

Marian Catholic

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



JUNE 2022

57 MEMBERS OF CLASS OF '22 RECEIVE DIPLOMAS

Fifty-seven graduates of the Marian Catholic High School Class of 2022 joined our alumni ranks following the commencement exercises on June 2.

In this edition, we want to congratulate the graduates and welcome them to the Alumni Association! Membership is offered to graduates in the five years following their graduation as they pursue educations and careers of their choice.

We wish you health, happiness and prosperity; and ask that you continue to stay in touch with our Alma Mater and the Alumni Association.

During the commencement held in the John P. Malarkey Gymnasium, Head of School Michael Brennan led the conferring of diplomas. Baccalaureate Mass was celebrated by the Rev. Brian M. Miller, chaplain, and concelebrated by local parish pastors.

In her valedictory address, Lauren Reaman assured her classmates that everything happens for a reason, saying "These words are ones that all of us hear from time to time, invoking a range of emotions anywhere from comfort to anger if their use is poorly timed. It is a message that reflects the scope of our lives."

Reaman noted, "Sometimes it feels like we're being pushed down a never-ending hallway, having no control over where we are going, getting thrown through new doors, both good and bad, and starting



new chapters of our lives when we don't feel ready." And while Reaman said change is one of the most frightening things a person can encounter, she said it can be beautiful because it allows a person to choose a reaction.

"While we will always naturally find ourselves filled with fear, my hope is that we can always look for the positive, knowing that what we experience has

potential to help us become the people we are meant to be," she said.

She closed, "Marian Catholic is an immensely special place, and I am so blessed to have been a part of it. Now that we are at the end of our path together I wish you all the absolute best, may you find peace and happiness wherever life takes you," she said.

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Photo by Casey Lutz Photography

CLASS OF '22 (CONTINUED)

Salutatorian Walter Pavlik called the day one of celebration and gratitude, telling his classmates, “Today is the most significant and life-altering achievement most of us can claim to date.»

He said when the class members enrolled at Marian Catholic as freshmen, “Each of us had a vision of what high school would bring, whether it was academically, athletically, artistically or spiritually. We set goals, worked hard, and we are standing here today as confident graduates.”

Through their years, he said, “We learned how to navigate through challenging times together, not only as classmates but as friends. We learned how to listen and learn in new ways. These valuable lessons will remain with us forever. Our high school years are forever defined by our resilience and our ability to overcome obstacles.”

“Marian Catholic is an immensely special place, and I am so blessed to have been a part of it.”

— Lauren Reaman, Valedictorian

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CLASS OF 2022!

Abigail E. Artz
 Alyse R. Blasko
 Rhiannon G. Brady
 Morgan E. Brennan
 Jay Meng Burton
 Bryan A. Cervasio
 Haili Ann S. Conrad
 Eleanor J. Cunningham
 Grace E. Curnow
 Rhiannon M. Dempsey
 Zachary T. DeRemer
 Olivia G. Erickson
 Jose Luis Espailat-Turbi
 Michael J. Fellin
 Jacob R. Fenstemaker
 Eden Sierra J. Fleming
 Katelynn M. Frantz
 Noah J. Frask
 Logan R. Fritz
 Isabella Elena Genao
 Mason B. Gibson
 Rylynn P. Hall
 Colin M. Hasara Jr.
 Joselyn Hernandez
 Chloe R. Hiles
 Eviana E. Jimenez
 Leana L. Jimenez
 Robert J. Jones
 Maura P. Kelly

Ashlyn E. Klitsch
 Alexander J. Kokosky
 Steven E. Kostecy
 Joshua Kuzmitsky
 Isabelle J.V. Lesante
 Brendan T. Lonergan
 Alexandra K. Martinez
 Paige M. Matchick
 John Milosh Jr.
 John C. Moyer
 Alysha A. Nunez
 Nathalie Marie A. Nunez
 Walter J. Pavlik III
 Lauren K. Reaman
 Matthew M. Rehrig
 Madilyn N.C. Rick
 Lliam P. Sanphy
 Paris J. Sevinsky
 Hannah J. Shimko
 Ethan T. Smith
 Elizabeth Ann C. Snerr
 Anthony J. Soberick
 Kelly C. Sullivan
 Charlotte M. Vinson
 Taylor P. Walsh
 Paige A. Welch
 Reese A. Williams
 Morgan R. Yanuzzi

MARIAN CATHOLIC ADDS LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAM

When Michael Brennan was named the new Head of School at Marian Catholic High School, Hometown, in 2021, he brought with him not only a Pennsylvania principal's certification, but a background in special education with over a decade of experience.

Under his guidance, Marian Catholic has implemented the Aquinas Learning Support Program that "strives to educate the whole child in the areas of physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development," he said.

Aquinas is a relatively new program in the Diocese of Allentown for families of boys or girls with learning disabilities, as previously Notre Dame of Green Pond and Berks Catholic high schools have offered the program.

Marian Catholic is in the first year of a three-year implementation plan that offers "a Christ-centered, quality academic education within a Catholic school environment for children with identified specific learning disabilities," Brennan said.

"We started the program this year without advertising it, and there were 14 students in the program to start. Through the year, with transfers and other situations, we now have 26 students who receive some level of support in the program," said Brennan, who spent the last eight years in the Palmerton Area School District as a learning support teacher and department head before coming to Marian Catholic.

Brennan, who also has his special education teacher and supervisor certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, wanted to start the program "because of the increase in 504 plans and learning support locally, and also due to the mental health issues youths may be facing in the aftermath of COVID-19," he said.



Michael Brennan, Marian Catholic Head of School, discusses Aquinas program with Nicole Dunn, director of student support services.

A 504 plan, Brennan explained, is one that assists a student who has a physical, mental, or medical impairment that limits his or her life activities, as opposed to having a specific disability due to academic testing.

Brennan said data on schools statewide shows the norm for school districts is 10-15% of their student body is in special education, but it has increased in recent years, he said, and has become "more around 20% of the populations."

"We want to make Marian Catholic an opportunity for more and more students," Brennan said. "With the program in place here, parents now have an alternative location to send their sons or daughters."

He added, "We cannot do all of the accommodations, for instance, we do not have an elevator, but we can do a lot, and we want parents to know we're here to help their son or daughter gain self-advocacy skills, increased confidence and develop leadership while

supporting individual learning differences while respecting the spiritual dignity and potential of each person."

Accommodations often refer to testing changes, classroom adjustments and curriculum modifications which may be updated or revised as the need changes.

Brennan said space formerly used for library purposes at the school was turned into a "student support center," a place where students in the Aquinas program go to for help.

To begin implementation of the program, Marian Catholic hired Nicole Dunn, a 2008 graduate of Marian Catholic, as director of student support services. Dunn holds a BA in psychology and a master's degree in school counseling, both from Kutztown University.

Dunn, whose duties include overseeing guidance and the Aquinas program, said, "Through fostering a culture of inclusion

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AQUINAS PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

and advocacy, students are provided with one-on-one support as they work toward reaching their highest potential; not just academically, but socially, emotionally and spiritually.

“Together with the students, our Aquinas Team and classroom teachers have worked tirelessly to tackle barriers to learning, integrate differentiated instruction, and celebrate every academic victory - whether large or small. As we reflect on the success of our first year and look forward to our future goals, our hearts are full of

immense gratitude for our generous donor who made this program move from a dream to a reality.”

With Dunn’s assistance, students and parents develop a schedule, do academic planning, and get personalized attention. In some instances, students are scheduled for an extra preparatory period; others might get help from student-led tutors; and some are afforded one-on-one attention.

Caitlyn Weniger, a counselor with the Catapult Learning program made available through a contract with the

Schuylkill IU, is assisting with the program.

For the past two years, Weniger has helped provide support in Schuylkill County schools in the areas of mental health, academic achievement, transition planning, career readiness, personal and social development, and in supporting students in times of crisis.

To be eligible for the Aquinas program, a student must have an Individualized Education Plan or the 504 Plan upon enrolling at Marian Catholic.

'19 MCHS VALEDICTORIAN NAMED GOLDWATER SCHOLAR AT VILLANOVA



Villanova University student and Marian Catholic High School Class of 2019 graduate, Zachary (Zach) Boyer, has been named as a 2022 Goldwater Scholar by the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation. A junior in Villanova’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Boyer, from Tamaqua, was selected from more than 1,200 institution-nominated students nationwide.

“As a Goldwater Scholar, Zachary will have a remarkable opportunity to

further the work he’s begun as a student-researcher at Villanova. He follows in the footsteps of previous Villanova honorees, many of whom have gone on to excel as researchers in other prestigious, national scholarship programs,” said University Provost Patrick G. Maggitti, Ph.D. “I congratulate Zachary on this honor and thank the Villanova faculty and staff who have helped him achieve his academic goals.”

A chemistry major and recipient of the James C. Curvey Endowed Scholarship at Villanova, Boyer’s research has focused on the underlying chemistry of antimicrobial agents. An aspiring medicinal chemist, he aims to develop therapeutics for infectious diseases. The pandemic delayed Boyer’s attempts to become involved in bench research until spring 2021, when he began working with Dr. Matthew O’Reilly. In summer 2021, he was awarded a Villanova Undergraduate Research Fellowship and studied the

synthesis of novel molecules with antimicrobial properties (“Organic Synthesis, Identification, and Biological Analysis of anti-MRSA Dihydrofolate Reductase Inhibitors”). Boyer has presented at the Villanova Undergraduate Research Symposium, as well as the 2022 American Chemical Society national conference. This summer, he will work as Johnson & Johnson as a synthetic chemist intern.

The Goldwater Foundation awards \$7,500 scholarships to sophomores and juniors who intend to pursue research careers in the natural sciences, mathematics or engineering. It is widely considered the preeminent award for undergraduates preparing for research careers in STEM.

The Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation was established by Congress in 1986 to honor Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater, who served for 30 years in the United States Senate.



DONNA, JACK, JANIE AND DENISE *anxiously finish assignments after a strenuous day at school.*

Dowling Dynasty Reigns Supreme; Makes Marian Scene Appearance

“Are the Irish taking over the school?” One can frequently ask that question when referring to Marian, especially, since there are quite a few Irish students attending it. With the Irish, however, Marianites also have the good fortune to ask, “are the Dowlings taking over the school?” It would seem that Irish and Dowling are interchangeable.

Hailing from St. Ann’s, Lansford, the four Dowlings are, by first name and class, Denise, 2A; Janie, 2B; John, 2C; and Donna, 2D.

Well liked by both their teachers and their classmates, the three sisters and one brother are quite proud of the fact that they are Irish.

Donna, the freshman and youngest member of the family, plans to join Chorus, bowling, and newspaper. She would like to attend college after graduating.

John, or Jack, as his sophomore peers call him, is a tackle on the Marian football team.

Janie is an active junior interested in becoming an elementary school teacher. She has received honors the two years she attended Marian and

is presently engaged in newspaper, bowling, and Chorus.

Denise, who has recently been accepted at Sacred Heart School of Nursing in Allentown, received honors for two years while at Marian. She is page one editor of the MARIANEWS and is a four-year member of Chorus and bowling. Last year she also became a part of the newly formed French Club.

So, the Dowling Dynasty reigns supreme. But confusion also reigns supreme as wave after wave of Dowlings besiege the teachers’ roll books. Marian, though, is fortunate and honored to have them as a part of the school.

Editor’s note: Denise Boyle, '70, the eldest of the four Dowling siblings of Lansford who attended MCHS together in the 1970s, passed away on June 6, 2022. She was the wife of Charles Boyle, also Class of 1970. Their three children graduated from Marian Catholic: Patrick '95, Ryan '00, and Jennifer Rehnert '93. Jennifer and Chris’ four children are also Marian Family: Collin '20, Corey '21, Connor '25, and Cara '28. John “Dizzy” Dowling '72, passed away on Jan. 28, 2017. He and his late wife, the former Patty Coleman of Tuscarora '77 who passed away on Feb. 7, 2017, are the parents of Marian Catholic alumni John Dowling '02 and Kressa Dowling '09. Jane '71 continued the Dowling family Catholic education legacy by teaching at our partner schools – Our Lady of the Valley and Our Lady of the Angels schools – for 40 years before retiring in 2016. Thank you to the Dowling, Boyle and Rehnert families for their commitment to Catholic education!

TRIBUTE TO COACH DAKOSTY'S HALL OF FAME INDUCTION PLANNED AS LAUNCHING PAD OF INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE FOOTBALL PROGRAM



Dan LaBert is a successful CEO for the National Association of Independent Life Brokerage Agencies, the leading insurance industry organization promoting retirement security and consumer choice in the insurance and financial services marketplace through the use of independent wholesale brokerage distribution channels. He attributes his success to the days he played in the Marian Catholic Football Program.

That's exactly how Jack Pieracini feels. He's a global account manager handling financial services for a technology company in the Silicon Valley, and he credits his success in life to his mother and father, as well as the Colt gridiron program.

"I can't say I would be where I am today if it weren't for my mom and dad and Marian Catholic football," Pieracini insists.

The duo is joined by scores of former Colts who played on the gridiron under the watchful eye of Stan Dakosty, the Colts' Hall of Fame mentor who has paced the sidelines for an amazing

43 years. LaBert and Pieracini remember well Dakosty's longstanding message to every player on every team he ever coached, that is, "Never forget where you came from."

Steadfast in their belief of that mantra, they are leading a charge to help the program in which they once played, but will forever tell people, they will always belong.

"Once a Colt, always a Colt," LaBert said.

The two Colts, who played at Buffalo and Fordham, respectively, and a handful of other former players, want to give back to the program they say "gave us so much," LaBert said.

That's why they are spearheading the establishment of a yet-to-be-named Marian Catholic football alumni family and friends organization that will benefit the Marian Catholic Quarterback Club and football program.

"There is no larger gathering in Marian Catholic than the football program, and there's a good reason for that," LaBert said. "Former players want to be part of the program's success and we want to do whatever we can to give Coach (Dakosty) and his staff and players whatever resources they need to be successful."

With their beloved coach most recently having been inducted into the District 11 Hall of Fame, the former players want to celebrate that induction as a means of launching their club plans.

"Many of us would have attended his induction had we known, but the attendance was limited, so we're planning to celebrate with Coach ourselves," said LaBert.

That event is scheduled for Saturday, August 20, with a dinner at 6pm in the

Jack Malarkey Gymnasium at Marian Catholic. Earlier in the day, the 2022 Colts will have their pre-season scrimmage against Holy Redeemer of Wilkes-Barre.

"As ex-players in the program, we have to be cognizant not just of where we're going, but where we've been, and celebrating Marian Catholic football is special to many, many people," LaBert said.

According to Labert, the former players are focusing their efforts on "raising awareness of Marian Catholic football, and establishing a football alumni family to keep us updated on plans for the football program," adding, "we want to engage alumni to support the football team, attend games, and, in some cases, offer mentorship to the current players."

Supporting the program, he said, is not new to ex-players. He explained, "Two years ago, 30 guys raised \$13,000 for new helmets. Last year, we raised \$7,000 more, but now we want to have a more formal plan."

Former Colt Joe Vilcheck noted about the helmet purchases, "We were not just raising money for the football program, but to also protect someone's son."

Pieracini said the former players want to support the program in which they played on a more frequent basis. "We hope to be supportive on a more regular basis, maybe every year have a keynote event. With the more people we can get involved, the more money we can raise to help the program."

He added, "There's a network out there and we hope to leverage it a little bit to give back more to the Marian Catholic football program."

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MARIAN CATHOLIC FOOTBALL PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

A former president of the Fordham Gridiron Club, he wants to borrow that model to help create a similar club at Marian Catholic, saying, "It's designed to bring former players back, perhaps to talk to the student athletes about opportunities that can open up in their lives through football."

Pieracini is quick to borrow another of Dakosty's words of advice, that is, "Use football as a means to an end," saying, "We learned that participation in the program gave us an opportunity to experience something we would not have experienced in life. So we'd like to get more former players involved in talking to the Marian Catholic players about

things like career choices and the role football can play in them."

According to Kristine Evina, Marian Catholic's Director of Advancement, the initiative is welcome news for the school, and is very similar to the many organizations that support Marian Catholic.

"This is something the ex-players want to do on their own, the school and Advancement Department is not involved," she said. "But we welcome anyone who wants to help Marian Catholic in any way. The guys have indicated they want to raise funds for the football team and help the students

involved in the program they love.

We encourage players of other sports to do the same, and we're confident the efforts of these former football players will result in a model for other clubs."

LaBert said participation from former statisticians, managers, cheerleaders and band members is welcome. "The whole idea is for Marian Catholic football to return to bigger things and bigger gatherings."

LaBert and Pieracini welcome former Colt players to help with the cause. They can be reached at dclabert@gmail.com (LaBert) and jackpieracini@gmail.com (Pieracini), respectively.

'87 GRAD HEADS LEHIGH VALLEY REALTORS

Howard Schaeffer, a member of the MCHS Class of 1987 and a Realtor with RE/MAX Real Estate in Allentown, is the new president of the Greater Lehigh Valley Realtors.

Howard, who was raised in Tamaqua, has been a fulltime Realtor since 2002, specializing in commercial sales, residential home sales, new construction sales and investor relations.

A former active-duty U.S. Marine, Howard spoke passionately in front of more than 130 real estate professionals about his mission and goals for the association.

"Having a plan for my mission is how I am programmed as a Marine," he said. "We have had amazing presidents in the past. It is my job to preserve their hard work, but to also leave the association

better than I found it. My number one goal is to take professionalism to the next level, and to construct a better sense of teamwork within our profession."

In addition to serving on the Greater Lehigh Valley Realtors Board of Directors, Schaeffer served on the association's Grievance Committee from 2016-2018.

Schaeffer has been awarded the prestigious RE/MAX Chairman's Club Award and was elected to the RE/MAX Hall of Fame in 2012. He is the team leader for Howard Schaeffer & Associate's Real Estate Team.

Schaeffer is an active member of the Lehigh Valley Marine Corps League Detachment 296; Chairman of the Board



for the Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation; National Chaplain, Marine Corps League; President of the Marine Corps League National Foundation and the United States Marines Youth Foundation Inc.

KEEP US INFORMED

Provide us your updated information. The success of any organization is dependent upon membership and communications. As we are continually updating our contact information, we'd like to hear from you. An "Alumni – update your information" prompt is readily available on the alumni page of the school's website.

IN MEMORIAM

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

Mary Lynn Ann Bargilione, 65, of Nesquehoning, passed away on May 20, 2022. She was the wife of John Bargilione, a member of the MCHS Class of 1972.

Denise M. Boyle, 69, of Summit Hill, passed away on June 6, 2022. She and her husband, Charles T. Boyle, graduated in 1970 from MCHS. They are the parents of three MCHS graduates, Ryan, Patrick and Jennifer Rehnert.

Mrs. Mary A. Makara, 91, of Summit Hill, passed away on March 24, 2022. She was the widow of Michael P. Makara and the mother of three MCHS graduates, Michael and David Makara, and Carol Crowley.

Francis X. Maurer Jr., 66, of Nesquehoning, passed away on May 31, 2022. He was the husband of Nancy (Sotak) Maurer and was a 1973 graduate of MCHS.

Irene (Renee) Rose Mariotti Novak, 83, of Lansford, passed away on April 3, 2022. She attended Marian Catholic and St. Ann's high schools, Lansford.

Allen L. Wertman Jr., of Brockton, passed away on May 24, 2044. He was the husband of Deborah A. (Inama) Wertman. They are the parents of MCHS graduates Ryan and Erik Wertman.

Frank Yusella, 93, of Tamaqua, passed away on April 16, 2022. He was the father of MCHS graduates Frank Yusella and Christine Huegel.

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN DESIGNATE YOUR PA STATE TAXES TO MARIAN CATHOLIC!

By doing so, you can help build a brighter future for deserving students at Marian Catholic. This past year, over 60% of our students received tuition assistance through the PA tax credit program. By participating in this amazing program, you can make a Marian Catholic education possible for our students next year and for years to come. The Allentown Diocese has made the process simple, quick, and easy! Contact Kristine Evina, MCHS Director of Advancement, at kevina@mariancatholic.org or call 570-467-3335 ext 115 for more information.

Visit our website for more information: www.mariancatholic.org/tax-credit

BE A CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

Because classmates keep in touch with each other, and probably know better where their classmates are living, we are using a classmate representative approach to help us update our records. So, we need your help! The role of the Class Representative is to help connect their Marian Catholic classmates and other alumni by informing them about what is going on currently at the school and within the Alumni Association and engaging them through events and reunions. For more information on the association and how you can help, contact Bill O'Gurek, Class of '73 and association president at alumni@mariancatholic.org.

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@mariancatholic.org and we will be more than happy to help you reunite with the Marian Catholic family.



WWW.MARIANCATHOLICHS.ORG    

Marian Catholic High School, 166 Marian Ave. Tamaqua, PA 18252 | 570.467.3335 | alumni@mariancatholic.org