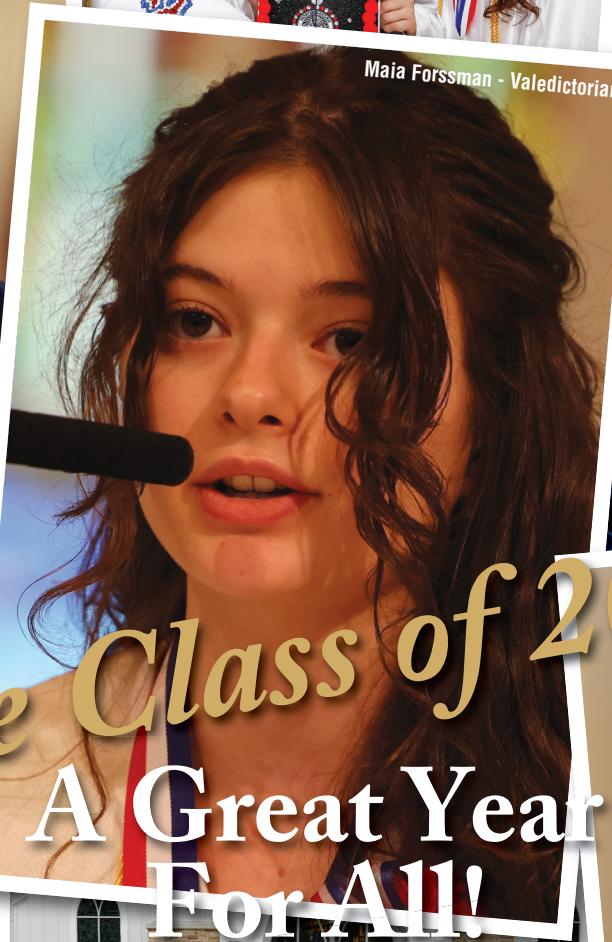


KENNEDY CATHOLIC PREPARATORY SCHOOL ♦ SAINT MARY'S ACADEMY

THE GAEL

SPRING/SUMMER 2023 VOLUME 36



KCPS Volleyball, Softball and LAX Programs Score Big Wins!

The Achims' Gift of Their Time Brings Robotics Awards, and More!

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 end another year of grace. And what a tremendous year it has been. This was our inaugural year for our new middle school, St. Mary's Academy. Named after our forerunner, St. Mary's School in Katonah, SMA carries on the tradition of excellence in Catholic education that began in 1924. We embrace our motto: "Qui credit habet alas;" The one who believes has wings. Or, as we like to say: "If you have faith, you can fly." And we plan for our students to soar as they take on the rigors of our academy education. Educationally, our goal is to close the pandemic gap for the younger students and accelerate the learning process for eighth graders preparing to enter the Prep. So far we have seen tremendous results and we anticipate this new venture in Catholic education will continue to grow and develop as we move forward.

In academics another new initiative is our part-



nering with the College Board and implementing their Pre-AP program, something that will serve our students well academically for years to come. Of course, we continue to excel in sports, with our boys and girls LAX teams winning city championships. And how about that KC robotics team? Their appearance at the VEX World Championship has again won them international renown.

The Sr. Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center will also be a welcome addition to our already expansive athletic complex, and we are ready to break ground now that we are close to achieving our fundraising goals. However, we still have a way to go; please read the article on page 23 for more information. To be outfitted 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark G. Vaillancourt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'M' at the beginning.

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

Events at Kennedy Catholic

Golf Classic – Thursday, October 5, 2023
Homecoming – Friday, October 6, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.
Open House – Sunday, October 15, 2023, 1-4 p.m.
& Wednesday, October 25, 2023, 7 p.m.

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UPDATE YOUR ALUMNI RECORDS

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Raising Faithful Catholic Kids Takes

Patti and Brian Ledley always knew they wanted to raise their children to appreciate, live and practice their Catholic faith. They also felt that they needed support to help them with this on-going journey. That's why they chose Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School to assist them.

Besides providing a stellar, modern college-prep education, KCPS offered their family a nurturing faith-based learning environment – a space where they could continue to learn about and practice their religion and values beyond church and home.

"While we had no grand plan for raising our ten kids, I would say without question that Kennedy Catholic was and is a big part of our recipe," said Patti. "As practicing Catholics, Brian and I know we all need to practice to get better at being Catholic. During all the years at Kennedy Catholic our kids spent practicing lacrosse or football or basketball or their band instruments, and all the years spent helping and doing community service for

the best things to have happened for us. But most of all, the idea that faith and service are taught, discussed and hopefully lived and learned each day is the biggest reason we found Catholic education to be important," he said. "Catholic education is an investment in your children, to help them learn and grow in a faith-based environment, and to prepare them for college and adulthood."

One of the goals the Ledleys had set was to see that all of their children obtain at least a four-year college degree after high school, and to date "we have been very lucky to have succeeded," they said.

In fact, those goals were surpassed. The Ledley children have gone on to attend and graduate from great colleges and universities: Brian Jr. '01, Fordham University; Brendan '03, Loyola College Maryland and an M.L.A. from Cornell University; Patrick '06, Loyola University Maryland and an M.S.T. from

Fordham University; Anne '08, Loyola University Maryland; Bill '09, Bentley University and an M.B.A. from Columbia University; Gerard '12, University of Notre Dame; Andrew '12, University of Notre Dame and a Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University; Deirdre '16, Manhattan College; Sean (who graduated from Brewster High School '20), Emerson College; and Mary '23 has committed to



others, were times our children practiced being Catholic. My point is Kennedy Catholic helped Brian and I accomplish raising Catholic kids," she said.

The Ledleys always had faith in Catholic education, and the support behind it. "Schools are a precious instrument that makes such a vital contribution to the work of the Church and of society," said Pope Francis in 2013. "The mission of schools is to develop a sense of truth, of what is good and beautiful," he said another time. The Ledleys agree, and nine out of ten of their children attended KCPS because they felt the school's mission was in sync with what they wanted to help their children to grow and practice their Catholic faith on a daily basis.

Brian Ledley knows that KCPS could offer his offspring the things they believed were very important. "Between the college preparation program Kennedy offers and the fact that a college education is the expectation after graduation, it has been one of

attend Pennsylvania State University.

The last Ledley to matriculate through Kennedy Catholic, Mary has left her legacy during her senior year as a member of the team working to restore a program favored among modern Gaels – Kennedy Live. After falling into disuse during the pandemic, Kennedy Live needed excited team members and problem solvers to learn new production technology and restore the show to its former glory. Mary spent many a homeroom and free 8th period troubleshooting cameras, lighting, microphones and green screen software to become the lead production technician on the show. As she prepares to take her next steps, she is also working to prepare younger Gaels to take up her mantle. These are big Sperrys to fill in the opinion of producer Ms. Noelle Torre '14, who extends her gratitude to Mary for her hours of patient work.

The Ledleys are proud of everything all of their children have

is a Village, and a Special School

accomplished at Kennedy Catholic and are grateful for the strong Catholic values that were instilled there while they were able to practice their faith. They are also satisfied with the solid college preparatory education they all received.

Proving that a KCPS education can lead to any career, the Ledley kids have positions as Hospital Administrator, Landscape Architect, Assistant Catholic School Principal, Food and Beverage Director, Investment Analyst, Craft Beer Brewer and Logistics Manager, to name a few. While students at Kennedy Catholic, they participated in many extracurric-



ular opportunities offered by the school, including football, baseball, basketball, lacrosse, cross country, Kennedy Live, band, yearbook club, the National Honor Society and more, and devoted numerous hours to community service. They have worked in the family catering business, who in turn helps KCPS – the Ledleys have catered many events in the Lakeview Room and the White House at Kennedy, including class reunions, fundraisers and teacher/staff meals over the past 26 years.

Patti made a great analogy about it all: "In the Food Service business, we follow recipes all the time and we know that you want the end result to be good – and Kennedy Catholic was and is a big part of our family recipe for raising good kids."

The Ledley Family roots at Kennedy Catholic go very deep, beyond their children. "Our family's ties to Kennedy go back further than our own children. My mother, Patricia Farrell Ledley, was a 1959 St. Mary's graduate and my wife's sister, Bridget O'Donnell Landy, graduated from Kennedy Catholic in 1993. Some of the Sisters of the Divine Compassion (Sr. Christopher, Sr. Caroline) taught my mother, my sister-in-law and my children. I also had aunts and cousins who attended Kennedy," said Brian.

Today, Kennedy Catholic has opened its doors to even more children, through St. Mary's Academy. A middle school located within KCPS, this is the newest effort to expand quality Catholic education in the Westchester and Western Connecticut areas.

And as a four-year college preparatory school enriched and enlivened by its Catholic identity, Kennedy Catholic helps form and deliver well educated, compassionate, articulate students to the world. Diocesan priests, deacons, sisters and lay men and women constitute the well-rounded faculty and staff of the Kennedy Catholic community. The school provides regular masses and celebrations, a four-year theology program and community service opportunities in conjunction with an accredited college preparatory education, including areas in STEM and the Fine Arts, as well as many clubs and activities and 25 varsity sports.

KENNEDY ALUMNI NEWS

Kennedy Catholic loves to hear from our alumni and share their updates and good news with the KCPS 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, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn! Reach us also at (914) 232-5061, ext. 110.

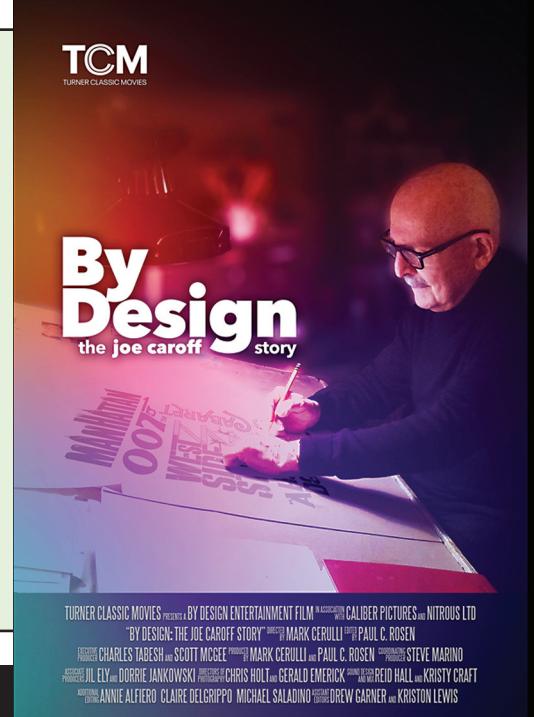
Mark Cerulli, Class of 1978, directed and produced "By Design: The Joe Caroff Story," a documentary on the famous graphic designer which premiered on Turner Classic Movies in October and is streaming on HBO Max. The film focuses on Joe Caroff, a graphic artist who created dozens of iconic movie posters and TV, product and company logos. His most memorable projects include posters for the films "West Side Story," "Cabaret," "Rollerball" and "Manhattan," as well as the iconic James Bond 007 logo and corporate logos for broadcasters Orion Pictures, ABC Olympics, Fox and many more. In November 2022, Film Forum, a well-known cinema in New York City dedicated to independent movies, held a special screening of "By Design: The Joe Caroff Story" that was attended by Mr. Caroff himself.

Mark is an award-winning movie and documentary writer, producer and director. A former staff producer at HBO, he currently freelance produces featurettes and industrials for HBO, EPIX, A&E, Sundance Channel and others. Mark also produced and directed "Halloween: Faces of Fear," a digital theatrical release from Fathom Events, and co-wrote/produced AREA 5150, an upcoming feature co-written and directed by Sean Haitz. He also serves as a volunteer video producer/director for the nonprofit Musicians On Call, creating informational and fundraising videos for the organization that sponsors musical visits to critically ill children and young adults. Currently residing in Los Angeles, Mark graduated from Syracuse University after graduating from Kennedy Catholic.

William Ross, Class of 1990, was sworn in as the Colonel/Chief of the Maine State Police on March 1, 2022 by Maine Governor Janet Mills. After graduating Kennedy, Bill earned a B.A. in Sociology in 1994 from Siena College. While in college, and until 2000, he served in the United States Army Reserve and trained as a 91 Bravo Combat Medic. After nearly a decade in the private sector, Bill served as a Patrol Officer for the New York City and Portland Police Departments. It was in Maine that he worked his way to the impressive top of the law enforcement ladder, serving as a Trooper, Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant/Commanding Officer and Maine State Police Major before his promotion to Colonel/Chief of the Maine State Police.

"Major Ross is a dedicated law enforcement professional who exemplifies the Maine State Police's values of integrity, fairness, compassion and excellence," said Governor Janet Mills in a public statement. "His decades of experience, from his years as a patrol officer to his years on command staff, position him well to become the next Colonel and to lead the Maine State Police into the future as they protect and serve the people of Maine."

Bill believes that his education at Kennedy Catholic helped him with this ascent. "Kennedy Catholic gave me the confidence to get out there and get things done. The school provided a solid education but more importantly a greater sense of right and wrong," he said. Bill also had great inspiration during those days. "My friends inspired me the most; I was very fortunate to have a great group of friends. We helped each other ... of course when we weren't making fun of one another," he said. "Even though we don't see each other as often as we should, my Kennedy friends are the best friends I've ever had." These connections



also inspired him to work in law enforcement. "Several of my friends' parents were in law enforcement and they were genuinely good people. They were always involved and kept us in line," Bill noted.

At Kennedy Catholic, Bill was captain of the football and wrestling teams. His faith was also importantly nurtured here, as he said it continued and carried him through the tough times and helped him enjoy the good times. "I graduated from Kennedy in 1990 and to this day I still reflect on how positive my experience was. I have two children in high school and they attend Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine, also a Catholic college preparatory school. The Kennedy years were a lot of fun and I still have some great memories. My brother Patrick '93 and sister Kathleen O'Dell '95 are also Kennedy alumni and share the same sentiments I do," he said.

Bill has this advice for students at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School today: "Don't ever give up, stay true to yourself; we all make mistakes and a little humility goes a long way." To those considering a career in law enforcement, he shares that, "Regardless of the negative media surrounding the law enforcement profession today, it is still a very rewarding job. If you're looking for a career that is gratifying and provides a sense of making a difference, law enforcement is for you. You'll have a front row seat to what is really happening in our society and you can have an impact on those you connect with."



Christopher Hanrahan, Class of 2017, believes his time at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School prepared him for his journey to the priesthood and service to the Lord as his path “to grow in holiness and joy.” But it took a while after graduation to reach that revelation, as one journey led to another. Chris explains:

“After my years at Kennedy Catholic, I began a journey in search of the truth. I was not content with joining the rat race. My journey led me through many paths and jobs. After leaving Kennedy, I started a company with my good friend and classmate, in search of great wealth and power. I also worked as a contractor with the intent of acquiring the skills needed to own properties. Yet, throughout all that time, I still felt an emptiness within myself. At first, I thought this would be filled with money and success, but, as I grew closer to my goal, I realized this was not the case. What I came to realize was that what I desired was the joy and fulfillment only God could grant me. So, after many years of discerning the call of the Lord, I decided to enter the seminary with the hope of being ordained a priest.”

Chris entered The Cathedral Seminary House of Formation and also began attending classes at St. John’s University to earn a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy. He shares that he is thriving in his current studies and has discovered a great love for philosophy and the other liberal arts, and looks forward to continuing his higher education. But there are still some challenges. “One of the greatest challenges that I currently face is overcoming the desires of my past and accepting God’s will in my life. After many years of desiring and pursuing the things of the world, it is difficult to give them up. But by the grace of God I continue to grow and change as I walk this path. It is not easy to leave behind all that the world offers, but I am confident that I will overcome this struggle, in time,” he said.

This young man recognizes the importance of a strong foundation in helping one overcome the difficulties, challenges and roadblocks the world presents, and believes that without a good foundation in liberal arts and a strong faith, it becomes exponentially more difficult to face all of those challenges. “I now realize that without the education, friends and faith that I received from Kennedy Catholic, I would have had an even more difficult time facing the trials and tribulations that have appeared in my life,” he said.

At Kennedy Catholic, Chris was inspired by many people, including Mr. Santini, one of his history teachers and moderator of the Investment Club. He also credits Father Vaillancourt, President/Principal, and the Sisters of the Divine Compassion who taught at Kennedy. “The Sisters always taught with such love, and they were always friendly and caring. Father Vaillancourt’s fervent faith and Catholic vision helped to form the school into what it is today. Also, his devotion to Christ is not only inspiring, but also helped me in my own discernment, because he is an example of a good and faithful priest, which I aspire to become,” Chris shared. As a student at KCPS, Chris also served as co-captain of the varsity tennis team and as a member of the Kennedy Gaels Robotics Team and the Philosophy Club, and co-founded the Investment Club with classmates.

Chris would like parents and students thinking of attending KCPS to know this: “I think that parents and students need to know that Kennedy is a well-rounded, and unapologetically Catholic, high school. Furthermore, the students have the opportunity to embrace and explore the faith without fear of judgment or restriction. Kennedy Catholic offers a full education in the areas of S.T.E.M., Liberal Arts and Theology. Also, the extracurricular programs cover a wide range of interesting topics and all the major sports. And because Kennedy has students attending from many counties in the area and those participating in the international student exchange program, students have the opportunity to meet many new people and develop long-lasting friendships.”

As for current students, he would like to let them know that there is life beyond high school. “There is a world out there to discover and learn about. Grades are important, and a solid education will help you in all aspects of your life, but they are not the only things to worry about. You should find out who you are and what you are called to be. You should spend this time learning new skills and trying new jobs, so that you can figure out what you want to be. But, at the same time, you have your whole life ahead of you, and there is no rush to figure everything out,” Chris advised.

All should pray for Chris as he continues on this journey that has been set before him, the path to being ordained a priest in the Archdiocese of New York. “Along that path, I wish to grow in holiness and joy. I want to share the Love of Christ with the world and to follow the will of God,” he said.



“I wish to grow in holiness and joy. I want to share the Love of Christ with the world and to follow the will of God.”



Class of 1972 Celebrates Their 50th Reunion

On October 15, 2022, members of the Class of 1972 reunited at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School to greet each other, celebrate old times, catch up and enjoy the friendships and connections they made over 50 years ago at Kennedy Catholic. Thank you to Lucia Ahneman for organizing this amazing event!





Kennedy Catholic encourages alumni to get together and hold reunions to reconnect, remember and rejoice together. We can even host reunions at the school! The Alumni Office is happy to help you plan your event and provide contact information so that you can reach out to your former classmates. For more information, contact alumni@kennedyatholic.org. And let us know if you already have a reunion planned!



The Kennedy Catholic Players Have Fun With SpongeBob

Almost every high schooler in our country grew up with SpongeBob and his friends, so it must have been fun to portray these delightful underwater characters on land at Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School in the 2023 Spring Musical.

Nickelodeon's™ "The SpongeBob Musical" is based on the wildly successful TV series (and later movies) by Stephen Hillenburg. What made this production so much fun, besides portraying beloved characters, was the chance for the young performers to sing songs written by famous artists such as David Bowie, Cyndi Lauper, John Legend, Panic! At the Disco and more, even one by SpongeBob himself (Tom Kenny, the voice actor).

"The SpongeBob Musical" was the right production at the right time. Since everyone

involved felt that students were still recovering from the ramifications of the pandemic, it was decided that a light and humorous musical filled with the iconic characters was perfect for this year's Kennedy Catholic musical.

"The SpongeBob Musical" tells the tale of the undersea world of Bikini Bottom and its salty inhabitants. Although the aquatic world is brimming with fun and adventure, SpongeBob, Patrick, Squidward, Mr. Krabs and the rest of the gang struggle through the ups and downs of life, trying to figure out the true meaning of friendships, the importance of family, and working together as a community to achieve happiness. These are many of the same values Kennedy Catholic reinforces with its students. In the musical, SpongeBob comes to the rescue when the





bickering town. SpongeBob stops the madness and lovingly confronts them, reminding them how wonderful life can be by just having each other.

Dozens of students made this production possible, from the actors to the running crew, from the orchestra to the production crew, and so many more. Teachers, staff, administration and parents were extremely instrumental and helpful in making Bikini Bottom come to life on the KCPS stage.

Ms. Barbara Rue, the Director and Lead Choreographer, is grateful to everyone, and reinforces that only a true team effort could pull something like this off. "I remind the cast of these few things often: everyone has something to offer, no one is more important than anyone else, and no one can do this alone," she said. Ms. Rue believes that the Theatre Arts Program at Kennedy teaches students some important lessons, including problem solving, perseverance, collaboration, accountability, team work, discipline, receiving constructive feedback gracefully and the importance of following directions.

"Doing a musical theatre production is not just about putting on a show," she said. "The by-products are much more important, including memorable life lessons, tremendous self-growth, and a sense of

END END
approaches and
Bikini Bottom
becomes a chaotic,
unkind and

achievement individually and as a team."

But it is not all just hard work and lessons learned – putting on a Kennedy musical is fun, too! "We all worked hard but we all laughed and joked just as hard. Ms. Chloe Bodt, our Musical Director, would break up tedious vocal harmony rehearsals with a great theatre story that gave the kids good giggles with a little lesson on the side," Ms. Rue said. "Quite often, some fantastic costume from 'Mrs. DiGrandi's Bikini Bottom Fashions' would be modeled. It always reminded us of how cartoony this show was, and how much fun they'd be to wear. On another busy rehearsal day, stage crew volunteered to stand in for the actors so we could work the lighting cues. It was fun seeing them do all the roles, they were quite good!"

Despite the long rehearsals and all the preparation needed, the cast, costume girls and crew "never complained, never got tired and never gave up. It was a sheer joy to work with them everyday," Ms. Rue noted.

She hopes more students will sign up for future productions. "You don't have to have your sights set on becoming a performer as a career to have fun and try something new in high school or junior high. We welcome the curious students to the budding professionals to be a part of the wonderful experience of musical theatre at Kennedy Catholic. If anyone would like to participate in the musicals, in any capacity, please let Mrs. Ines Wilhelm-Boston, Chair of the Fine Arts Department, know. Kennedy Catholic also has a tap club and a musical theatre dance club that run in the fall and spring," Ms. Rue said.

Student Art Show Highlights Talented KCPS Student Artists



Spring is the season the KCPS Arts Program shines the most each school year. The beloved Spring Musical takes center stage, the bands and choirs have perfected their sounds and performances for their concerts, and student-artists display their best works in the Student Art Show set up in the Commons.

At this show, students enrolled in Studio Art, Studio Art II and Advanced Visual Art I and II show their greatest and favorite creations of the year. Senior work is showcased and the underclassmen are represented as well. The students work side-by-side to put this exhibit together, which features original paintings, sketches, drawings, prints – all two dimensional media – and some digital work.

"The goal of the Kennedy Catholic Fine Arts Program is to help

young people access and become comfortable with their creative selves ... to become better actors, singers, painters, musicians, etc.," said Catherine Glembotzky, Fine Arts faculty. Students get to discover and build their talents through Theatre Arts, Band, Chorus and Visual Arts.

Students exploring the Visual Arts have many options to share their talents. Seniors may participate in the Katonah Museum of Art's annual Young Artist Exhibition. "Sometimes they have the opportunity to participate in the graphic side (invitation and program design) as well as designing and hanging the show," said Ms. Glembotzky. Underclassmen have exhibited in the Garrison Art Center Student Invitational. There are plenty of other opportunities, including parti-



pating in the U.S. Congressional Young Artists, Scholastic and High School Christian Art competitions, as well as various other local contests.

This year, senior Maia Forssman was one of the student-artists who helped organize and set up the communal underclassmen boards for the Student Art Show

display, as well as putting up her own personal board that showcased her best personal pieces. Over 50 students display their artwork produced during their high school art careers at that point. Seniors get their own boards, while underclassmen share boards. Maia contributed a few of her favorite colored pencil drawings, charcoal drawings and oil paintings. "I tried to display works that showcase my creativity, but that also have an emotional impact," she said.

"We have access to a lot of different media in the arts program, so we have all different types of works featured in this year's show – oil paintings, watercolors, graphite and charcoal drawings and collages. Some of our seniors also created some really cool digital art," Maia explained. "Each artist offers a unique perspective and creative viewpoint through their work, so there's a really wide range of styles featured as well. We are given a lot of assignments as a part of the art curriculum that are meant to instruct us in the fundamental elements of art – value, light, perspective and such – so there are a large number of pieces that

showcase these basic technical skills very effectively. But there are also some pieces that are very abstract and experimental," she noted, adding, "I always enjoy seeing how my peers push the boundaries of their art beyond strict technicality to create work that is quite expressive."

Maia feels that the Student Art Show is very important to student-artists, and that Kennedy Catholic provides a lot of support to them. "My peers and I have had access to a wealth of materials and media because of the funding given to the Arts Program, and I think that we've all benefited from this exposure to a wide variety of ways of creating art. I don't think I would have been able to improve in my technical ability over the past four years as much if I didn't have access to these materials, in addition to the community of fellow artists who I've been able to learn from and grow with," she said.



As for the art shows, Maia believes that "every student who puts up their work in a show feels proud to have the opportunity to share their works with friends who are not involved in the visual arts. And I think the shows are important to those students who are not involved in the visual arts, as it allows for students to connect with others through the art, even if they don't share the same interest in creating it, because emotions



can be conveyed through art that really resonate with the viewers."

Many student-artists, like Maia, think that Kennedy Catholic's Arts Program allows them to enjoy the freedom to pursue individual artistic interests. And they agree that the support the faculty and administration give to them, including from Mrs. Ines Wilhelm-Boston, Fine Arts Department Chair, President/Principal Rev. Mark Vaillancourt and the Fine Arts teachers, allow them to grow and flourish as artists.



The Achim Family's Gift of Their Time Brings Robotics Awards, and More, to KCPS

For the past several years, the Kennedy Catholic Robotics Team has won recognition in various competitions and earned several trips to the National Championships. The students push themselves hard, always working together and supporting each other. But none of this would be possible without the guidance and time of Jennifer and Andrei Achim.

The Achims have coached the team since 2018. They believe that the opportunities and experience the students receive help them not only while at KCPS, but prepare them for the demands of the future. "It is a tremendous learning experience for students who participate (on the Robotics Team)," said Mrs. Achim. "Robotics is a huge part of the future – it is revolutionizing various industries, from manufacturing to healthcare. By introducing students to robotics in high school, we are equipping them with the necessary skills to succeed in this rapidly changing world."

According to the coaches, the KCPS Robotics Program fosters creativity, teamwork and leadership skills. "Working on their robots requires collaboration, communication and the ability to work together in teams. They share ideas, listen to each other, and work together to reach a common goal. These skills are valuable not only in the workplace but also in every-



day life," Mrs. Achim noted. The coaches also believe that students involved in robotics learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills, skills which can be applied to a wide range of careers including engineering, software development, computer science and more, all high-demand jobs that pay well and continue to grow.

These experiences and skills show even while competing in high school. This year alone, the two branches of the Robotics Team already have won 19 awards combined, including winning competition championships three times and earning the highest award – the Excellence Award – four times. (According to Mrs. Achim, the Excellence Award is "presented to a team that exemplifies

overall excellence in building a high-quality robotics program and is a shining example of hard work and dedication.") This includes Team A beating out 68 top teams to win The Excellence Award at the Southern New York State Championship, earning them a spot at the VEX Robotics World Championship in Dallas, Texas in April, where over 800 robotics teams from around the world converge to prove their mettle. There Team B, for the second year in a row, won the Energy Award for their extraordinary enthusiasm and Team A made it all the way to the

quarterfinals in their division. The KCPS Robotics Team members are:

- Team A: Matthew Achim '24, Captain; Lazaro Hidalgo '25, Lucas Hung '24, Anthony Nieves '25, John Pollack '24 and Corbin Rosario '23
- Team B: Bart Casabona '23, Captain; Gabriel Hidalgo '23, Captain; Olivia Casabona '25, Lylla McKee '25, Patrick O'Connor '25, Edoh Ogbue '24, Brenna Rosario '25 and Deonna Shapley '24.

Additionally, for the first time this year, the students participated in a Signature Event that was held in December at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, where they won the Sportsmanship Award. Collaborating, tenacity, putting egos aside and determination to work together to never give up and reach their goals are what allows these students to achieve so much success. "Both Team A and Team B iterated upon their robots many times, including one of the teams completely changing the design of the robot and rebuilding it from scratch late in the season," said Mrs. Achim. Their growth is noticeable as the season progresses, beyond robot building.

"There is a portion of the tournaments where the teams are interviewed by judges for ten minutes or so

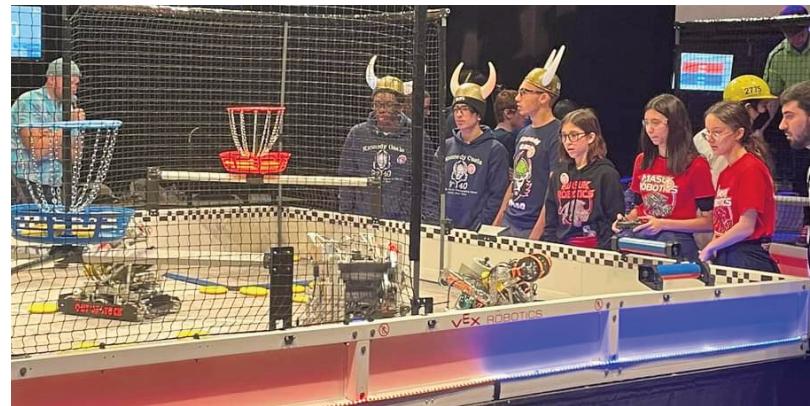


and are asked to explain why they made certain decisions about their robots and their design process," Mrs. Achim said. "We've been coaching this team for five years. Many students come on the team in their freshman year shy and unsure. You can see the dramatic improvement they develop through this practice. They develop confidence and can articulate clearly while thinking on their feet." She also noted that team members become part of a special community of students in southern New York, as they have developed partnerships and long lasting friendships with members of other robotics teams, even helping each other with design ideas – behaviors which fulfill Christian values.

Being part of the Kennedy Catholic Robotics Team requires the same commitment student-athletes devote to their sport teams. But the season is longer and takes place mostly on weekends, averaging about ten hours each weekend, September through April. Obviously, this is a lot of time from the personal lives of the Coaches as well. Why do they do it? "We absolutely love it. There is no better way to spend our time than working with students who are just discovering their passions, and if we can play a small part in helping them in this discovery, that is so rewarding," said Mrs. Achim. "Recently a parent told me that their daughter has enjoyed being on the team so much that it has sparked a real interest, so she enrolled in a summer engineering program."

But all the hard work and competition can be intense. According to Mrs. Achim, winning many tournaments and awards makes it look easy, but it is far from that. "Handling pressure and difficult situations, working with others and the variety of skill levels – these are the life skills that all our students leave the program with. Yes, it's great to win but it's also important to know that not everyone can always win and learn how to deal with that, even when you worked so hard," she said.

The Achims are grateful for the support of the dozens of volunteers including parents, students and faculty that helped the Robotics Team host its first tournament at Kennedy Catholic this year. Over 25 teams participated in the competition, but KCPS Team A was named Tournament Champions and received the Excellence Award for their outstanding performance across multiple categories, includ-



ing design, building, programming and driving their robot, and for their notebook and interview skills.

The rewards of being on the KCPS Robotics Team are many. "Students who have participated in the past have received generous scholarships and attend universities like Georgia Tech, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Villanova and Manhattan College, studying all different types of engineering and computer sciences," said Mrs. Achim. "Working in high school robotics can prepare you for a wide variety of careers in the fields of robotics, engineering, technology and

beyond. We have students interested in studying game design, aerospace engineering (like Mr. Achim did), mechanical engineering and artificial intelligence."

In fact, the Achim's oldest son Christian (CJ) '20, a past captain of the Kennedy Catholic Robotics Team, is a junior at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute studying mechanical engineering. "He is interested in a career in robotics but also exploring other options in the technology field like computer science," Mrs. Achim said, noting that he helped coach the KCPS team, teaching them about programming and more, and won the Volunteer of the Year Award at the State Championship because of how much time he spent working with students (he also had an internship at The Harvey School coaching their robotics students). Parent Carl Pollack also volunteered as a coach this year, and the Achims are grateful for his time and efforts.

So while these parents volunteer to support their children's interests – the Achims are also parents to Matthew '24, who has participated in competitive robotics since he was in the 7th grade – they also do it to allow other students to build important life and career skills and explore the world of robotics, which will eventually lead to a better and brighter world for us all.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2023!!

On Saturday, June 3, 2023, senior Gaels entered St. Joseph's Church in Somers, NY, as students and left it as the 57th graduating class of Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School. The 152 graduates are going off into the world well-prepared as scholars, leaders and faithful followers of Christ thanks to the Catholic education they received at KCPS.

As a whole, the graduates earned over \$40 million in Merit Aid Awards and scholarships. The Class of 2023 was accepted into some great colleges and universities, including:

- American University
- Boston College
- Boston University
- Bucknell University
- Case Western Reserve University
- Colgate University
- College of the Holy Cross
- Connecticut College
- Cornell University
- Emerson College
- Florida State University
- George Washington University
- Howard University
- Lafayette College
- Lehigh University
- New York University
- Northeastern University
- Northwestern University
- Skidmore College
- SUNY Binghamton University
- SUNY Stony Brook University
- Trinity College
- Tulane University
- University of Florida
- University of Georgia
- University of Maryland – College Park
- University of Miami
- University of Michigan
- University of Rochester
- University of Southern California
- University of Virginia
- Villanova University
- Wesleyan University

Christian Service Leaders Honored at 2023 President's Dinner

Each year Kennedy Catholic recognizes and honors the individuals, faculty and students who are true examples of Christian service and testaments to the values of Catholic education. These people are important to the spiritual and educational life at the school and set examples for all Gaels.

On May 11, these Christian leaders were honored at the 2023 President's Dinner at Villa Barone Hilltop Manor in Mahopac, NY, in front of their peers and admirers. Congratulations, and thank you, to the honorees:

The Lux Christi Award was presented to Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV, Superior General, Sisters of Life. She was recognized for



her dedication to the protection and enhancement of the sacredness of human life.

The Divine Compassion Award was presented to Mr. Andrei and Mrs. Jennifer Achim for their dedication and leadership to the Kennedy Catholic community, and for the success and mentoring of the Kennedy Catholic Robotics Program. Mr. and Mrs. Achim have served as volunteer mentors and coaches of the Kennedy Catholic Gaels Robotics Team since 2018, helping the team earn many competition title awards.

The Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Mrs. Georgia Ioannou, Science Teacher and Chair of the Science Department. Mrs. Ioannou was chosen by her fellow faculty for providing exemplary education and service to her students this past year.

Last but not least, the Students of Excellence awards were given to the Kennedy Catholic seniors who are considered to be "strong and committed Christian leaders who are determined to make a difference for Christ in our world and in the lives of others," and best represent the qualities of courage, compassion, service and academic accomplishment. The students honored were: Jalen Alvarez-Vasquez, Gianni Bove, Rachel Cunningham, Shannon Dalrymple, Meghan Duffy, Nancy Farias, Maia Forssman, Maria Garcia Martinez, Robert Grande, James Horan, Justin John, Jeffrey Laederach, Jessica McGovern, Ryan McInerney, Chloe Molina, Fionnoula O'Reilly, Caitlin Ortiz-Luis, Kiera O'Sullivan, Julianna Perucci, Cynthia Piazza, Sabriye Powell, Nicolas Savino, Quinn Sharp, Kieran Sullivan, Connor Torrey, John Vespucci and Michael Zeoli.

The entire Kennedy Catholic community recognizes and thanks all the awardees for their selfless dedication to past, current and future KCPS and Saint Mary's Academy students in their journey to receive an outstanding academic and faith-based Catholic education.



KCPS Girls Volleyball Sets Them Up For Life



Most often, sports teams are written about if they have a winning season and nearly reach or capture a championship title. But there are other ways a team wins, ways that are even more important. This includes learning and showing good sportsmanship, overcoming adversity and challenges, and having a winning attitude no matter what.

These are the primary goals of the Kennedy Catholic Athletics Program. At Kennedy, student-athletes are taught how to grow their confidence and talents, develop self-discipline and leadership skills, and practice good sportsmanship, fair play and teamwork. Coaches make sure to impart respect for the rules of the game, officials, opponents and teammates.

The Girls Volleyball Team exemplifies all of these traits. Despite some challenges,



the lady Gaels continue to hit the courts with their best efforts and play exciting, honorable games, efforts which took the 2022 Varsity team all the way to a win in the first playoff game of this season. After winning the 2019 CHSAA Division I AA/A and the Intersectional City Championship (with a 20-0 regular season record), the girls were sidelined by the pandemic in 2020, and, after the 2021 season, the team lost ten seniors when they graduated. Then, the 2022 team had multiple players out sick and hurt throughout the season; but despite all of this, the girls "managed to put together a surprising season, including the playoff win," said head coach Tony Santora. The Varsity team defeated Preston High School 3-1 in that game, after a final regular season record of 6-9. The JV team had an impressive 11-3 record, winning its division in fall 2022.

"I believe the entire 2022 season was a highlight. I am very proud of the way my ladies played," Coach Santora said. "This past season was quite the team



effort. Every young lady had a part in the success of this team. One outstanding player from my Varsity team, sophomore Olivia Casabona, was chosen as our team MVP by the other opposing coaches in the league. Seniors Maddie Levinson, Naima Walsh and Meghan Duffy did a marvelous job working with a very young team. And Coach Michelle (Santora) Pandicia, who is my outstanding Freshman coach, helped coach and worked with me and both my JV and Varsity teams to make sure they were prepared for competition," he noted. A 2010 KCPS grad and Coach's daughter, Michelle has coached the Lady Gaels since 2013.

Coach Santora's philosophy includes the belief that you "always work with what you are given and never wish for something you can't have." His strategy is to play everyone in every game. "I treat my team with respect and always want them to enjoy playing this game and have a good time," Coach said. He has been the Varsity coach since 2014 and contin-



ues to also coach the JV team, which he started doing in 2008. Coach Santora also makes himself available to help out any other Kennedy Catholic sports teams that need assistance. At St. Mary's Academy and Parish, he is in charge of scheduling CYO Basketball, gym time, rentals for gym time and assisting any Kennedy Catholic sports team with using the facility.

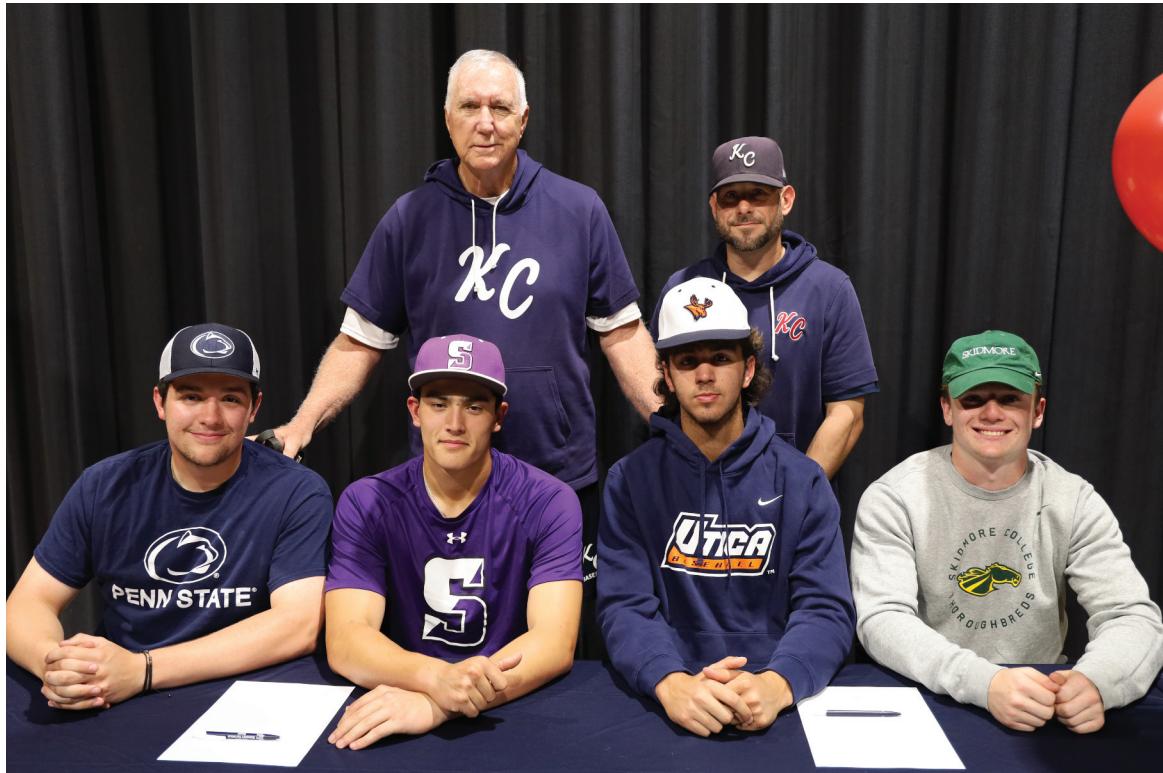
What advice does he have for future KCPS students and volleyball players? "If you are coming to Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, be ready to work your tail off – it will definitely prepare you for your next step in college." He knows for sure, as he is a Kennedy Catholic parent. "Michelle's four years at Kennedy were awesome. She graduated with honors, was in the National Honor Society, and was very involved in various extracurricular activities at Kennedy, including playing on the volleyball, softball and golf teams. She graduated from Iona College Summa Cum Laude, and is now working for Western Connecticut State University's Alumni Office, and also has a Personal Trainer Certificate and works with numerous athletes," Coach shared.

The moral of this story? You don't always need a winning record to still be a winning team. Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School offers the dedicated people, programs and support to ensure its student-athletes learn the skills they need to succeed on their teams and in their classrooms, and later in college and life. These are the true rewards.



Gael Student-Athletes Sign to Play in College

This spring, ten student-athletes signed to play in colleges and universities, taking their talents, skills and lessons learned on Kennedy fields and courts to the next level. GO GAELS!



Baseball: Aidan Bergholc, Penn State Harrisburg; Darren Gray, Scranton University; Austin Rhodes, Utica University; and Nick Duryea, Skidmore College



Basketball: Taylor Malone, Manhattanville College



Football: Jonathan Ferrara, Nichols College; Luis Garcia, Monroe College; Dan Duryea, Salve Regina University; and Anthony Castaldi, Catholic University

KCPS Gael Spring Sports Highlights

Girls Softball clinched the CHSAA Tier 1 Division Title for the second year in a row by defeating Maria Regina 13-4. They were unbeaten in CHSAA Tier 1 play at 7-0.



Kennedy Catholic Boys and Girls Lacrosse also had some amazing standout moments this season! The boys team finished undefeated in league play, did great in the playoffs and won their 8th consecutive CHSAA Championship!! The girls team won the City Championship with a close score of 12-11!!



Senior Maline-Sky Turnquit scored her 200th goal.

Senior Connor Baia won his 500th career faceoff.



Junior Fin McConnell scored his 100th career goal.



The Shamrock Social

Is a Huge Success for KCPS – And You!

The 41st Annual Kennedy Catholic Auction, a fun tradition that everyone looks forward to and raises funds for Kennedy Catholic Preparatory School, was held a little later this year and dubbed "The Shamrock Social."

Held on March 18, the event leaned on the St. Patrick's Day theme, featuring the decor, music and food of this beloved Irish saint and holiday. The luck of the Irish was upon Kennedy Catholic, as just over \$55,000 was raised to help the school provide quality fitness equipment for the soon-to-be-built Sister Janet Meehan Fitness Center.

Irish (and other) eyes were smiling while looking at the plethora of treasures found in KCPS' Lakeview Room, the Bridge and the Commons. Bountiful gift baskets and certificates (and maybe pots of gold?) lined these spaces, where everyone could participate (even online!) in the gift auction. Gifts ranged from watches and jewelry to designer clothes and purses and items to pamper yourself and raise your spirits (pun intended) to high-end kitchen appliances and tickets to shows and sporting adventures to so much more. The Pot o' Gold Raffle and Sr. Barbara Money Tree were successful favorites as well.

Attendees were able to bid on numerous live auction items, such as golf outings, prime seats at graduation, free lunch for your student for a year, cleaning services, vacations to the Bahamas, North Carolina, Wyoming, Cape Cod and of course Ireland, and more. And one lucky winner gets to name the roadway that runs from Rt. 138 to the parking lot! Talk about leaving a legacy!

But that's not all attendees were able to do. The sounds and tastes of Ireland were prevalent, with harpist Alyssa Reit playing Celtic and Irish tunes along with other music. The menu included a carving station of corned beef and roasted vegetables, smoked salmon on black bread, mini shepherd's pies, pulled pork sliders, potato pancakes and mini vegetarian egg rolls (a favorite of the leprechauns) and, of



course, traditional Irish soda bread.

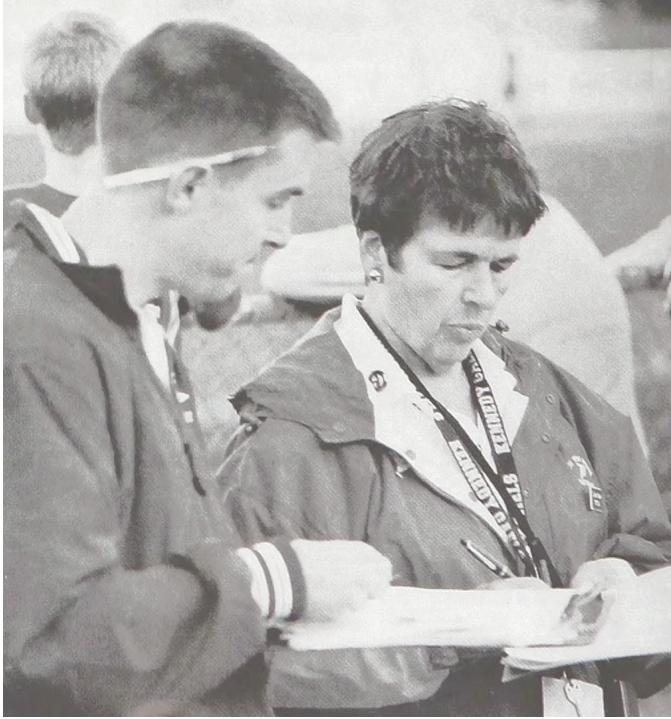
Maria Abbamont, Academic Scheduling Coordinator for KCPS, helped organize the event with the Advancement Department and other volunteers. She has worked on the logistics and decorations for the auctions since 2019. Her sons, Michael '19, who will graduate with a Business degree from Sacred Heart University this year, and Christopher '24, have

attended Kennedy Catholic.

"The auction is an important event for our school as it is the largest fundraiser for us. Besides the fact that we love it when you help us raise funds for our school, the auction is a great way to meet new friends and socialize with old friends. The food is always great, and it is a perfect night out," Mrs. Abbamont said. She, along with everyone at KCPS, thanks all the gift donors, sponsors, volunteers, bidders and attendees who made the Shamrock Social a success.

The Annual Auction and other KCPS events are a great way for alumni to come back and see what's new while greeting old friends, teachers, staff and coaches that mattered to them. This also lets you support your alma mater and future generations of Kennedy Gaels. We always welcome you, enjoy seeing you, and appreciate your support. If there are other types of events that you would like to see in the future, or you would simply like to support us in building our community and providing a quality Catholic

education to future students, please reach out to Fred Compton, Director of Advancement, at advancement@kennedycatholic.org. If you can't join us, you can help by donating to our special projects or Kennedy Scholarship Fund at www.kennedycatholic.org/giving/.



The Sister Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center – Almost There, But...

In 2021, Kennedy Catholic announced plans to build a new Student Fitness Center. The center will provide all Kennedy students a special place to maintain healthy habits and build their physical strength, stamina and skills with new state-of-the-art gym equipment. The facility will also allow student-athletes to train with weights and more to be competition ready.

The new, separate 2,300 square foot building (located in front of the convent and overlooking the turf field and track) will be named the Sister Janet Meehan Student Fitness Center, in honor of beloved girls cross country & track coach and art teacher Sister Janet. A pillar of the Kennedy Catholic community for over 50 years, she was named Coach of the Year seven times and encouraged students to get fit and maintain a healthy lifestyle. From 1967 to 2015, Sister Janet impacted thousands of students through her teaching and commitment to athletics at the school.

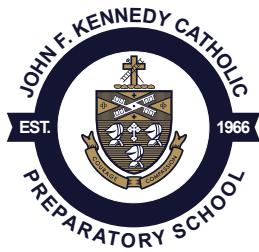
Fundraising has been underway, and currently we are at 78% of our goal! That means we have raised \$935,900 towards our goal of \$1.2 million to build and outfit the new student fitness center. We hope to begin construction this summer and plans have already been drawn. The Fitness Center Committee is working with Class Captains to raise the rest of the funds still needed. Class Captains reach out to classmates to share news of the new facility and

ask for support. We are in need of Class Captains from the 1990's through the 2000's to help; if you want to allow Kennedy Catholic to continue to best serve our students by volunteering to be a Class



Captain or by donating funds, please contact Fred Compton, Director of Advancement, at fred.compton@kennedycatholic.org or go to www.kennedy-catholic.org/fitness-center/.

Your support will help educate generations of Gaels in health and wellness. A healthy body is necessary for peace of mind and spiritual connection. The best part of donating to this project is that Mark Girolamo '71 will match donated funds up to \$300,000, so the goal amount is quite reachable, with your support. Your employer might also match your donation. Thank you in advance!



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Parents of Alumni,
If your son or daughter no longer maintains permanent residence at your home,
please notify the Alumni Office of his/her new mailing address at
(914) 232-5061 ext. 110 or Alumni@KennedyCatholic.org.

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

**Golf Classic –
Thursday, October 5, 2023
Homecoming – Friday,
October 6, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.
Open House – Sunday,
October 15, 2023, 1-4 p.m.
& Wednesday, October 25,
7 p.m.**

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



CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

