

Marian Catholic ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



FEBRUARY 2022

MARIAN CATHOLIC LOVE STORIES – CELEBRATING OUR ALUMNI VALENTINES!



Tom and Margie (Pollock) Spokas

Marian Catholic couple, Tom and Margie (Pollock) Spokas, will be celebrating their 47th wedding anniversary on May 3.

Tom, a member of the Class of 1969, and Margie, who graduated the following year, were married on May 3, 1975.

"We were a year apart at Marian, but we knew each other pretty well, both our parents had places at Lake Hauto," Tom said. "We started dating after college, got married, and honeymooned in Niagara Falls."

The couple lived in Hazleton for 46 years, during which time Margie owned the Tiny Tykes Teachery day care centers in Hazleton and also had worked in several of the parochial elementary schools.

Tom worked as an accountant and sales executive for several firms, including one that has evolved into Market Street Financial Advisors where he has been employed for the past 35 years.

"Over the years, we enjoyed traveling to many places in the U.S. and we have visited London, Cancun and have toured Ireland and Italy," Tom said.

The Spokas' have two children and three grandchildren. Recently relocated back to Lake Hauto, they are "enjoying relaxing and spending time with our family, along with home improvement projects, golfing, and following Marian sports," Tom said.

Keith A. and Angela (Colancecco) Degler

Keith A. and Angela (Colancecco) Degler, members of the Class of 1998, note Marian Catholic "is and always will be our second family, our second home," according to Keith.

The couple will be married for 16 years in July, but they have been together since their sophomore year at Marian.

"We went to our sophomore semi-formal, and got to become best friends," Keith

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Keith A. and Angela (Colancecco) Degler
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said. "Just before the end of sophomore year, I asked Angie out, and we have been together for over 25 years."

They both attended and graduated from Bloomsburg University, after which time Keith related, "It was two years later that I proposed to her right where it all

started at Marian. It was outside the gym in the rain. We even had our engagement pictures taken at Marian."

He adds, "Marian Catholic is such a huge part of both of our lives. My family helped build the school; our parents and siblings have graduated from Marian; and, before you know it, our son and daughter will be there as well."

Jim and Marge (Solick) Menconi

Marian graduates Jim and Marge Menconi are celebrating 52 years of marriage.

Marge grew up in Summit Hill where she went to St. Stan's Grade School and Jim, a Tamaqua native, went to St. Jerome's Grade School. They met at Marian where they were in the same class.

The Menconis started dating in their sophomore year, and one of the big events they would do together is go to the St. Ann's dances every Sunday night in Lansford.

Jim was a shooting guard on the basketball team and Marge kept the stats for Coach Wink Gallagher's team and played in the band. They went to their senior prom together.

The couple graduated in 1963, the year that the new school was built, and Jim was one of the speakers at the ground breaking ceremony.

After high school, they stayed together even when they lived in different cities. Marge graduated from St. Joe's School of Nursing and initially worked in Philadelphia, and Jim graduated from Penn State.

They were married in August of 1969 when Jim was in law school at Duquesne.



They moved back to Tamaqua and raised three children, all Marian graduates: Kristin Menconi, 1990, Kara (Menconi) Coassolo, 1991, and Karina (Menconi) Reed, 2000.

Before they both retired, Marge worked as a nurse at the Gnaden Huettten Memorial Hospital, Lehighton, while



Jim maintained his law practice in Tamaqua.

The Menconis have seven grandchildren, all of whom go to Catholic school - two at Allentown Central Catholic High School, one at St. Ann's in Emmaus, three at St. Thomas More in Allentown, and one in preschool.

Steve and Teresa (Patton) Sheer

Steve and Teresa (Patton) Sheer were lab partners as members of the Class of 1969 at Marian. That started a relationship still going strong 48-plus years later.

Steve hails from Tamaqua, where he attended SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Elementary School, while Teresa, a Kelayres gal, attended St. Patrick Catholic Elementary School.

Their “connection” started in their junior years at Marian when they became lab partners in Sister Regina Alma’s chemistry class and continues to this day.

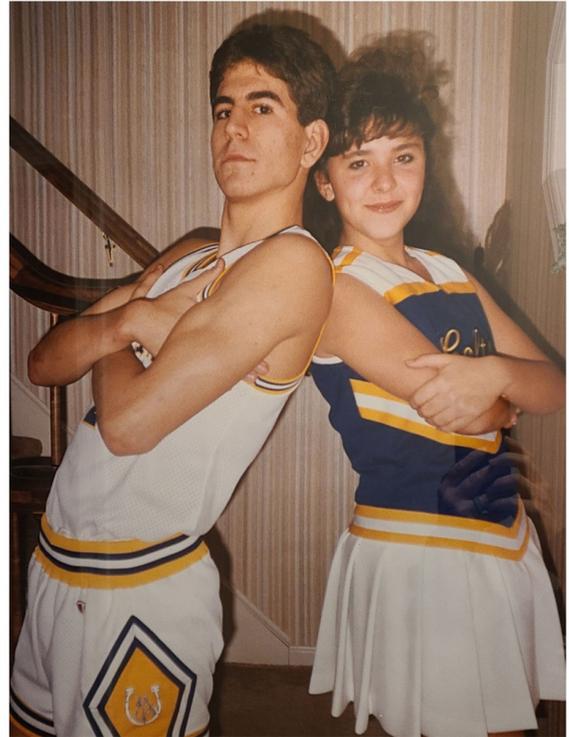
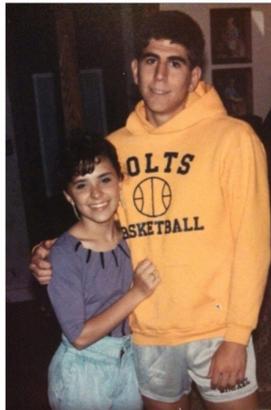
After high school, Steve continued on as an electrician working at local power plants and Teresa as a teacher.



In 1997, Teresa returned to Marian and became part of the Mathematics Department and later served as Studies Director.

They are the proud parents of four children – “All Marian graduates!,” they proudly state. They include

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Mark & Kara (Menconi) Coassolo

Kara (Menconi) Coassolo, Class of 1991, and her high school sweetheart, Mark Coassolo, Class of 1990, will celebrate their 23rd wedding anniversary this year. They live in Macungie.

The couple met at St. Jerome’s Grade School in Tamaqua, when, Kara said, they “were seated next to each other in seventh grade Reading class.” She added, “Our friendship back then was passing notes in the hall, talking on the phone at night, and hanging out at recess! When we were both in high school, we started dating again, when Mark was a sophomore and I was a freshman. He would pick me up for school every day, and even taught me to how to drive a car in the Marian parking lot (before I got my permit - of course, my parents didn’t know at the time!”

Much of the Coassolos lives were built at Marian, as both of Kara’s parents, James and Margaret (Solick)

Menconi, are Marian graduates (Class of 1963). Mark’s mom, the former Margaret Gallagher, graduated from Marian in 1966, and his dad, Louis Coassolo, taught at Marian for many years before retiring. Of course, Mark is the grandson of our own Hugh “Wink” Gallagher - “Mr. Marian,” our legendary teacher, coach and athletic director.

After high school, Mark went on to study and play basketball at Elizabethtown College. He is currently a biology teacher at Fleetwood Area High School.

Kara graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and Temple Medical School, and is a physician in the Department of OB/GYN at Lehigh Valley Health Network.

The Coassolos have two daughters, Maggie, a sophomore at Allentown Central Catholic High School, and Anna, a seventh grader at St. Ann School in Emmaus.

Steve and Teresa (Patton) Sheer
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Stephen J. "Chip," Class of 1997, Scott, IT Class of 1999, Francis, PhD, Class of 2002, and Natalie, Esq., Class of 2005.

Theresa notes, "We are hopeful our four grandchildren will also graduate from Marian."

Both Steve and Teresa still work in their fields but are looking forward to full retirement. They credit Marian with their success and also their family's accomplishments, both in their respective fields and in their faith.



Dave and Mary Ann (Geusic) Bielen

Over 54 years ago, on October 25, 1968, Dave Bielen '69 asked Mary Ann Geusic '70 to dance at a Marian Catholic. He said he had his eyes on her for awhile and finally got the courage to approach her, and so began their dating. They attended many school events together, as well as both of their proms. If Dave didn't have the use of the family car or a ride from his hometown of McAdoo, he would hitchhike to Lansford, where Mary Ann lived. They would meet at the "My Place," which was the local hangout, and go to the movies in Lansford (The Andrea Theatre) and Coaldale (The Angela Theatre). A big night out was a trip to Leiby's in South Tamaqua.

They are now married 48 years and throughout their marriage, have been ardent supporters of Marian (Dave is honored to currently serve as a Board member for Marian Catholic High School). They have lived in Hometown for over 33 years and raised a wonderful daughter, Angela Meiss, MHS class of '91 (cheerleader), and cherish their granddaughter, Julia Meiss, MHS class

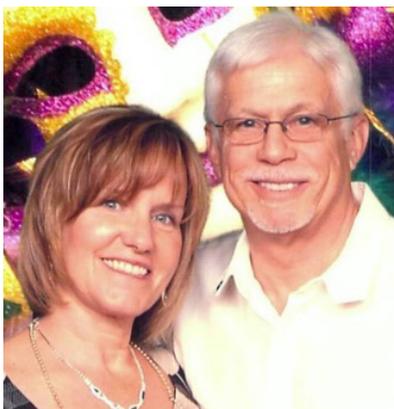


of '24 (volleyball & softball).

Dave obtained a business degree from Penn State University, has been in the grocery/food business for over 54 years, and is currently Vice President of Integrity Food Marketing based in Wayne, PA. Mary Ann obtained her paralegal certificate from Penn State and has enjoyed working for Atty. Joseph Semasek for over 40 years.

They both attended their 50th class reunions and also the class of 1969's 70th birthday bash.

The couple attribute their successful careers, strong Catholic faith and long, loving marriage to the values instilled in them and the education they received at Marian High School.



Debby (Blew) and Ed Brezinski

Debby (Blew) and Ed Brezinski were in the same homeroom for all four years before their graduations in 1972 from Marian, but they never attended any

classes together, nor did they even socialize much at all. In fact, Debby addressed Ed as "Hey You" in his yearbook!

After graduation, Ed attended the five-year and 10-year reunions of their class, but Debby did not. She did attend the 15-year reunion, and although Ed had a ticket to attend, he was unable to do so that day.

"As fate would have it, we were both there at classmate Ed Kanick's restaurant in Lansford for our 20-year reunion," Debby said, adding, "We were each standing with our own cluster of friends, panning the room, when our eyes met. We raised our glasses to each other in recognition and later

talked and danced. And that was the beginning of our now nearly 30 years together."

In June of 1993, Debby and Ed married in the "Little White Church" on Quakake Road. Debby and her three children then joined Ed in Stone Ridge, N.Y. A year later, their son was born.

The Brezinskis now live in Mesa, AZ. They have seven grandchildren.

"While we enjoy visiting our friends and family back East, we sure don't miss the snow and freezing rain," Debby said.

Fittingly, as the marriage became a product of their class reunion, Debby and Ed are the ones spearheading the 50-year reunion of the Class of 1972.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK CELEBRATIONS

“Faith, Excellence, Service” was the 2022 theme for Catholic Schools Week that was celebrated at Marian during the week of January 30 through February 4.

The week long activities enabled the student body to participate in a number of new activities that differed from past Catholic School Week observances.

Of course, the week began on Sunday, Jan. 30, with the traditional Open House program, where the administration, teachers and coaches made presentations to visiting youths and their parents, followed by tours of the school.

On Monday, Feb. 1, an induction Mass for the Student Evangelization Team started the week’s events. The guest

speakers were Rob Longi and Luke LeTourneau, mission ambassadors for “Stewardship: A Mission of Faith.”

The duo has been coming to Marian to lead monthly adoration and to facilitate retreats and help launch the evangelization team, said Patrick Smith, Theology department chairman and director of Campus Ministry. The day included guided adoration in the school chapel.

On Tuesday, Athleisure dress down day, the students participated in a dodgeball tournament, while Blue and Gold Day was observed on Wednesday, when a Family Fued Trivia contest was held.

Thursday was “Service Appreciation Day” and a Patriotic Dress Down was

observed, the Marian family offered its appreciation to alumni who served or are serving in the military (see below). The activities included a Teacher Appreciation Breakfast and an afternoon volleyball tournament. A snow day pushed the final day to Monday with Olympic games and a Class Shirts Dress Down Day.

Student council members said they were happy to have new activities mixed with old traditions from previous Catholic School Week observances while the faculty and administration concluded the weeklong program “was nice to give the students and teachers a break and from their daily routines and a opportunity to have fun together.

MARIAN CATHOLIC ALUMNI IN THE ARMED FORCES



Specialist Cody M. Decker
Class of 2010

(May 27, 1992-June 8, 2020)
Enlisted in the U.S. Army
on July 31, 2012

June of 2015, Cody was honorably/medically discharged; Receiving the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Purple Heart Medal of Merit and the 5 NATO Service Medal with special recognition for serving under the 319th Military Intelligence Battalion during Operation Ice Storm.



Crystal (Kline) Ruppenkamp
Class of 1998

Served in the Air Force from
1998-2012



CMSgt Jeff “Duke” Herman
Class of 1996

U.S. Air Force (active duty)
Serving for 23+ years



Michael S. Greek

Parent of sophomore, Angelo Greek
U.S. Army. 1985-1989

Cyndi Svetz (not pictured)
Class of 1980

Army Nurse 1985-1989
USAF Nurse 1990-1996

Greg Svetz (no pictured)
Class of 1984

USAF 1988-1992

Margaret Mary Hartnett
Class of 1969

Served five year Active Duty
in the Navy and 22 years in the
Naval Reserve; Retired a Senior
Chief Yeoman (E-8) in 1999.

MARIAN CATHOLIC ALUMNI IN THE ARMED FORCES



**Midshipman Candidate
Jamison Wheeler**
Class of 2021

Attending the United States Naval Academy Preparatory School in Newport, Rhode Island until May 2022 at which point she will graduate and attend the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.



Sgt. Rachel Hersey
Daughter of Janet Dzurinin
Currently stationed at Fort Riley, KS in the military since 2014.



SPC Charles Dzurinin
Son of Janet Dzurinin
Served and participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and is a volunteer Fire Fighter, U.S. Army, 2013 - 2018.



Dustin McCarroll
Class of 2003
Currently serving in the Air Force



Commander Joe Mitzen
Class of 1997
Currently serving in the Navy Active Navy since 2001 after attending the Naval Academy. Currently the commanding officer of USS INDIANAPOLIS (LCS 17), a littoral combat ship stationed in Mayport, FL. Wife Kelly is a Lieutenant Commander (not an alumni) is in the Navy Reserve.



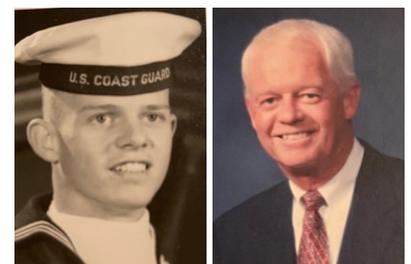
Nicholas Goff
Class of 2020
Son of Kathy Goff
Currently serving in the Pennsylvania National Guard



**Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Retired)
Army Master Aviator
Michael J Chickilly**
Class of 1978
23 years active duty in Army Aviation



Joe Suzadail
Class of 1965
U.S. Naval Reserve 1964-1970
Active Duty 1967-1968
U.S. Naval Reserve 1976-1980



Daniel Shaeffer
Class of 1965
United States Coast Guard, 1967-1973.
Served on the Presidential Honor Guard from 1967-1968.

The service men and women featured in this issue were submitted by their loved ones for our Catholic Schools Week assembly. We are so proud of all of our alumni, family and friends of Marian Catholic that have served or are serving in the military. Do you have a loved one that is serving or has served in the Armed Forces? Please share their story at: alumni@mariancatholic.org.

MARIAN CATHOLIC ALUMNI IN THE ARMED FORCES



Jim Sauka
Class of 1966
Army, served 1968-1970



Howard Schaeffer, USMC
Class of 1987

"The military changed my trajectory of life – it opened doors for me after my service to our great nation. I felt I belonged to something far bigger than myself. Now, I am the Marine Corps League National Chaplain and the President of the Marine Corps League foundation."



Joseph Baddick
Class of 1970

Army
Served with the 82nd Airborne Division from Aug. 1970 until Aug. 1973. Served with the National Guard for three years at Ft. Indiantown Gap, working on helicopters.



Paul Bray
Class of 1978
Uncle to Julia Dvorak
U.S. Army
Served August 1978 to October 1985
Rank: E4-Specialist 4



SSG Joseph Kash
Class of 2000
Father of sophomore Caden Kash
Active Duty Army
10 years of service (still serving)



Sergeant Lionel Lawson
Enlisted Marine who served from 1965-1969 when he was severely injured in the Vietnam War ending his plans to be a career Marine.
Husband of Kathleen (Curvey) Lawson, Class of 1966
Father to Kelly Jo (Lawson) Scafidi, Class of 1989 and Heather (Lawson) Stettler, Class of 1992
Grandfather to Olivia Stettler, Class of 2020
Brother-in-law to Patricia (Curvey) Zupko, Class of 1959 (St Jerome graduate, a Marian legacy School)
Uncle to Debbie (Zupko) Smarr, Class of 1979; Donna (Zupko) Suda, Class of 1981; Derek Smarr, Class of 2005; Dylan Smarr, Class of 2011 and Tyler Smarr, Class of 2012.



Cpl. Michael McLaughlin
Class of 2018
Serving his 4th year as a United States Marine and is currently deployed overseas.



Ensign Kaitlin Kowker
US Navy Nurse Corps
Marian Class of 2016, Valedictorian

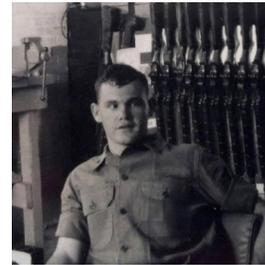
William (Bill) Rhodunda (not pictured)
Class of 1958
Served on active duty in the U.S. Army from January 1959 to March 1965.

MARIAN CATHOLIC ALUMNI IN THE ARMED FORCES



Edward Zavasky

Marine Veteran who served in the Vietnam war.
Father to Sheri Boyle. Grandfather of Rebecca Boyle,
Class of 2023 and Erica Boyle, Class 2025.



John J. Kennedy
Class of 1968

United States Marine Corps active
from April 1969 to April 1971

NEEDED: CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

Have you remained in contact with your classmates? Have you participated in class reunions whereby you were able to “connect” with classmates and obtain useful information regarding their whereabouts?

If you answered “yes” to the above questions, then you can be an important part of helping us to grow the Marian Catholic Alumni Association.

As we progress in our rebuilding of the association, we have a need for class representatives to help us “connect” with alumni with whom we have lost contact. We have found that classmates know their own classmates better than anyone, mainly because of them having kept in contact with each other.

With that in mind, the association is continually seeking class representatives whose volunteerism would not be labor

intensive. As a class representative, you could help us locate your classmates, and update our database for your class so that we can keep in contact with them and let them know what’s happening at our Alma Mater. Class representatives also make referrals to us about stories of accomplishments, etc., of their class members.

We are currently looking for representatives for the following classes: 2018, 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2008, 2007, 1994, 1989, 1980, 1978 and 1972.

Please consider joining us in what has been a “fun experience” in locating our graduates. And if you’re a member of a class not listed above, we also welcome you to join us and other class representatives in working on this project. We can be reached via email at alumni@mariancatholic.org or contact our Advancement Director, Kristine Evina, directly at kevina@mariancatholic.org.

IN MEMORIAM

Marian Catholic alumni and friends are asked to keep in their thoughts and prayers the families of the following:

Brian Carroll: 52, of Summit Hill, passed away on Feb. 2, 2022. He was a 1987 graduate of Marian Catholic High School. Brian previously taught at McAdoo Catholic Elementary School and was a third-grade teacher in the at Jim Thorpe School District.

We know our alumni are proud about the education they received at Marian Catholic!

Join our Alumni Association today for a nominal membership fee of \$10 per year. In an era when Catholic schools are facing continuous challenges that have prompted many to close their doors, our alumni strive to be there for the next generation and for years to come. If each of us can do just a little, together we can do great things for our Alma Mater! Go www.mariancatholic.org and click on “Alumni” and “Join” to become a member today!

YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE: '88 GRAD LEADS HIGHWAY SAFETY RESEARCH

Editor's note: In this month's issue, we highlight the career of 1988 graduate Matt Moore, formerly of Tamaqua, whose career has found him landed in Arlington, VA, where he oversees an organization whose primary work involves collecting transportation data used across the country, mainly for insurance companies and the automobile industrial. The series, "You can get there from here," will be designed to share the good news of alumni in various life endeavors upon attaining a Marian education. We welcome the opportunity to tell similar stories from Marian Catholic alumni who can contact us at alumni@mariancatholic.org.

It's amazing what data will reveal to those who gather it, share it and interpret it.

A 1988 Marian Catholic High School graduate is heading up a Arlington, Virginia-based organization that conducts highway safety research that does exactly that – gathers and shares statistics – with a mission of reducing human economic losses that result from operating vehicles on the nation's highways.

Matt Moore, son of former Tamaqua resident Randy Moore and the late Mary Moore, is the senior vice president of the Highway Loss Data Institute, an affiliate of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. He oversees HLDI's research program, the collection of vehicle information and the production of loss data. The institute processes insurance data from companies that represent approximately 85 percent of the U.S. private passenger auto insurance market.

The line of work is ultra-cumbersome, as HLDI analyzes the insurance records of more than 400-million vehicles and in



excess of three billion transactions per year.

That data is wide-ranging, including the costs of claims, average insurance losses for specific vehicles and information on insurance payments. HLDI's research deals with everything from anti-lock brake systems, sizes of motors, types of glass in a vehicle, theft risks and rates, impact of animals (mainly deer) on vehicles, headlight mechanisms and vehicle specific data. The studies also involve tractor trailers and motorcycles.

"Professionally, my biggest challenge is Highway Loss Data Institute's (HLDI) research results are sometimes the first in the world," Moore said. "HLDI studies

are often like the canary in a coal mine. This can lead to skepticism about the findings. Consequently, we sometimes have to burn energy convincing key stakeholders the results are actionable versus taking action.

"Personally, my biggest challenge is work related travel. In 2019, I logged over 75,000 airmiles, delivering presentations on the work of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and the Highway Loss Data Institute (HLDI). Keeping up with the demands of my job, my family and trying to stay physically fit while spending so much time traveling is a huge challenge. For example, my last trip before the pandemic started in 2019 was

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YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE

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to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. That trip took almost a full 24 hours of flight time in each direct direction. "Among HLDI's credentials is that the institute "published the first studies in the world on the impact of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS)," Moore said. He explained, "Those studies indicated that front automatic emergency braking systems had the biggest benefits. Those front automatic emergency braking systems reduce the occurrence of bodily injury liability crashes by over 24 percent. Ultimately, those results led to a voluntary commitment between the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and auto manufacturers to equip all vehicles with those systems by September of 2022. This commitment will prevent a lot of crashes and save a lot of lives."

Moore joined HLDI in 1999 as a programmer. During his 20 years there, he has held a variety of positions of increasing responsibility and scope. He is the author of numerous research papers and has led several projects that resulted in studies that were world firsts on topics such as collision avoidance technologies, legal recreational marijuana and anti-lock braking systems for motorcycles.

His firm's studies on the effectiveness of collision avoidance systems has led to a voluntary commitment from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and automobile manufacturers to fit nearly all vehicles sold in the U.S. with anti-brake systems by 2022.

After graduation from Marian, where he played football for the Colts, Moore attended St. Francis University in western Pennsylvania, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. Before going to work for HLDI, he worked in higher education, conducting institutional research, designing data systems and creating web sites.

Admittedly always "fascinated by technology and cars," Moore says he gets "to work with complex data systems every day to study vehicles and vehicle related technologies."

Until last summer, Moore's father still lived in the home where Matt grew up in Tamaqua. "I love the area and visited often," the Marian graduate said. "My kids grew up hiking at Hawk Mountain and climbing the Glen Onoko Falls. Their favorite place for ice cream is Heisler's."

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We're interested in hearing from alumni and would like to share news about your families, careers, etc. with your classmates and friends. Whether you are planning a reunions or just want to locate a classmate, send us an email at alumni@mariancatholics.org and we will be more than happy to help you reunite with the Marian Catholic family.

'22-'23 ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN IS UNDERWAY

The Marian Catholic Alumni Association membership campaign for '22-23 is underway. Joining the association is just one way in which alumni can express their pride in the education they received at Marian Catholic.

Join our Alumni Association today for a nominal membership fee of \$10 per year. In an era when Catholic schools are facing continuous challenges that have prompted many to close their doors, our alumni strive to be there for the next generation and for years to come. If each of us can do just a little, together we can do great things for our Alma Mater!

Learn more at www.mariancatholics.org/alumni.

