

KENNEDY CATHOLIC PREPARATORY SCHOOL - ST. MARY'S ACADEMY

THE GAEL

FALL/WINTER 2023 VOLUME 37



The Gaels Welcome New Principal Viceroy
10 Years Later, They Meet Again: 2013 Reunion
St. Mary's Academy Soars in Its Second Year!

Student Fitness Center Update
The Kennedy Gaels' European Excursions
1974 50th Reunion in the Works!

**When a Kennedy Catholic Reunion Ends Up Helping the Community,
Everyone Feels Blessed**

KC Softball Reaching Record Highs, Teammates Play in European Championship

President's Message



Dear Friends of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School,

To the families and friends of Kennedy Catholic Prep, I send you my best wishes as we have begun another year of grace. We have been truly blessed as a school in our new principal Mr.

Greg Viceroy. Mr. Viceroy is no stranger to Catholic education and the importance of faith-based education, having benefited either as a student, teacher, or administrator for the last 35 years. His experience and love for Catholic education are evident in his daily presence to our faculty and students. May he continue to take our school forward in the path of excellence laid down by past generations of Gaels.

And our new Academy continues to grow and thrive. We plan for our students to soar as they take on the rigors of our academy education. Their new STEM center features AI, robotics, and daily journeys through the exciting world of science and technology. Built on traditional American values, we have seen tremendous results as we anticipate this new venture in Catholic education will only continue to grow as we move forward. And in the Prep, our partnering with the College Board will continue to serve our students well as they build their tomorrow by working hard at their studies today.

The Sr. Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center will also be a welcome addition to our already expansive athletic complex, and we hope to break ground soon now that our fundraising has hit the one-million-dollar mark. Filled with state-of-the-art exercise equipment, the student fitness center will be a very welcome sight flanking our already excellent track and field athletic facility.

So as you turn the pages of this edition of *The Gael*: if you are a parent - be excited for your child; if an alum - be proud of your alma mater; and if you are a prospective student - be enthusiastic about becoming a Gael! In Christ,

Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D.
President

A handwritten signature of Fr. Mark Vaillancourt, Ph.D. in black ink. The signature is stylized and cursive, appearing to read 'Mark Vaillancourt'.

Events at Kennedy Catholic

Spring Musical & Art Show - March 1 at 7pm,
March 2 at 2pm & 7pm, March 3 at 2pm

President's Dinner - May 23 at 6pm

Graduation Commencement - June 1 at 11am

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Update Your Alumni Records

Advancement Office

Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School

(914) 232 - 5061 ext.110

advancement@kennedycatholic.org

kennedycatholic.org/alumni

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PUBLISHER

Rev. Mark G. Vaillancourt, Ph.D.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Fred Compton P'15, '19

PRODUCTION EDITOR/WRITER

Janine U. Azzi

MANAGING EDITOR/ART DIRECTOR

Noelle Torre '14

PHOTOGRAPHY

Fred Compton P'15, '18

Lucas Hung '24

Kelly Walsh '24

PROOFREADERS

Rosemary Davin P'05, '07, '11, '13, Sue
Willis

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Gaels Welcome New Principal

With 35 Years of Experience in Catholic Education, Mr. Gregory Viceroy Joins KCPS Administration

In August 2023, the John F. Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School & St. Mary's Academy community welcomed a new addition to its leadership, Mr. Gregory Viceroy, who has taken up the role of Principal. Partnered with President Father Mark Vaillancourt and the rest of the administration, Mr. Viceroy has devoted himself to continuing the school's mission of providing Kennedy Catholic Gaels with the highest quality education not only in academics, but also in leadership and faith.

Mr. Viceroy is no stranger to Catholic education and the importance of faith-based education, having benefited either as a student, teacher, or administrator for the last 35 years. After attending St. Barnabas and Cardinal Spellman High School, Mr. Viceroy came back to Catholic institutions for his graduate studies at Iona University and Mercy College. The early years of his career saw him as a teacher, during which time he placed great emphasis on the relationships he made with students. Now as an administrator, he has been able to affect the most number of students and their families. "Whether as a Dean of Student Affairs, an Assistant Principal or, for the past ten years, as Principal, I understand the critically important responsibility of leading a school community," reflects Mr. Viceroy. "Through God's guidance, I have been successful and look forward to continuing my work at Kennedy Catholic & St. Mary's Academy."



As a new Principal, Mr. Viceroy's first order of business is to invest time in understanding the culture of the school community. Since his arrival, he has been impressed by the "unwavering dedication and work ethic of our faculty, the respect and maturity of our students, and the overall support I have received from everyone on our campus." He wishes to show his respect for the work that has already been accomplished under Father Vaillancourt's leadership and hopes to continue that outstanding work by working closely with him and the rest of the administration. "There is an obvious sophistication that permeates every aspect of our program, supported by a genuine pride that I quickly witnessed within my first few days at the school," remarked Mr. Viceroy. "I saw that we are inspired to inspire — which leads to great achievement and outstanding success! Indeed, we have so much to be proud of, and we have a very bright and exciting future ahead!"

Already the Kennedy Catholic Gaels have seen great accomplishments this year, with four seniors receiving commendation from the National Merit Scholarship program for their PSAT scores that placed them among the top 5% of test takers in the country. These four seniors, Mary Gilmore, Riley Evers, Robert Cross, and Christopher Abbamont (pictured above) are true representatives of the potential of a Kennedy Catholic education.

How You Can Help the Next Generation



20th Annual Golf Outing

Kennedy Catholic's 20th Annual Golf Outing was held at The Mahopac Golf & Beach Club on Thursday, October 12, 2023. With about 90 golfers taking to the green, the fundraiser to support the Sister Janet Meehan Fitness Center was a success for both the community members who enjoyed the day and the Gaels who will benefit from their support.

The Winning Foursome, with an 11 Under Par, included Brian Lamberti, John Myers, Todd Myers and Joe Delgrosso. Closest to the Pin golfers were Fr. Robert McKeon, 4'-2" for men, and Cathy Hoffman, 35'-11" for women. And Matt Burke achieved the Longest Drive honors. Congratulations to them!

We would like to thank all of our sponsors for their patronage and support and to those who attended and enjoyed the day with us! We can't do it without you.

Sister Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center Update

from Rev. Mark G. Vaillancourt, President

When our good friend and alumnus Mark Girolamo '71 introduced our newest initiative, the Sr. Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center, two years ago, we had no idea of the outpouring of love for Sr. Janet and support for the project that we would receive from alumni. For many, this is the first time they are reaching back to their alma mater, either in the form of financial support or sharing anecdotes about Sr. Janet, or both. We are also pleased that many from our community, even those who did not have the chance to meet Sr. Janet, recognize the importance of this project as a true asset for our students.

Our school commits to forming the Mind, Body and Spirit of our students, and the Sr. Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center will help fortify the Body tenet of our mission. We would like to think she would be humbled by this extraordinary outpouring of love and support. However, there have been some hurdles to jump over.

Recently, we learned that the costs of materials are growing at an unprecedented rate, one that shocked our committee members and stakeholders. This project was initially estimated to cost about \$1.2 million. The latest estimates are closer to \$1.5 million, and these numbers increase every 60 days as the prices of construction materials increase. A recent anonymous gift of \$200,000 has helped us reach the \$1 million mark, a milestone we would not have achieved without the generosity of the Blue and White Fund, and over 350 Kennedy Parents, Alumni, Friends, and their Corporate Partners. Although this \$1 million is enough to start the construction phase of the building, we are still not at the finish line. With our professional partner, architect Mr. Paul Checco, AIA, we are close to awarding the contract to a builder, breaking ground, and starting the construction process.

We still need help getting the final \$500,000, funds that will allow us to bridge the gap due to the increased construction costs and to purchase the state-of-the-art exercise and training equipment needed to fill this grand building. With well over 70 classes of KCPS and St. Mary's grads out there, this additional \$500,000 is achievable. We greatly appreciate gifts of any size. This endeavor will profoundly benefit our Gaels as individuals, as members of athletic teams, and as young adults establishing lifelong healthy habits.

If you would like to donate or participate in helping us close the gap between building and completing this project, please contact Fred Compton, Director of Advancement, at fred.compton@kennedycatholic.org or go to www.kennedycatholic.org/fitness-center/. Thank you again for all you do to help us advance the cause of Catholic education and ensure that our young people achieve their dreams. GO GAELS!!

When a Kennedy Catholic Reunion Ends Up

Alumni Feature

The bonds forged at Kennedy Catholic last forever. Friendships made while attending this special school endure through time and change. And when alumni can reconnect, magic can happen.

Take the story of several members of the Class of 1981. At their reunion in October 2022 at Molly Darcy's in Danbury, CT, Bob Riebesehl and Maureen (McGuire) Decker, who had been friends since grammar school, reconnected and rebonded over their passion to help the community.



Bob belongs to St. Joe's Men's Ministry, whose motto is "Every Child Deserves a Bed." This volunteer group builds bunk beds from scratch for families in need, and delivers them straight to their homes, where they assemble the beds and also provide new mattresses, mattress pads, sheets, pillows and quilts. To date the ministry has built and donated nearly 100 bunk bed ensembles.

As divine intervention would have it, Maureen works as Associate Director of Volunteers with the nonprofit organization Saint Joseph Parenting Center in Danbury, CT (the name is just a coincidence, but perhaps another sign from above). The center's mission is to strengthen families through parenting education with the hopes of breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect. Maureen knew of five clients that would benefit from these beautiful custom-built bunk beds.

So a few months later, in early July 2023, Bob and Maureen joined together to bring this simple but important necessity to several young children in need. The duo and others met at five houses in Danbury to assemble the beds for the families trying to improve the lives of their children, and equipped them with all new bedding.

"The families are incredibly grateful for Bob's and the other men in his ministry's generosity," said Maureen. "I am so grateful that Bob and I reconnected and together were able to have an impact on these families. I guess you just never know what will transpire after a fun class reunion!"

Maureen said that the Class of 1981's reunion was an ideal setting for classmates to reconnect. "Many of us had not seen each other in years so we caught up on what our lives were currently about and then had some laughs reliving memories from the past."

The fact that something so important and wonderful could come out of this reunion was a major bonus to attending such events. One classmate was able to help another help children who needed the most basic thing: a bed to get a good night's sleep in, something most of us take for granted.

According to Bob, "Our Men's Ministry group is blessed with several handy gents, two of whom are carpenters (does this sound familiar; our Lord was a carpenter!). They perform all the cuts for the headboards and rails, etc. Through the charitable donations of other parishioners we also supply the sheets, comforters, pillows and pillowcases. This endeavor has been going on for nearly ten years with approximately 100 families receiving beds so far from our ministry."



This gift to children often means so much to them and their parents. This is especially true for the clients of Saint Joseph Parenting Center. "If I were to sum it up in one word I would say these bunk beds mean SMILES!! The families were so appreciative to receive these handmade bunk beds and all of the luxurious bedding," said Maureen. "Some of the families live in tight living quarters and the bunk beds allow them to maximize the use of space in their children's rooms. For some of the children, this is the first time they have a bed of their own. Our families are grateful for the kindness shown to them by St. Joe's Men's Ministry," she noted.

Helping the Community, Everyone Feels Blessed

Saint Joseph Parenting Center works to promote “A World Free of Child Abuse and Neglect.” The center aims to strengthen families at risk of abuse and neglect by providing parenting education and resource support, and promotes positive parenting to “Educate the Parent, Protect the Child.” With two locations in Stamford and Danbury, Connecticut, the organization supports nearly 500 children a year and has served over 1,700 families. If you would like to support and/or volunteer at Saint Joseph Parenting Center, contact Maureen at (203) 512-2804 or email her at mdecker@sjpcenter.org. You can learn more about the organization at www.sjpcenter.org.



Chris Langdon, a classmate and friend of Bob's, said that this ministry is one of Bob's favorite things to do, as he considers it strictly an act of charity that meshes with Bob's strong faith and personal skill. "Bob and his men's ministry provide children who are in real need, who don't even have beds, a safe place to sleep and in a way, a sense of pride," Chris said. "Bob and Maureen practice the Christian values that they learned at Kennedy Catholic and bring them into their everyday and professional lives."

Maureen remembers Kennedy Catholic as a very family-oriented environment that encouraged all students to work to be their best selves. "A faith-based education has been the foundation for my continued adult Catholic faith, which has served me well," she said. Maureen also made sure her children attended Catholic schools where they lived.

While a student at Kennedy, Maureen was involved in cheerleading and belonged to SERVE, an organization that encouraged students to help those in need. "I believe this fueled my passion for serving those who are less fortunate," she said.

Maureen and her husband Ken have four children and two grandchildren. Bob and his wife Joyce have two daughters and three grandchildren. Both Maureen and Bob believe that the Catholic education they received at Kennedy Catholic, which always encourages living a life the way Jesus taught us to, the importance of community service and loving others, is what made them driven to help those in need their entire adult lives.

She also believes attending Kennedy Catholic helps parents of students as well.

"Parenting can be very challenging, and having your children in a family-oriented, faith-based environment will provide much needed support during the teenage years. And a Kennedy Catholic education will set the students on a path for success," she said.

Bob and Maureen wanted to share this story with all Kennedy Catholic alumni for a good reason. "Our hope is that this may inspire others to go out into their communities and seek out opportunities to give back. It is so rewarding!"

And KCPS hopes that other alumni will be interested in planning their reunions so that they too can reconnect, reminisce, enjoy the party and maybe find ways to bring blessings into the world.

If you would like assistance with planning a reunion, feel free to reach out to the Alumni Office at alumni@kennedycatholic.org.



Alumni News

Kennedy Catholic loves to hear from our alumni, and share your updates and good news with the Kennedy Catholic Family! Visit kennedycatholic.org/alumni to create a submission, or contact the Alumni Office at alumni@kennedycatholic.org with your information and photos so we can share, and so we can stay in touch with you too! Don't forget to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and LinkedIn!
You can also reach us at (914) 232-5061, ext. 110.

Reunions

Attention Class of 1974! 50 Year Reunion Plans

It's time to reunite! The Class of 1974 from John F. Kennedy Catholic High School (now John F. Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School) is coming together for a very special event – their 50 Year Reunion, to be held June 21-23, 2024. It's been half a century since the class graduated and went separate ways, but now it's time to come back together and reconnect with old friends.

The Class of 1974's 50th Reunion will be a two-day event with plenty of opportunities for fun and plenty of time for making memories. Friday evening will begin with cocktails and time to reacquaint in the pub room at the Hotel MTK, Mt. Kisco, NY. On the second day, there will be a selection of activities such as playing a round of golf, attending Mass and taking a tour of the high school. On Saturday night there will be dinner and dancing in the school's Lakeview Room in a festive atmosphere.

So, if you are a member of the class of 1974 from JFK Catholic High School, mark the dates on your calendar, dust off your dancing shoes, grab your golf clubs and get ready to party! The 50th reunion is sure to be a blast, and a chance to make some new memories with old friends. Please reach out to your former classmates and let them know that you are attending the event. Encourage them to join as well. For more information, please contact Donna Herrle at herrledonna@gmail.com and/or visit our Facebook page: Class of '74 - JFK, Somers, NY. We hope to see you there!

Ten Years Later, They Meet Again

The Class of 2013 reconnected on Saturday, November 11th, at the Brazen Fox in White Plains. Thanks to the hard work of planning committee members Shayna Gaskins, Shannon (Spillane) McCaul and Madison Evans, 50 members of the class met for dinner, drinks and memories.



Gael Updates

Once a Gael, Always a Gael! We love to hear from you and see what you have achieved since graduation, so read about your fellow Gaels and then reach out to us to tell us your news at alumni@kennedycatholic.org.



Brendan Kenneally '22, currently a student-athlete at Adelphi University, played for the Irish Wolfhounds this past summer. The Wolfhounds are the first Irish-American Baseball Club composed of Irish and Irish American dual citizens, and they play with the hope that Ireland reaches the World Baseball Classic in 2026. Also, two current Kennedy softball players competed for Ireland in the European Championships, read about that on page 17.



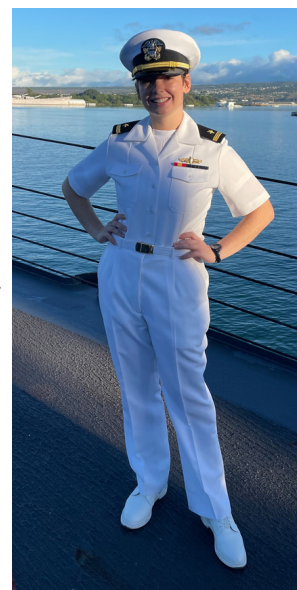
Teresa Devino '16 is serving aboard the USS Wayne E. Meyer, a U.S. Navy warship operating out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Teresa jokes that her job is like a normal office job except that her office floats out into the ocean, but we know there is more to it than that. "I have a boss, do paperwork, and joke around with co-workers. You get really close with people you work with because the hours can be long and the experiences can be pretty unique to the Navy community," Teresa said.

She is currently transitioning roles in the Navy. "My first tour was in Hawaii as a Surface Warfare Officer on USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108), where I led a division of sailors and became qualified to run the bridge (drive the ship) underway. Now I am training to be a Meteorology and Oceanography Officer, which will allow me to aid in the planning phase of operations mostly (the fancy lingo we use is 'Battlespace Awareness')," Teresa said.

The KCPS alumna began her journey to the Navy via the ROTC at Virginia Tech where she studied Civil and Environmental Engineering. "I went with the Navy because I didn't have a lot of prior knowledge about the military and the Navy seemed to have the most diverse career opportunities. It was like picking a big college because I wasn't sure what I wanted to major in – so I went with the place where I could do anything and just decided along the way," Teresa explained. She feels that the ROTC offers many advantages, especially scholarship opportunities. Teresa was able to commission (become an Officer) immediately after graduating college.

Regarding her current career, Teresa said she finds that the social skills she learned in high school were incredibly valuable. "Most of my time at Kennedy Catholic was involved in year-round volleyball and community service. That's where I can say my earliest ideas of leadership come from. Academically, I feel I was at or ahead of the baseline starting out in college because I was able to take AP/college courses at Kennedy," she noted, adding that, "I was there when the iPad was first introduced to the classes, and learning to keep up with technology and use it efficiently is a huge advantage careerwise."

Teresa has good advice for today's KCPS students: "Lean into what interests you, and don't ever be afraid to try new things. Classes are a great way to learn new subjects and build study habits, but what's really going to stick with you is what you learn by putting yourself out there and making the most out of your time outside of the classroom. Trying something completely new or trying something harder than you're comfortable with is terrifying to everybody, but more often than not you will surprise yourself with what you can accomplish if you just step outside your comfort zone. Failure and embarrassment are side-effects of growth and learning, and they are NECESSARY for personal growth. Just have fun along the way, and you have nothing to worry about."



Susanna (Cohen) Kercher '15 married her husband Michael, a classmate from the University of Notre Dame, this past May. Fr. Vaillancourt presided over their wedding Mass at St. Joseph's Church. The couple traveled to Italy for their honeymoon, where they received a sposi novelli (newlywed) blessing from Pope Francis.



Lindsay Walsh and Alex Lieske, both Class of 2013, tied the knot on July 30, 2023 at the Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, New Jersey, surrounded by friends and classmates who have become family.



Alumni News

Join the Kennedy Catholic Alumni Association – Don't Miss Out on the Fun!

In the Spring of 2023, the Kennedy Catholic Alumni Association reformed with a reinvigorated energy to get more involved with its alma mater. The Alumni Association's goal is to help make our alumni community an active and viable network for generations to come. No matter if those generations refer to the school as Kennedy Catholic Prep, Kennedy High School, or JFK, we are all Gaels who shared the benefit of the Catholic education instilled within the brick walls of our school. The last six decades of our school's graduates have produced alumni who maintain high-level employment and flourishing careers, an untapped source of professional networking that we are committed to explore and utilize.

The Alumni Association meets quarterly in person and via video conference to touch base on efforts in recruiting more members, discuss and plan upcoming events as well as share ideas for new events. Important aspects of its mission include sharing news about school events on social media and by word of mouth, supporting current Gaels at athletic matches, and ultimately partnering with the school to help plan reunions for other classes in addition to their own. Several alumni from the last ten years have visited our juniors in their College Preparation and Career Planning classes to discuss life after Kennedy and their professional experiences so far – engaging and enriching conversations for our current Gaels.

Past social events sponsored by the Alumni Association include the Trivia Night held in June 2023 at the Lazy Boy Saloon in White Plains, the Homecoming Tailgate held on campus at the baseball field in October 2023, and the Annual Turkey Bowl held on campus at the turf field in November 2023. Among these three events, over 50 alumni ranging from members of class years 2002 to 2021 came together - but we need more participation to grow!

We are excited to plan more events and invite all alumni back to campus to meet current students and share their collegiate and professional experiences. If you are interested in joining the Alumni Association or visiting campus, please contact Fred Compton at advancement@kennedycatholic.org or call the school at (914) 232-5061 and ask for Advancement.



2023 Homecoming

The Gaels Kick Off the Year with Homecoming Events, Some Old and Some New

by Kelly Walsh, Class of 2024

One of Kennedy's most beloved and anticipated school weeks is homecoming - a week to honor our student body and Gael Pride. This year's homecoming was held in early October and featured an array of fun events all leading up to the big game on Friday night.

Homecoming events help each Gael create essential memories they will carry with them after graduation. The Club Expo kicked things off, during which leaders from each club represented their group and recruited new members. Student Council organized several events, including the fan favorite Girls Powder Puff Football game (at which the seniors triumphed 21-7 over the juniors) and an all new Boys Powder Puff Volleyball game. Fall athletes were honored at the Pep Rally and the Gael mascot helped the cheerleaders build excitement for Homeroom Olympics and the Varsity Football game the following day. Homeroom Olympics featured the traditional games, relay races, musical chairs, capture the flag, and tug of war, outside on the turf, and of course the seniors emerged as champions. Varsity Football took the win over St. Dom's, with three seniors scoring to lead the team to the 17-7 victory.

For seniors, homecoming week is a bittersweet time, as it marks the beginning of the end of high school. While there may be a touch of sadness, it's a time to look back and reflect on all of the accomplishments we have had at Kennedy. The memories we create throughout homecoming are something we have to cherish for the rest of our lives. Ultimately, homecoming is a time to look forward to the future, while knowing we can always return home. Once a Gael, always a Gael!



Sophomores celebrate at Annual Homeroom Olympics



Senior boys strategize with coaches at first Powder Puff Volleyball



Seniors girls get pumped for Annual Powder Puff Football



Annual Club Expo



The Gael works the crowd before Pep Rally

The Class of 2023 Goes Far...



Rachel Cunningham is a U.S. Air Force Academy Appointee in Colorado Springs. She was a member of the Student Council, a Student of Excellence and a four-year member of both the Swim and Tennis Teams at KCPS.

Darren Gray, University of Scranton

Darren Gray attends the University of Scranton, majoring in Kinesiology & Business Administration. DJ is a recipient of the Loyola Scholarship and now plays NCAA baseball for the Scranton Royals. DJ was a four-year member of the Kennedy Varsity Baseball Team and a batboy for the New York Yankees.



Fionnoulia O'Reilly, Boston College

Fionnoulia O'Reilly now attends Boston College studying Business at the Carroll School of Management. Noulia (pictured with her parents and brother Connor '20) played four years of Varsity Field Hockey and Lacrosse, and was a member of Chess Club and Yearbook staff.

Jared Freda, SUNY Delhi

Jared Freda is now a student at SUNY Delhi, where he studies Automotive Engineering. Jared was active in a number of community service initiatives while at KCPS.



Here Are Some Highlights!

Jake Piotrowski now attends West Virginia University to study Global Supply Chain Management. He received the Chambers School of Business Merit Scholarship of over \$48,000. Jake was a member of the Varsity Golf Team and the Kennedy Catholic Players' Stage Crew.



Kelly Duque, University of Colorado

Kelly Duque is a student at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she studies Business. Kelly was a four-year member of the Spring Track Team.

Jack Gordineer, University of Wisconsin

Jack Gordineer is at the University of Wisconsin in Madison studying Geological Engineering. Jack received a Civil & Environmental Engineering Merit Scholarship. A volunteer firefighter in Cold Spring, he was also a member of the Fishing Club, NHS and Golf, Soccer, Lacrosse, Track and Basketball Teams.



Ava McKearney, Quinnipiac University

Ava McKearney is studying Health Science at Quinnipiac University. A recipient of a Trustee Scholarship, Ava is joined by sister Caitlyn '18 and brother Michael '20. Ava played four years of Field Hockey, Lacrosse, and was part of the inaugural Girls Flag Football Team.

Saint Mary's Academy Soars

The New Middle School Grows Its Program Offerings and Student Body



The 2022-23 school year was the first year Saint Mary's Academy (SMA), a middle school located in a dedicated wing of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, educated and nurtured students in grades 6-8. And from all accounts, it was a successful inaugural year for all!

Many new students from both public and private schools enrolled in SMA this year, joining returning academy students. Ms. Emily Machado, SMA's Dean and Social Studies and English Teacher, attributes this to happy existing students and good news spread word-of-mouth. "I am happy and proud to say that our first year went very well thanks to our dedicated administration, staff and families. We would not have been able to have been successful in our inaugural year without the support and understanding we had from all parties involved," she said.

She noted that the staff of St. Mary's Academy continues to work to make the school stronger and the experiences of the students better. According to Ms. Machado, during the inaugural year SMA staff was dedicated to helping students make a seamless transition into the rigorous academic curriculum. "This year we are implementing a new method of promoting a sense of community within our middle school," she said. Furthermore, this past summer, all middle school teachers were trained in Developmental Designs I for middle school, an approach that encompasses both the academic and social needs of students.

"This provides structures for teaching the whole child in order for academic growth to be enhanced, which is something we take great pride in here at SMA and KCPS. Mr. Tassone, our Athletic Director, has also taken the time and effort to determine what the best athletic opportunities are that we can provide our middle school students this year as we grow in size," Ms. Machado explained.

One of the other focuses for this year is adding extracurricular activities and opportunities for the academy's students. Right now, there are numerous clubs such as Arts & Crafts, Cartoon Drawing, Chess, Faith Life, Game Night, Girls in STEM, Legos, Music: Recording & Production for Singers, Ping Pong, SMA Illustrated (the student-centered magazine), and the SMA Yearbook. For athletics, students can participate in cross country, soccer, basketball, volleyball and track & field.



Of course, a rigorous academic STEM program that is faith-based is the main focus, one that will allow SMA graduates to transition easily into Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School. St. Mary's Academy gives families another choice for a superior Catholic education in Northern Westchester County. SMA students are able to take high school level courses in eighth grade, learn on KCPS' premier instructional technology platform and attend regularly scheduled Community Masses.



In Its Second Year!

When plans were announced for SMA, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, said that, "This is great news for Catholic families in Northern Westchester County as we all continue to battle (the effects of) the Covid-19 pandemic. The Catholic Church in New York introduced organized education to New York more than 200 years ago, and the academy's formation is a move towards preserving and growing Catholic education in this area for generations."

St. Mary's Academy is designed to offer the same time-tested Catholic school curriculum and values-centered education available at all Catholic schools across the region, and especially at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School. Both schools share one common mission: preparing students for a successful future by working to develop Mind, Body and Spirit. SMA's program of studies fulfills middle school educational standards of the College Board's Pre-AP Curriculum and also challenges students to expand their educational horizons by studying languages other than English along with math, science, robotics, humanities and theology.



Hear From Our Students!

"SMA is a really good school. It is readying us for high school and college, we start at a higher level than at other schools. I love the STEM class, and our lunches are awesome!" Alex Curra, Grade 6

"The students and teachers are all very kind here. I would tell other students considering coming to SMA how great the school really is." Jacob John, Grade 7



Mrs. Jackson
Chief Coordinator

Ms. Machado
Dean

LEARN MORE

Please visit kennedycatholic.org/st-marys-academy
or contact Mrs. Courtney Jackson at
cjackson@kennedycatholic.org or Ms. Emily Machado at
emily.machado@kennedycatholic.org.

With such a successful first year, it is no surprise to learn that this year the student body added 29 students (growing from 46 to 75 students). There is so much to gain by attending the newest Catholic middle school in the region, one that is attached to one of the most successful and highly revered Catholic high schools that serves students in NY and CT.

"St. Mary's Academy provides a unique opportunity to start the Kennedy Catholic Preparatory school experience during an important developmental time in a student's life. Students at Saint Mary's Academy are already incorporated into KCPS school life, and truly look up to our upperclassmen. They take pride in knowing that one day, they too will be upperclassmen leaders inspiring our academy students," said Ms. Machado.



"I like the way the teachers teach here, it is an awesome school. If you want strong academics, then you should consider SMA as an option." Jason Polcari, Grade 8

"All the teachers are supportive and are able to work more one-on-one with you. I like being involved in a bunch of clubs. And the food is really good!" Robyn Lewin, Grade 7

The Kennedy Gaels'

Gaels Jet Set to Barcelona, Southern France, Paris

On and off since the mid 1980's, Kennedy Catholic Gaels have had the privilege and opportunity to explore the European continent guided by their trusted faculty leaders. These trips foster cultural literacy, leadership and independence, and ultimately help students on their path to becoming engaged global citizens.

Kennedy students are exposed to the skills upon which traveling internationally relies: organization, responsibility, punctuality, endurance and respect. Graduates who partook in European excursions as high school juniors and seniors have the confidence and enthusiasm necessary to pursue study abroad during their undergraduate education, and develop a lifetime love of traveling.

The tradition continued in April 2023 when a group of 41 Gaels jetset from New York to Europe for a ten day cultural excursion, guided by a team of Kennedy Catholic faculty, staff and family.

When the four sophomores, 11 juniors and 25 seniors and their chaperones landed in Barcelona, Spain, they fought bravely through jet lag to travel further to La Rambla, the bustling heart of Spain's second largest city. While there, they toured Barri Gòtic, the Gothic Quarter, took in the architecture of Antoni Gaudí at Parc Guell and La Sagrada Familia Cathedral, and visited the Picasso Museum.



First stop: Barcelona - Mirador del Palau Nacional

Just two days into their journey, they set out north to cross the Pyrénées into Provence in southern France. Passing through the countryside as it slowly changed from the arid Spanish climate to the lush French landscape, the group stopped in the medieval town of Carcassonne, whose ramparts and towers are so well preserved that they have been featured in movies. Upon arrival in Avignon, the picturesque medieval "City of Popes," the group enjoyed authentic French cuisine and a stroll around the piazza.



Last stop: Paris - Opéra National de Paris

The next morning the group of excited Kennedy travelers celebrated Easter Mass in a chapel next to the Palais des Papes and then spent the rest of the afternoon on horseback, leisurely riding along the bay in Camargue. Before they knew it, it was time to travel on one of Europe's fastest trains further north to their final destination: the City of Light, Paris. The Gaels' Parisian days began with a tour of the Marais, one of the oldest districts in the city, followed by a walk far underneath the city into the Catacombs. The group enjoyed a lesson in French cuisine complete with a crepe making station, fried camembert and pastry assembly before heading to Sainte-Chapelle with its spectacular stained glass windows. The trip concluded with a nighttime ascension to the second level of the Eiffel Tower.

Kennedy Catholic partners with ACIS, the American Council for International Studies, to provide exceptional educational journeys for students. ACIS provides a full itinerary complete with transportation, cultural site bookings, and a knowledgeable local guide who travels with the group for the entirety of the trip. Shout out to Cecilia, ACIS travel expert, as well as Mrs. Katie Glembotzky P'16, group leader and mastermind behind the program's success, and chaperones Mr. Marty Glembotzky P'16, Dr. Illaria Tedesco, Mrs. Patrizia Venturini, and Ms. Noelle Torre '14.

Look out for the Gaels traveling to Greece in the Spring of 2024 and follow their adventures on Instagram @kcpsgaelsabroad.

European Excursions

KC Softball Teammates Play in European Championships

Aine Curley '25 and Cassidy Moriarty '25, two of Kennedy Catholic's standout current softball players, had the amazing experience of competing in the European Championships this summer. Their talents and hard work led them to Prague, Czech Republic, as members of Team Ireland.

Cassidy's journey to this great softball adventure started when she learned about the opportunity while playing in a USSSA tournament in Florida two summers ago. After trying out for the U18 team, she was also invited to play for Ireland in the European Championships in 2023. Cassidy then let Aine, a teammate at KCPS as well as on her travel team Lady Fury, know about the opportunity, and Aine tried out in December in Virginia and also made the Irish team.

Aine was able to travel with Cassidy and her family to Prague for the games. It would be an experience of a lifetime, because besides meeting people from other countries and traveling abroad, their Team Ireland earned the bronze medal and qualified for the upcoming World Cup.

"Before the games, Ireland was ranked 17th out of 20 teams in Europe. At the championships, we placed third out of the 21 countries represented, just behind the Czech Republic which ranked first and Italy which ranked second," Cassidy said. She played third base and shortstop for Ireland, and plays shortstop, third base, first base, center field, left field and occasionally pitches for KCPS.

Aine, a catcher for both the Ireland and KCPS teams, said that besides their medal, the most exciting thing about this experience was "being able to interact with people from all over Europe." Both she and Cassidy agree that the parade before the games was a highlight. "We got to march with the other teams and celebrate with them. We took pictures with many different countries, especially the teams from Israel and Hungary," she said. "And we became close with the girls on our own team; we spent any free moment together as friends."



Before each game, the girls would exchange pins with the other teams. "We also spent time with the girls from Switzerland, and would braid their hair for their games. We went to watch their games and they cheered for us during our bronze medal game," said Cassidy. Aine noted that they also developed a relationship with the Hungary team, saying that the players came to most of her team's games and watched the bronze game on YouTube on their flight home, and sent them a video of their positive reaction when Team Ireland won the game and medal.

Aine believes attending Kennedy Catholic with a variety of people from different areas helped her adapt to this new, diverse environment. "I like attending KCPS because there are many different groups here so there is someplace for everyone," she said. "I met new people that I've become very friendly with at school. I am very grateful for all the memories and friends that I've made here and I can't wait to make more," she said.

Cassidy likes attending KCPS for many reasons. "I feel the school challenges me academically and really pushes me to test myself. Kennedy has offered me many amazing friendships, as well as memories and the best high school experience I could imagine!" she said.

Kennedy Catholic's Softball Program

Coach Chris A'Hearn Headed Into 11th Year

Thanks to back-to-back Varsity Team CHSAA League Championships along with the JV team being a finalist in last season's City Championship game, 2023 was a very good year for the Kennedy Catholic Softball Program. Led by an experienced coaching staff and support from the entire school, over 50 players have signed up to try out for the Spring 2024 season, and for the first time in Kennedy Catholic Softball history, which dates back to 1971, a first ever CHSAA Fall League was held.

Chris A'Hearn completed his tenth season as Head Coach for the Varsity team after serving as an Assistant Coach for two seasons. A dedicated police officer for over 25 years, most recently as a Lieutenant for a law enforcement agency, he also has vast experience in athletic coaching, having served as a football, baseball and basketball coach in the area as well.

Coach A'Hearn has used his varied experience to lead a special group of young ladies to consecutive Varsity Division titles. Last season, the Lady Gaels went undefeated (9-0) in the Westchester/Bronx division in the regular season, and had an overall 17-1 record for the past two years combined, earning them the number one seed spot. An upset in the 2023 playoffs due to a loss to St. Joseph Hill High School from Staten Island brought that season's final record to 12-3.

Despite the disappointment in the league playoffs, it was the first time in program history that four players were awarded All-League honors: Kaitlyn Roemmelt '23 (third consecutive All-League Honor), who led the league with eight home runs and 23 RBIs; Emily Melendez '23, who went on to play for the Syracuse University club team; Aine Curley '25, who ranks as one of the highest rated catchers in the league; and Cassidy Moriarity '25, who also ranked among CHSAA coaches as a top third baseman in the league. Both Aine and Cassidy have D1 potential as they head into the third year as Varsity players.



There were many highlights for the 2023 season, according to Coach A'Hearn. "Our best win came against Monsignor McClancy Memorial High School. We were down two runs with two outs in the last inning when we mounted a rally. The girls never gave up, and, one batter at a time, they all did their jobs getting on base. Freshman outfielder Liana Crawford '26 came to bat with the tying and winning runs on base, with two outs and two strikes; she hit a double to drive them both in, bringing us to an outstanding victory," he said.

"After celebrating a tremendous win, one of our Varsity players stood up and thanked our young freshman pitcher Emma Smith '26 for keeping us in the game, which gave us the opportunity for a late inning rally. Most people think of the result, not the road to it, and I thought this was very telling of the character of this team and its selflessness," Coach A'Hearn noted.

Four seniors from last year's Varsity team graduated in June. Co-Captain Katilyn Roemmelt '23 attends East Carolina University and is studying to become an oral surgeon while Co-Captain Anabri Gonzalez '23 attends Iona University and plans to major in Business. Emily Melendez '23 headed to Syracuse University for Pre-Law and Shannon Dalrymple '23 now attends the University of Delaware, one of the top schools in the nation for Veterinarian Medicine.

Coach A'Hearn believes that, "while these four leaders can't be replaced, plenty of players remain to reach the goal of a CHSAA City Championship in 2024, including Aine Curley '25, Cassidy Moriarty '25 and Emma Smith '26, who dominated the division by going undefeated in league play, and who walked just three batters all year and had a 1.08 ERA. The 2018 Varsity Team under Coach A'Hearn was a finalist in that season's CHSAA City Championship game so the desire to return and win a Championship is top of mind for Coach A'Hearn and all the players this upcoming Spring.

Reaching Record Highs



Coach A'Hearn believes "it takes a village" and depends on the support and experience of his two Assistant Coaches, Rob Moriarity (parent of Cassidy '26) and Brian Bruder, Kennedy Catholic's Director of Admissions and Social Studies teacher. "Both men are outstanding, caring coaches; they teach with love of the sport and compassion to see the girls elevate themselves in faith, friendships and family," said Coach A'Hearn.

Their coaching philosophy is sacred: "We put the girls first; their family life and school work comes before softball. While we are here to coach softball, our most important mission is to be a positive influence in these young women's lives for the short time we have them," Coach A'Hearn explained. "We also prepare them to work as a team. I'll gather them and tell one girl to stand alone in front of the whole team and ask them if she can win a game by herself, and of course the answer is no. I ask another with the same result until they're all together, and it is clear that now we can act and play as a team. So no matter how good you are, you can't succeed in life without working with someone as a teammate, whether it's family, school or work," he concluded.

The support the program receives from Kennedy Catholic administration is vital for the team's success. School President Father Vaillancourt, School Principal Mr. Gregory Viceroy and Athletic Director Dominick Tassone have been supporters of the program since day one. "They all understand we need to promote and grow Catholic education in our region. Kennedy Catholic Prep represents a big part of that growth, and in order to attract prospective students to a school like KCPS, it takes a collaborative effort from administration, faculty, coaches and staff," Coach A'Hearn said.

He also added that he believes that it has never been more important to make sure there is another generation instilled with the values of a Catholic faith-based education. As a father of three daughters that graduated KCPS, "Faith is only as good as the foundation, and Kennedy Catholic Prep provides a foundation that will lead them for the rest of their lives. The combination of a college preparatory education that includes strong academics, extracurriculars including athletics and a variety of clubs along with the Arts and STEM programs all shape us into who we are and become. There is no better place to achieve this than at Kennedy Catholic Prep," Coach A'Hearn said.

The A'Hearn family is deeply involved with Kennedy Catholic and its mission. Coach has participated in the building of the snack shack and bathrooms at the football field, and helped secure the softball field scoreboard that was funded by the Link Family (Jessica Link '18, four-year Varsity starter). Coach A'Hearn continues to actively lead fundraising activities that have resulted in improvements to the softball field and due to his handiwork, the construction of a brand new softball clubhouse last year gives the girls a "sense of pride."

Coach A'Hearn and his wife Kathy, who holds a Doctorate in Nursing from Sacred Heart University, are the proud and supportive parents of three Kennedy Catholic Prep alumni. Annemarie '09 went on to the Division I Rowing Team at Sacred Heart University, Kathryn '11 played for the Endicott College Soccer Team (she was captain of Kennedy's Soccer and Softball Teams, a member of the Basketball and Indoor Track Teams, and earned the Allen Anthony Anderson award for Outstanding Three Sport Athlete), and Maureen '13, who played softball and ran cross country at Sacred Heart University. "Once again, all our daughters have benefited greatly from a Kennedy Catholic education, which has guided them in life as far as faith, friendship and family ... and being a good teammate," Coach A'Hearn said.

Spring and the 2024 softball season can't come soon enough for the Kennedy Catholic Prep softball program, which has the goal of winning a CHSAA City Championship this season and in the seasons to follow, all with the support of the entire Kennedy Catholic Prep community. Go Gaels!



Keep up with the Junior Varsity and Varsity Softball Teams on Instagram at @kcps.jvsb and @kcps.vsb.



KC Welcomes New Basketball Head Coaches

Marcus Matthews & Dominick Tassone Take Point

Kennedy Catholic welcomed two new head Basketball coaches this season (although one may seem familiar to many). Marcus Matthews joined as head coach for the Boys Basketball Team, while KCPS Athletic Director, Football coach and PE and History teacher Dominick Tassone signed on as the head coach for the Girls Basketball Team.

Coach Matthews was just as excited to join the Athletics Program as Kennedy Catholic was to have him join the school's coaching staff. "Kennedy is a great school with great academics, a great foundation in faith and great facilities," said Coach Matthews when explaining why he chose to coach here. He previously coached basketball as a Graduate Assistant for two years at Seton Hall University under Shaheen Holloway (Seton Hall HC) and Kevin Willard (Maryland HC). Prior to that, he served as a high school assistant coach for seven years at Monsignor Scanlan High School in the Bronx. Coach Marcus played collegiately at Division II Southern New Hampshire University and also at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School in Brooklyn, part of the CHSAA.

"I relish the opportunity to lead Kennedy Catholic back into a championship caliber program," Coach Matthews said. "I want our team to be fun, exciting and hardworking. We want to compete hard. I also want to help develop the student-athletes into young men on and off the court and give them lifelong memories through different basketball experiences," he noted. Coach Matthew plans to connect the team with the community for volunteer work during the holidays.

Coach Matthews said that the team has been working hard since August and they look to put out a good product this season. "I really hope people come out and support our Boys Basketball Team this year. We are planning to take advantage of our home court and having the fans support us will be huge," he said.



Coach Tassone, who has been Kennedy Catholic's Athletic Director for seven years, also serves as head Football coach and girls Flag Football coach and teaches U.S. History and Physical Education at Kennedy. A graduate of LIU Post University who went on to earn his master's degree from Molloy College, Coach Tassone coached ten seasons of Freshman and JV Basketball at Holy Trinity High School, three as head coach.

"My coaching philosophy is pretty simple: I believe in accountability and dependability," Coach Tassone said. "I always tell my kids to do what you're supposed to do and do it the way you were taught to do it. I am always a full responsibility guy; I want you to take ownership and make no excuses. Being dependable is important because that is how trust is formed. I want us to compete to the best of our ability and then, win or lose, you can hold your head high."

After the previous coach resigned, AD/Coach Tassone sensed that the team needed a more "Kennedy" touch; that is, bringing more school spirit and community into the girls program. So he applied. "Once I received the blessing from my family and Father Vaillancourt to coach the girls team, I thought it was a no-brainer and signed on immediately. I love basketball and it was time to make it part of my life again," he noted. Two alumnae from the Class of 2010 assist him with the coaching, Lauren Foti and Michelle Santora. "Our goals are simple: work extremely hard in practice and be the last one standing in March, and most importantly have fun doing it!"



Keep up with the Boys and Girls Varsity Basketball programs on Instagram at [@kcps_mbb](#) and [@kcpsgbb](#).



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May 23 at 6pm

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