall into one of three broad giving areas.

General Operations, which provides for the most immediate needs in the current school year. Examples of giving to General Operations include gifts to the Annual Fund and Gala.

Endowed Funds, which include long-term gifts that return a percentage each year to St. Mary's. These include named scholarships and estate or legacy gifts.

Targeted Giving includes specific projects and campaigns according to donor interests. Targeted Giving involves giving to specific St. Mary's programs or ministries, such as Campus Ministry, the engineering program, forensics, or tuition assistance.

Gifts to any of these giving areas can be made in a variety of ways including checks, online gifts, gifts-in-kind, stock donations, required minimum distributions from retirement accounts, insurance beneficiaries, and real property. Regular monthly gifts and matching gifts through employer-sponsored programs are always a special blessing. In any given school year, gifts are needed in all of these areas to help keep tuition manageable for our families.

If donors have a special area of interest, we can always find a way to match their giving preferences and intentions to the needs of the school.

We recently received gifts from two separate estates of long-time supporters of St. Mary's. The gifts did not have specific



Jim Orff, at his 90th birthday party in 2016, left an estate gift to St. Mary's.

purposes, so in coordination with the families, we included both gifts in the endowed Emergency Relief Fund that was established this summer in honor of the class of 2020. These long-time supporters who have passed to eternal life will now have their final gifts to St. Mary's as part of our endowment that returns a gift to the school every year, virtually forever.

Another way to match giving preferences with needs at the school is through sharing professional expertise. Recently, the O'Canna family, which currently has two students enrolled at St. Mary's and owns PPC Construction, donated the labor and specialized tools to renovate the curbs

and sidewalks around the exterior of the school.

At the same time, the O'Donnell's—Mark '73 and Kathy '75—had been interested in contributing to a project to help the school. So providing a gift to fund the materials for the curb and sidewalk project was a perfect fit for their interests and for the needs of the school. Thanks to this great partnership between a current Pirate family and an alumni family, we have corrected a safety hazard and increased the visual appeal of our school at the same time.

The faithful and generous support of so many alumni and friends over the decades has not only ensured our presence in the Colorado Springs community, but also positioned St. Mary's High School to clearly distinguish ourselves as a faith-filled community committed to helping our students thrive in mind, body and spirit. We are profoundly blessed and grateful for the many partners who have joined in our mission!

Our official motto, Deus Providebit, means "God Will Provide," and God has certainly blessed St. Mary's High School with thousands of generous and faithful supporters who have helped our school endure. Thank you to all of you who keep St. Mary's in your prayers and in your hearts! •



Virtual Gala Successful Thanks to Community

A famous quote claims that “attitude is the difference between an ordeal and an adventure,” a theory that has been tested during the last few months of rapid change. When schools shut down their campuses in mid-March due to the COVID-19 outbreak, everyone was hopeful that the shut down would be short lived. That included the events staff at St. Mary’s High School, who at that time was just weeks away from their Annual Gala.

Two weeks into our new normal it was evident that the Gala as planned—with its roaring 1920s theme to be held at the Antlers Hote—would not be possible. Events Director Raquel Krasovec said they were presented with three alternatives: postpone, cancel, or go virtual. After much discussion, the Gala committee decided to go virtual and began gathering information and developing a plan that would work for the St. Mary’s community.

“After the initial panic, we decided to trust God, ourselves, and the St. Mary’s community and move forward with a virtual event,” Krasovec said. “Our biggest concern was not that different from the concern that runs through all events—will we be able to deliver our community an experience that leaves them feeling like it was worth their time, money and the effort they invested to be at our event? And could we create that experience virtually?”

The virtual Gala was held on April 18, the date originally planned for the event. It consisted of several activities that are included in the live event, such as the silent auction, the live auction, the Gift from the Heart appeal, and the raffle drawing. While bids were taken on the live auction through the GiveSmart app, which has been used for the silent auction for the last several years, “Pistol” Pete Husak joined St. Mary’s President Rob Rysavy on a Facebook livestream to present the live auction items. The livestream also included videos of students, maintaining a student presence which the live Galas have each year.

The community response after the event was overwhelmingly positive, with several people asking for a virtual event to be added to future live Gala events. As Jeremy Stump, a



They say the show must go on. That’s how St. Mary’s approached its annual Gala, which became a virtual event as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the country. St. Mary’s President Rob Rysavy, left, “Pistol Pete” Husak, center, and TJ Burch hosted the virtual event, while Kevin Baker, foreground, helped broadcast the livestream via Facebook.

St. Mary’s parent, said, “We took COVID-19 lemons and made lemonade.” At the end of the evening, Stump shared a video of himself doing the dance move “the worm” since the community met its fundraising goal for the evening.

Krasovec said while the rhythm of Gala day was different since onsite details didn’t need constant attention, the excitement and nervous energy were the same. Before the event, champagne and a dessert from Mari-golds were delivered to our previous Dessert Dash winners, the Wilcox, Stump, and Silver families. The Dessert Dash is a highlight of the Gala each year, with freshmen families providing desserts and tables bidding for the opportunity to choose first.

“When we gathered up our small group in the Cove and off site at the start of the evening there was a sense of calmness knowing that, as [SMHS President] Rob [Rysavy] had said, ‘no matter what the outcome, we have already succeeded,’” Krasovec said. “With the exception of some minor technical difficulties, the evening went better than expected. Our high energy hosts and our student-centered videos captured the hearts of our generous St. Mary’s community.”

Overall, the Gala raised approximately \$130,000 for St. Mary’s Tuition Assistance program, which Krasovec said was not far off the net profit raised in the school’s best Gala year. With more than a third of St. Mary’s students receiving tuition assistance, profit from the Gala is important to the school community.

“Just as importantly, based on feedback from our community, we were able to connect with one another in a fun and meaningful way while working to meet the mission and needs of our school,” she said. “We will take the new experiences and lessons learned from this year’s Gala and incorporate them in our future events.” •

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF OUR GALA SPONSORS

When the COVID pandemic forced the Gala to go virtual, all of our sponsors graciously transferred their sponsorships to donations.

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Save the Date

For the most up-to-date schedule, please visit St. Mary's website at www.smpirates.org. The calendar is found under the Events section on our homepage.

The 1885 Society Needs Your Legacy Help!



ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL

What is the 1885 Society?

The 1885 Society is a recognition of the St. Mary's Catholic Education Foundation (SMCEF, a 501c3 non-profit organization) given to benefactors who have remembered St. Mary's High School (SMHS) in their Estate Plan and/or have made a sustaining gift to the Foundation.

Why 1885 Society Needs Your Legacy Help.

Until recently in SMHS's 135-year history, our beloved high school had never sought an endowment to provide for tuition assistance for our students. Like most Catholic schools, SMHS had always depended on the Lord to provide through Diocesan and Parish Budgets, annual fundraising, and modest tuition. With the virtual elimination of Teaching Orders in our Church, and with the rise of State sponsored Charter schools (Government money used to open specialty public high schools competing with private high schools) tuition has increased, putting our students' families in greater need for tuition assistance in order to attend the only Catholic high school in Colorado Springs.

What Can You Do for the 1885 Society?

By remembering SMHS in your Estate Plan with a gift of assets, you can craft a life-changing legacy that will impact St. Mary's, Catholic education, and deserving students long beyond your lifespan.

How Can I Get Started and Help SMHS through the 1885 Society?

SIMPLE, Just call St. Mary's High School Development Office at 719-635-7540, ext. 38, and let them know you'd like to speak with the Foundation Board President, and I will call you back to discuss your desire to help our beloved St. Mary's High School!

Thank you for your help!

Mick Pepper '92, President

Randy Cloud, Secretary

Mackenzie Barta '13, Treasurer

John Stinar, Legal Counsel

Address Corrections

You are important to us! Please update your contact information by emailing development@smhscs.org. Thanks!