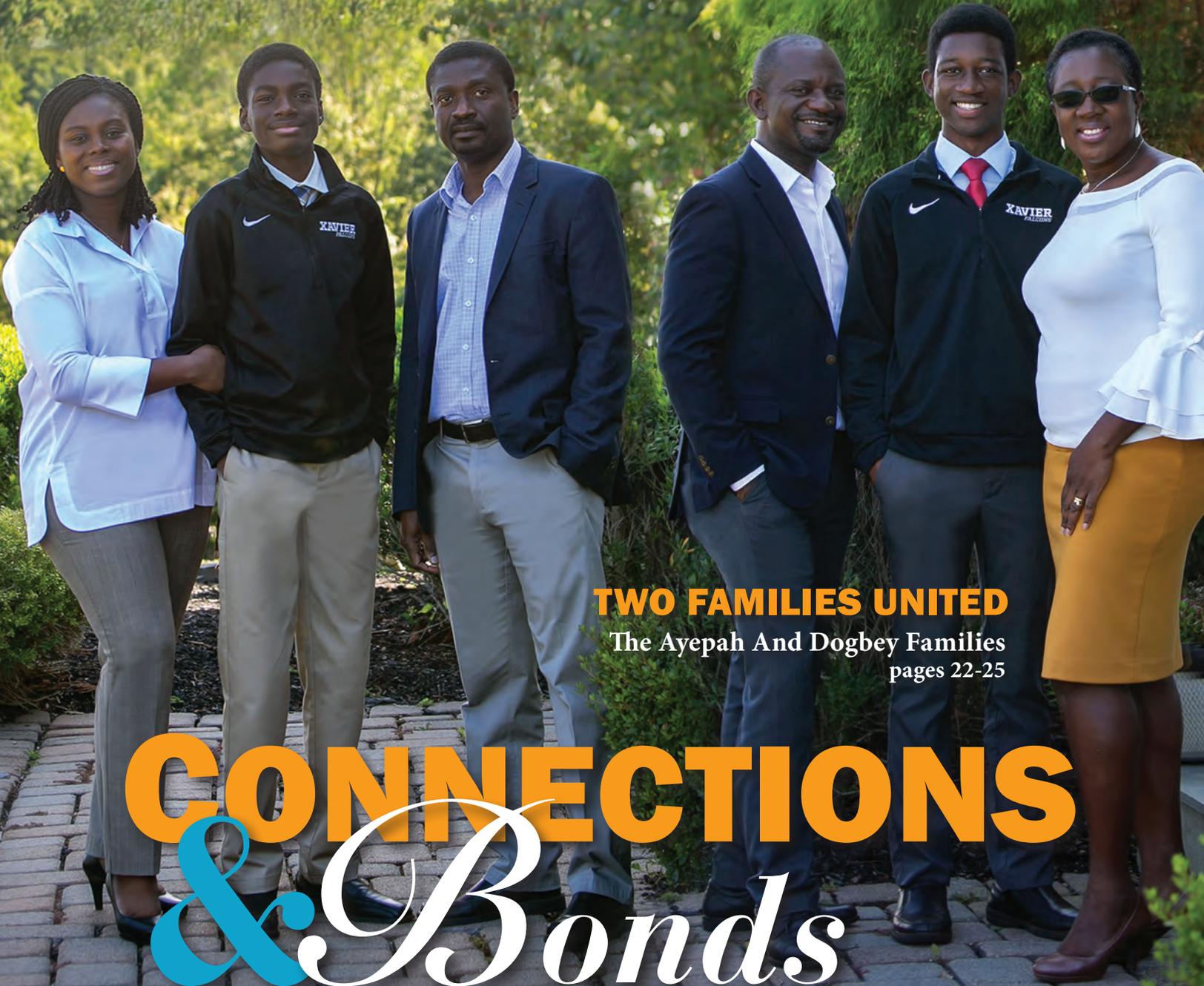


XAVIER

20²⁰/₂₁

MAGAZINE



TWO FAMILIES UNITED

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PRESERVING U.S. HISTORY

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STRO

Logos



INGER

inger

This Is **XAVIER**



LETTER FROM THE Headmaster

Dear members of the Xavier community,

When we gathered for school on Thursday, March 12, we had all seen the uptick in COVID-19 cases across the country and here in Connecticut. What we did not know was that it would be the last day of in-person classes at Xavier High School for the 2019-20 school year.

Immediately the faculty, staff and administration went into overdrive, and by the following Tuesday, March 17, we were fully up and running delivering classes remotely to 660 students. It was an incredibly seamless transition and my sincere thanks go out to everyone in the Xavier community for making this happen.

The in-person shutdown of schools around the state created a cascading effect on non-academic programming. The athletic programs at all schools were immediately stopped just as the winter state tournaments were about to begin. The undefeated Xavier swimming team won its first SCC championship in 26 years and was looking to capture its first state title as the top seed heading into the championships. Similarly, the basketball and hockey teams were seeded highly and never got their tournaments started. We did, however, pick up a state championship with the wrestling team capturing its third state title two weeks before the shutdown. Congratulations to Coach Mike Cunningham and all of our wrestlers for hanging another banner in Kohs Gymnasium. Additionally the spring musical with *Mamma Mia!* and had worked tirelessly throughout the winter to prepare for a weekend of shows.

As we approached our year-end celebrations, we knew that we wanted to create as much of a realistic experience for our seniors as we could. Putting together a virtual Baccalaureate Mass and graduation was a huge undertaking and again, the faculty and staff at Xavier came together to create what we thought was a wonderful send-off for the incredibly resilient Class of 2020. They will forever hold a special place in our hearts for their patience and understanding in working through this pandemic.

Over this past summer, the building underwent a transformation to the world of social distancing. We opened full and on time with 662 students. We now live in a world of masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing, but the mission of Xavier never changes. We seek to educate the whole man, spirit, mind and body. Our goal at all times is to be together at Xavier, but we will deliver our mission and academic program remotely.

For those of you who support Xavier, I cannot thank you enough for your gifts. Now more than ever we truly need your help. The pandemic has brought unprecedented layoffs and furloughs, many that involve our Xavier families. Our requests for financial aid are higher than ever and I ask that we come together as a community to help as many families as we can.

May you and your families maintain good health until we have a suitable vaccine. All of us at Xavier thank you for being a part of our special community.

God Bless you all.

Sincerely,



Dave Eustis
Xavier High School Headmaster



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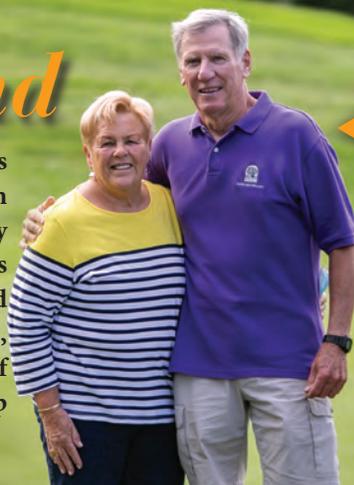
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FEATURES

The Ties That Bind

Since it opened, Xavier has been much more than a high school. It has been a community strengthened by the connections and bonds that have developed throughout the years. Inside, we take a look at a collection of stories that highlight friendship and family. **Pages 8-35**



HOOK, LINE & SINKER

No matter what job he is occupying (and he has had many), Rich Feitel has been completely devoted to Xavier since the moment he joined the Xavier community in 1969. **Pages 14-15**

The American Dream

Art Wrubel '83 went from Xavier to Penn to owning his own hedge fund in New York to partly owning the Philadelphia 76ers of the NBA. If the last name sounds familiar, then you probably remember Wrubel's on Main Street Middletown, a shopping destination for years. **Page 18**

MAN of HONOR

Kevin Lacz '00 Page 16



A SPECIAL BREW

Joe '05 and Johanna Perazella, a former Mercy student, make *perkfect* partners in life and in business. **Pages 28-29**



VIRTUAL VIRTUOSO

In his youth, Chris Vance '94 struggled to learn how to play piano. Now, he spends his life uniting people through the beauty of music. **Page 35**



FAMILY SPIRIT

The Ayepah and Dogbey families met in Ghana long before they sent their sons, Jamie '22 and Selorm '22, to Xavier. Pages 22-25

Alissa DeJonge '95 and Luke DeJonge '95 have been together since they edited each other's valedictorian speeches at Mercy and Xavier. Now, with their young son, Pierce, they've returned to the Mercy and Xavier community as Alissa takes on her new role as the Mercy President. Pages 26-27



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THE NEXT GENERATION

EIGHT STUDENTS. Eight unique stories about who they are, what it means to be a part of this community, and how Xavier has helped them learn more about themselves. **Pages 36-43.**

- 36. Finn Dowler '21
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- 38. Owen Padgett '21
- 39. Pat O'Hanlon '21
- 40. Satrohan Twins '21
- 41. Aidan Higgins '22
- 42. Drew Kron '22
- 43. Malcolm Wilson-Toliver '21



XAVIER TODAY

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PAST YEAR

It has been a year unlike any other in school history. But once again, the Xavier community adapted to everything it faced in 2020 and continues to move forward with the school's mission as a source of constant motivation. **Pages 44-59**

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- 57. Xavier Tributes
- 58. Looking Back
- 59. What We Learned

WELCOME TO XAVIER MAGAZINE 20²⁰/₂₁

Over the years, thousands of students have chosen Xavier High School for countless reasons.

THE ACADEMICS ... THE DISCIPLINE ... THE FAITH ...

Every individual has his own factors for walking through the doors that first day. But the detail that can sometimes be overlooked is one of the main reasons so many alumni remain connected so many years later.

No matter where you go or what you do after Xavier, there is a shared connection - a bond.



If you're an alum, you know the feeling. You arrive as strangers. You leave as brothers. If you're not a graduate, you may not share the bond the same way, but you experience it in your own way.

There is an unspoken truth between graduates and those that are part of the Xavier community. No matter if you are from the first graduating class or the last, when you encounter someone who has walked these halls and lived by the same value system, there is not only trust, but also respect.

Take the surprise meeting between a current student and an alumni this summer.

Back in July, student body Vice President Liam Houchin '21 was walking through downtown Kennebunkport, Maine, and wearing a Xavier hoodie when he was stopped by a stranger. Before he knew it, Houchin was in the middle of a 15-minute conversation with a graduate from years past. And there it is was - that bond.

L-R: Matthew Conyers, Jeff Otterbein '72

As we began to brainstorm themes for this edition of XAVIER Magazine, we kept running into stories that highlighted the incredible relationships that exist in our community, and the power of that community.

Some relationships started at Xavier. Others were in place long before Xavier became part of the picture. And some happened after graduates left the walls of Xavier to take on new challenges.

Throughout this magazine, we've gathered a collection of stories that focus on the power of friendship, loyalty and a shared experience, and the bond that comes with that.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories as much as we enjoyed telling them.

Whether it is the new friendship of two former Xavier football greats or the remarkable life of Kevin Lacz '00, these stories, and these relationships, represent the power of a Xavier education that cannot be measured by normal metrics.

This is a special community. From Xavier to our friends down the road at Mercy High School to the amazing alumni network that stretches to every corner of the world, we are constantly reminded of what it means to have the support of something bigger than ourselves - the support of a family. And make no mistake, this is a family.



Xavier. Mercy. New graduates. Former graduates. Faculty. Staff. Parents. Grandparents.

We're all in this together. This year, of all years, it felt right to spotlight some of those enduring relationships that make both schools much more than a place that runs from 8:15 a.m. to 2:26 p.m.

Faced with the uncertainty of the times, and all that lies ahead, we cannot help but lean on those that support us, and in return be there for them. These relationships matter. And in the end, they remind us what makes Xavier so different when you are choosing a school as a freshman.

When you decide on Xavier, you are not simply picking a high school.

YOU ARE CHOOSING A HOME.

Matthew Conyers,
Director of Communications
Jeff Otterbein '72,
Associate Director of Communications



XAVIER

20
21

MAGAZINE

CONNECTIONS & Bonds

**With Trust And Respect, The Ayepahs And Dogbeys
Have Formed A Special Relationship**

Left To Right

RINA AYEPAH, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

JAMIE AYEPAH '22

MICHAEL AYEPAH, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

RUPERT DOGBEY, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

SELORM DOGBEY '22

PIA DOGBEY, MD
Waterbury Hospital,
Internal Medicine Faculty

On The Cover

FAMILY SPIRIT

As college classmates in Ghana, Rupert and Pia Dogbey, and Michael and Rina Ayepah shared a dream. Together, the four wanted to be doctors. Now nearly 30 years later, their sons, who have grown up together, share the same dream.

After seeing the strength of their parents' bond, Jamie Ayepah '22 and Selorm Dogbey '22 have arrived at Xavier High School looking to live out the lessons they learned from their parents and create their own legacy.

From Ghana to Xavier, the two families have been there for each other.

Their story, like so many in this magazine, highlights the power of friendship and family.

At Xavier, that sense of community and camaraderie will always resonate, and represent something essential to this school and those that call it home.

Whatever we face, we remain stronger together.

pages 22-25

Jovan Santos-Knox '12
Kevin Lawrence '16

A FOOTBALL BROTHERHOOD

Kevin Lawrence '16 And Jovan Santos-Knox '12 Each Made A Name For Himself Playing Football For Xavier. Now They Are Chasing Bigger Goals Together In The CFL



XAVIER
TO CANADA



Earlier this year, Jovan Santos-Knox '12 was preparing for his fourth season in the Canadian Football League when he got a surprise call from Kevin Lawrence '16.

Before signing a contract to play guard for the Winnipeg Bombers of the CFL, Lawrence wanted some advice from someone he could count on.

The pair had never played a minute together during Xavier football's remarkable championship run from 2010-2014, when the program won four titles in five years, but Lawrence knew that Santos-Knox was the right person for the job, having played linebacker for Winnipeg and Edmonton.

"I was asking him every possible question and he told me a lot of great things about Winnipeg," Lawrence said. "After talking with him, I fell more in love with Winnipeg."

A few days later, Lawrence signed the contract.

Bonded by their memories of Xavier football and a shared vision of making it to the NFL someday, Lawrence and Santos-Knox have formed a strong friendship as they both chase their football dreams up north. Over the spring and summer, the pair worked out together at Tolland's Star Hill Athletic Center.

"I was able to mentor to him in a way," Santos-Knox said. "He would ask me everything he could think of because he knew

I had been there. I had literally been in the same situation as him. We really bonded."

Four days a week, five hours a day - lifting, running and preparing.

"He kept pushing me and motivating me," Lawrence said. "He really helped me get through it and know what it takes to play at the professional level."

Whatever Lawrence needed as he prepared for his first season in the league, Santos-Knox was there for him. And when the league, which typically runs from June to November, was canceled in August, Santos-Knox was there for him, too.

"My thing to Kevin was this - COVID is not going to stop you," Santos-Knox said. "I kept pushing him and telling him how far he has come. It is easy to be a mentor for someone like [Lawrence] because he is so accepting of knowledge. Our relationship works well."

Despite the cancellation of the season, both former Xavier greats count the last nine months as a blessing.

"He is just a great guy and a great friend," Santos-Knox said about Lawrence. "I'm as close to him now as I am to the friends I grew up and went to Xavier with."

When the duo played for Xavier, they were part of something special, and those lessons they learned through Xavier football have stayed with them as they have taken on bigger challenges in college.

"A lot of our success is due to what we did and what we learned during our high school days. We are two guys that busted our tails in high school and eventually got to where we wanted to be, but it wasn't easy."

~ Santos-Knox





UMASS AMHERST Student – Athlete
Jovan Santos-Knox
 @UMassFootball

School, major, year
 School of Management & Finance, Bachelor of Science in Business, Senior

Position, number, eligibility
 Linebacker, 47, Senior

Best place to study/playbook
 Coach (David) Walker's office because I can get the best advice and questions there.

Most challenging workout
 How Coach (David) Walker makes the workouts and you have to do it, but it makes you a better football player.

Best place to study
 I like to study in the library and get away from the distractions, but you can't get too far away from the school part.

Best part of being a UMass student
 Meeting with coaches and staff. There are many staff to help you complete every task in three places to great.

Best moment on the field for others
 After you are a freshman, you get away from the distractions, but it's the great moment of that night to get to the top.

Best part of being a linebacker
 The feeling of the game and being able to be a part of it. Being a part of the team is a very nice.

"It was really easy for us to hit it off right away because we had that Xavier brotherhood to fall back on," Santos-Knox said. "There is a sense of pride you have when you come from Xavier. It really is a brotherhood."

Before Lawrence had even committed to play college football for the University of Rhode Island, Santos-Knox worked hard to prove himself at the University of Massachusetts, where he became one of the leading tacklers in the country at the linebacker position.

Fast forward to a few years later and Lawrence was having his own moment as a guard and tackle at Rhode Island as the team was making a resurgence.

Two Xavier greats making an impact on small New England programs? The similarities were not lost on either player, or their former coaches.

"It is a credit to them," Xavier football coach Andy Guyon said. "They bought into the hard work, the discipline and everything we were doing at Xavier, and what it takes to be great in this game."

After completing his four years at UMass, Santos-Knox struggled to land a spot on a professional team (he was invited to the Philadelphia Eagles rookie camp but was not taken). However, despite a year away from the game, he never stopped working to get his spot. And in 2017, he got his chance when his dad Bryon, the Southern Connecticut State gymnastics coach, drove him nine hours to Charlotte for a tryout camp with Winnipeg.

"They said we're looking for a quarterback, but we might have an opening at linebacker, it wouldn't hurt to come," Jovan-Santos Knox said. "That is all my dad needed to hear to say, 'Okay, we're driving down.'"

A few days later, he got a call. They wanted to offer him a spot on the practice team.

In Winnipeg, Santos-Knox quickly worked his way into the lineup, first on special teams and later as linebacker, making an interception on his first play at linebacker.

"From then on, I have been a starter in the CFL," Santos-Knox said.

At Winnipeg and later Edmonton, Santos-Knox has played 27 games and made 142 tackles.

"If my dad did not push me to make that drive, I would've probably hung [my cleats] up," Santos-Knox said.

Santos-Knox sees the same type of determination in his training partner.

"I know I always have to keep working because there are so many people who are in the same position as me," Lawrence said.

During his time at Rhode Island, Lawrence helped the Rams go from the bottom of the conference standings to the top.

"For me to leave Xavier and to help put URI back on the map, it really means a lot to me. It is my contribution to the program. It means a lot more than personal accolades," Lawrence said.

This summer, Santos-Knox and Lawrence were set to play each other in the first game of



the season with Edmonton opening up against Winnipeg. But despite the cancellation of the season, both Santos-Knox and Lawrence know their time will come. And if the past is any indication, they have no problem waiting and working for their chance. They learned that and so much more at Xavier.

"A lot of our success is due to what we did and what we learned during our high school days," Santos-Knox said. "We are two guys that busted our tails in high school and eventually got to where we wanted to be, but it wasn't easy. Without Xavier, there's no telling where I would be or where Kevin would be." X





John W. Gastler

Faith, Family & Friends

46 YEARS AFTER GRADUATING,
JACK GASTLER '74 HAS
NEVER FORGOTTEN THE HOME
HE FOUND AT XAVIER



Gastler and former NFL
running back Floyd Little



Jack Gastler '74 was a football and track captain at Xavier, captained the football team at an Ivy League school, Columbia, and had a long and successful career in the financial world.

His football coach at Xavier, Larry McHugh, and his football coach at Columbia, Bill Campbell, were major influences in his life.

"I always tell people how blessed I was," Gastler said.

He paused, breaking down for a second.

"Sorry ... my dad and my mom ... talk about being blessed. My dad was the cornerstone and my mom helped build the person I am, and then I had both Larry and Billy and Rich Feitel. ... When you talk about being blessed by those three coaches ... I have to raise my father up as No. 1."

Gastler does not forget people. He rattled off the names of so many legendary players from that 1973 team, many with whom he remains in contact with and two, Matt Hoey '74 and Kevin O'Rourke '74, whom he calls best friends to this day.

"We were just together and realized that it was 50 years ago that we met at Xavier," Gastler said. "The three of us have raised our families together and now we are celebrating children's marriages, and in our case, grandchildren, together."

He mentions the impact that Feitel, his pole vault coach in track, had on shaping him into the person he is today. Feitel and his wife Lauralane, and Gastler and his wife, Debbie, remain close all these years later. "They were great role models for our marriage and as young parents," Gastler said.

Gastler does not forget his roots. Faith. Family. Friends. Those three words came up a lot in a conversation that stretched into 1 1/2 hours. Xavier means as much to him now as it did almost 50 years ago. His son Jay, a 2005 graduate, was married nearly a year ago, and five in the wedding party, including his best man, were Xavier graduates.

Now in retirement, Gastler is on his second tour of duty on the Xavier Board of Directors.

At one point, Gastler was on the Mercy Board of Directors.

"I'm committed to doing anything to help those two schools," Gastler said. "I'm a firm believer that our world is in desperate need of the product of a Xavier and Mercy education and experience."

Gastler was on Xavier football teams that won 34 games in a row, a Connecticut state record at the time. The Falcons lost to West Haven in the

*"I don't know who coined the phrase
'Good enough is never good enough if it's not your best,'
but that concept has always driven me to do my best."*

~JACK GASTLER

"We were so tremendously blessed by the leadership and faculty at Xavier during our time there," Gastler said. "Brother John Kerr, Brother James Boyle, Bill McKenna, provided a leadership style that aligned discipline with incredible caring for each individual. A superb faculty enacted the same in the classroom and the various coaching and extracurricular activities in which they participated. Giving, selflessness, and high expectations were continually on display."

Mercy means the world to him, too. His wife Debbie is a 1974 graduate. They hung out with the same friends and she invited him to the Mercy Junior Ring Dance. They've been married 42 years. One of their daughters, Connie, is a Mercy grad.

second-to-last game of the 1973 season. "All those wins," he said, "and that's the one you remember more than anything else ... I always say we didn't lose that game; we just ran out of time."

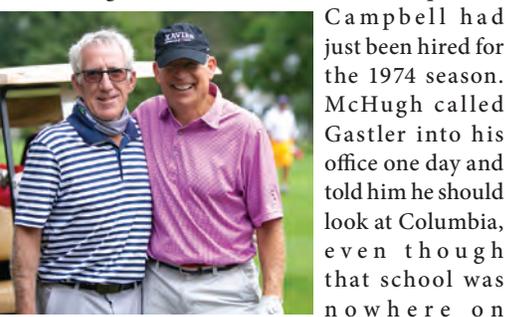
Still, he had the time of his life on the football field as a defensive back. ... and on the track where he was a captain of the 1974 state champion outdoor team where fellow tri-captain, and still close friend, Pat Augeri, was dominant ("best athlete with whom I've been personally associated"). Gastler also excelled in another area: the classroom.

"Larry McHugh, to my mind, was the best coach in the state, one of the best in the country, and an even better mentor," Gastler said. "He was a master motivator and phenomenal coach. We were

better-coached, better-disciplined, and better-conditioned than any team. When we walked onto the field ... sorry, ran, you never walked on a Larry McHugh team ... we never, ever, thought we would lose. We were mentally tough, we were physically tough. We worked harder than anyone else, and we were better prepared. It was also about being a team. No one player was above the team.”

Even before practice began, the team would run part of the cross country course in full pads. There were crabwalks up the hill. Heck, by the time the game came, it was a relief.

Gastler ended up at Columbia because of McHugh, who was a friend of Campbell’s.



Campbell had just been hired for the 1974 season. McHugh called Gastler into his office one day and told him he should look at Columbia, even though that school was nowhere on

Gastler’s radar. Other Ivy League schools were, as was the Coast Guard Academy, the front-runner. “But if Larry suggested you do something, you definitely did it,” Gastler said. He went for a visit and fell in love. It would change his life. He was captain of the 1977 team, started three years of varsity (freshmen could not start). Columbia didn’t win many games, but Campbell would become another lifelong friend and help launch Gastler’s career in the financial world.

“His leadership skills in being captain in both high school and college led him to an outstanding career in business,” McHugh said. “His success in life never changed Jack as a man. His loyal friendship is something I can always count on.”

Campbell, like McHugh, was more than a football coach. McHugh left the Xavier job in 1983 to become President of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce, building that organization into one of the most powerful chambers in the country. Campbell left coaching in 1983 and eventually became known as the “Coach of Silicon Valley,” having joined Apple Computer, Inc., as Vice President of Marketing, later becoming the CEO and Chairman of Intuit and coaching many of the executives and management teams of then fledgling companies such as Google, Amazon and Adobe, to name a few.

“Billy always preached to give back to your community, your school,” Gastler said.

Campbell died in 2016, and Gastler flew to California for his funeral.

“There were 1,500-2,000 people there,” Gastler remembers. “A virtual Who’s Who from Silicon Valley including former Vice President Al Gore and CEOs Tim Cook, Eric Schmidt, and Jeff Bezos,

from Apple, Google, and Amazon, respectively ... Everyone there was touched by Billy in some way.”

Gastler faced one of his biggest challenges when he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lymphoma in early 2017 and finished the chemo treatments in June of that year. His stomach didn’t feel right and his gastroenterologist, Stan Opalacz ’72, friend and outstanding football player in his own right, sent him to an oncologist.

“Faith, family and friends is what got me through,” Gastler said.

“God is in control and has a plan for each and every one of us. We are happy to accept His blessings; we must also accept the adversities and learn to lean on and trust Him.

“My wife, as she has always been, was incredibly supportive, courageous and never wavering in her faith that God would see us through this, whatever the outcome. The same with my children, their spouses and families, and Deb’s and my siblings and their families. My sister-in-law, Leslie (Cozzi) Logiudice and her daughter/my niece Lauren (Boule), both Mercy grads, are nurses, and were instrumental in guiding and helping me decipher and understand complex medical information and treatment regimens.”

And then there were the friends.

“Richie and Lauralane were always checking in. Rich and I did some power walks together to keep in shape after some of my chemo sessions,” Gastler said.

Hoey would sit with him at some of the chemo treatments. McHugh was in touch, as were O’Rourke, Augeri, Steve Murphy and Dave Chapman, football teammates at both Xavier and Columbia. Dr. Opalacz, and Dr. Bob Fales, his primary doctor and fellow Xavier (’74) classmate were key members of his health care team.

“It’s all those Xavier connections,” Gastler said. “And then numerous other Xavier, Columbia, church and business friends offered support in so many ways.”

In retirement, Gastler finds ways to stay busy. He’s very much involved with Xavier. He golfs. He skis, as do his four grandchildren. He eats healthy, he says, thanks to Debbie. He works out to stay in shape,

conscious of trying to keep cancer at bay. He spends time in the yard, making sure things are just so. In that regard, you might say he is a perfectionist, and where did he get that from? Well, for one, McHugh.

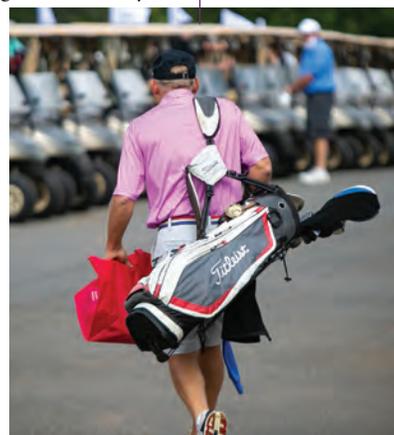
“Larry was a perfectionist,” Gastler remembers. “We didn’t have a terribly complicated offense, maybe 10-12 plays, but we ran them to perfection.



We’d run them over and over and over again in practice.

“I don’t know who coined the phrase ‘Good enough is never good enough if it’s not your best,’ but that concept has always driven me to do my best. My parents, Xavier, its leadership, its faculty, its coaches, athletics, extracurricular activities, provided a wonderful platform to do my best no matter the significance of the task. Most of the time it is not perfection, but great things can come from a process of doing all the little things to the best of your ability. Most of all, it leads to the satisfaction that comes from always striving to leave it all out on the field in everything you do.”

“My Dad always said ‘Talk is cheap. Actions speak much louder than words.’ How truly blessed I am to have been surrounded by people who lived by that creed every single day.” X



Moving The CHAINS

As A Longtime Volunteer At Xavier, Phil Franklin '73 Never Stopped Giving Back



is released, you can rest assured – Franklin will be there for the home games. Although he moved to New Hampshire six years ago, Franklin has continued to make the drive to Middletown for every home game where he works the lines with his son Ryan, a 2003 graduate, and a group of close friends. Then once the game is complete, he will often stay the night at a local hotel and head back the next morning for New Hampshire.

“I have enjoyed doing it for a lot of reasons, but one of the reasons was it just helped the school,” said Franklin.

As the Xavier community continues to find new ways to come together during a pandemic, Franklin’s years of volunteering remain a model of commitment to the mission, and the relationships he forged at Xavier.

Throughout the last four decades, Franklin has taken on a wide array of volunteer jobs and tasks for the school. He has been the president of the Alumni Association. He has served on the Board of Directors. He has helped lead several campaigns and ceremonies. And, of course,



Phil at a Xavier Homecoming event.

This past fall, those long road trips from his home in Bartlett, N.H., were postponed temporarily as the state continued to deal with COVID-19, but the minute the next Xavier football schedule



Intro Photo: Phil, with his son Ryan '03.

Left: Phil, with the Xavier football chain gang.

he has been on the chain gang for 17 years, a job he volunteered to do to help then Athletic Director Tony Jaskot '69.

However in the end, his reason for taking on each task is usually the same – Xavier gave him much more than an education as a student. More than 50 years later, Franklin can still remember walking into school that first day as a student.

“Coming in the door there was an expectation built into you of discipline,” Franklin said. “It was a special school because you were different. You came to school and you were taught by a great number of Brothers, you dressed differently, you wore a tie and a jacket There was a certain level of maturity that came out at Xavier.”

At a young age, Franklin craved that type of focus. Despite Xavier still being a new school at the time, he was all in.

“I wanted to be here,” Franklin said. “It was not a question of me arguing with my folks to go to a public school. I wanted to come here, and there was no question in my mind that this was going to work out.”

It certainly did. At Xavier, along with all the lifelong friendships he made and the set of values he developed, Franklin also got his first date with his wife of 42 years, Sue.

“It was incredibly meaningful for me to stand up as a representative of Xavier High School and as an alum and tell parents, ‘This is where you want your kids to go.’”

“It was a Xavier football game in 1972,” Franklin said.

The couple, who were in the same first grade class together in Cromwell, had been friends their entire life, but it was not until Xavier and Mercy that they eventually started dating after Sue asked Phil to the Junior Ring Dance. Now they have two grandchildren: Amelia and Gabriel.



Top Right: Phil, with his wife Sue (Mercy, Class of 1973), and their grandkids.

Right: Kylemore Abbey, Ireland





Left: Phil and Sue with their children and their spouses at the top of Mount Willard in the White Mountains of N.H.; Crawford Notch is in the background. Left to right, daughter, Jackie (Franklin) Rivard (Mercy Class of 2006); her husband, Adam Rivard, Sue and Phil, Trisha (Harris) Franklin and her husband, Ryan Franklin (Xavier Class of 2003).

In 1981, Franklin's Xavier experience ultimately led him back as a volunteer.

"[Former Alumni and Development Director Rich Feitel] called me one day and told me he was putting together a group of class representatives and asked me to come so I went," Franklin said. "I stuck with it because I kept seeing that it was something rewarding. It made me feel good to be able to do things for the school."

As a volunteer at Xavier, no job was too big or too small for Franklin. Whether he was serving his second term as the Alumni Association president, or buying legendary Cross Country Coach Bob Michalski a wheel to measure the cross country course (yes he did that!), Franklin enjoyed getting the job done for the school. And he did it all as he was working for Aetna Life & Casualty as a senior management administrator and later The Hartford, where he was a program director/project manager.

"It was never about me," Franklin said. "It was always to help Xavier have a good light shown upon it. I just felt that it was something that I could do to give back to the school."

When he was volunteering, Franklin had a phrase he used.

"I used to say 'alumni helping future alumni,'" Franklin said. "People would say, 'Oh, you're an alum.' but I'm not working for alums. I'm doing this for Xavier High School, and I never lost sight of that."

Years ago, Franklin partnered with two other alums to pay for a student to attend Xavier.

"There were just so many things I did for the school that I wanted to do," Franklin said. "I wanted to help parents see this was a great place to send their 13-year old sons."

Over the years, that often meant helping with lots of events. Trips to business expos, golf tournaments, social events – Franklin did them all. But despite the work and the hours, he always said yes because he felt it was necessary for the success of the school.

"It was incredibly meaningful for me to stand up as a representative of Xavier High School and as an alum and tell parents, 'This is where you want your kids to go,'" Franklin said. "I had so many positive experiences at the school, and afterwards as well. ... I wanted to do something for the school and I wanted to do it well."

As much as he loved his run as alumni association president, Franklin knew he needed to step back, so nine years ago, he went to

Measuring salvaged beams of the 1890 former church.



Stained glass windows from the former St. Joseph Church building in Bartlett, NH. Originally installed in 1890, these windows are in great shape today and will be a part of the future museum.

In front of the future Bartlett History Museum. The building is under renovation. Phil is leading the fundraising effort for the renovation project.



Enjoying some down time sitting on a boulder in the middle of Razor Brook in Bartlett; this mountain stream flows through the Franklin's property.

then Headmaster Brother Brian Davis, C.F.X., and told him he was going to step down. Still, he has not lost his love for volunteering.

In Bartlett, Franklin has turned his attention to another community, and a new set of relationships. He is now the president of the town's historical society and served as the chairman of the planning board for three years.

"When my wife and I moved here, we said we wanted to a part of this community," Franklin said. "We're not just moving to Bartlett to be here – we're moving here to a part of the community."

Since joining the historical society, Franklin has spearheaded an effort to renovate a historic Catholic Church in town, which is listed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places. Behind his leadership, the historical society, which has grown from 70 members to over 200, has raised more than \$250,000. And if he did not have his hands full enough, has also kept himself busy by writing historical articles for the Mt. Washington Valley Vibe Magazine, where he has detailed

the history of Snow Rollers and Snow Trains in New Hampshire to name a few stories. Not surprisingly this past August, he was also part of a crew that helped replace the old roof on the church. But for Franklin, who has always been interested in learning from the past and has traveled to famous historical spots around the world, the historical society and the writing allows him to do what he has always enjoyed doing – contribute to a community he cares about.

"I always feel it is important to give back and do something," Franklin said. "I could have easily moved to Bartlett, New Hampshire and done nothing. But that is just not me. I just cannot do it that way. I felt the need to be a part of something." X

Phil Franklin '73



This snow roller is part of the collection of local artifacts owned by the Bartlett Historical Society. Phil was a part of the crew that completed the renovation of the roller in 2015.

Rich Feitel

Hooked on XAVIER

For More Than 50 Years, Rich Feitel Has Given Back In Countless Ways



When Rich Feitel wants to escape, he gets out a fly rod and finds himself a river.

“Nothing like a peaceful day with nature to make you appreciate life,” Feitel said on a March day when we were all hemmed in by the coronavirus.

Feitel found himself on a river back then. “Social distancing is never a problem fly fishing; I practiced that long before COVID-19!” he said.

One thing that we did have during that time of self-isolation was nature, God’s beauty telling us that this too shall pass. Though we went into hiding, nature did not. It seemingly appreciated that there was less stress on the environment with life at a standstill.

Standing still is not what Feitel does well, unless he’s fishing, of course, or enjoying his collection of fine wines with friends. This is a man who has

been hooked on Xavier for much of his life. He arrived in the fall of 1969 as a history teacher and soon found himself coaching junior varsity basketball.

Feitel is an affable sort, easy going, social, composed ... but that basketball experience got the best of him. The first season the team went 15-5, but the next season Xavier was 8-12 and lost the last two games on desperation shots.

“That was enough for me,” Feitel said. “I really didn’t have the patience. Tom Conroy, who was the custodian at the time, thanked me for resigning. He was tired of fixing the broken bleachers I kicked in nearly every game and replacing the small windows in the locker room that I broke numerous times exiting the gym from another close loss.”

He did find his sport to coach. A track athlete in high school and college, Feitel helped coach track and field at Xavier with head coach Bob Michalski and throws coach John Chesnes until 1986.

A particular moment stands out: the first loss the team took in his 16 years of coaching.

“It was to Waterford after we had won 49 in a row,” Feitel remembers.

Two athletes had been suspended for a violation of team rules. Feitel said they each would have won their events.

“We ended up losing the meet by three points, but the team learned a good lesson that day – if you can’t play by the rules, you don’t participate,” Feitel said. “I think that episode made us a better and more disciplined team going forward. We went on to win 166 meets in a row after that loss until falling to Notre Dame by one point [lost the final relay by one-tenth of a second], the last dual meet of 1985.”

Feitel’s life was shaped by the relationships he made with his students and athletes, many of whom remain friends today with Rich and his wife of 54 years, Lauralane, always a presence at Xavier functions. Their son, Bryan, graduated from Xavier in 1986 and their daughter, Nanci, from Mercy; three grandchildren are Xavier alumni and a fourth, Hunter, is a freshman.

“I never could have done what I did without Lauralane,” Feitel said. “She was, and still is, a great ambassador for Xavier High School. ... I don’t think there is a Saint Lauralane, but





“There are times when you will have to make very tough decisions that are in the best long-term interest of an individual or program, although it would be much easier to ignore it; there are times when you have to be stern when dealing with people/situations; and there are also times that require compassion. Learn to know which response is needed and when.”



When McHugh became President of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce in 1985, Feitel left teaching and was named Director of Alumni and Development. He retired from the school in 1997, but not from work. For the next 21 years, until 2018, he was a development consultant with Catholic School Management in Madison, traveling the country to help other Catholic schools form alumni associations and to implement or enhance such things as annual giving drives and capital campaigns. In 2016 he was given the Lifetime Service Award from Xavier.

His fly rod had hardly hit the water when he answered another call in 2018, this time to help revitalize the Xavier Alumni Golf Tournament that he had started. Feitel and Associate Advancement Director Greg Jaskot '00 formed a committee of Xavier alums, and the past three golf events have produced more than \$200,000 for financial aid under their leadership.

OK, now about the call he didn't answer.

“I pretty much wear my life on my sleeve, so I don't think there is much people don't know about me,” Feitel said. “Maybe the fact that I've always relished 'quiet time' might be a surprise to people who don't know me well.”

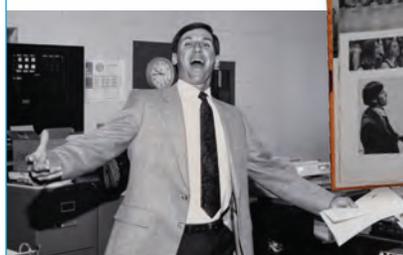
Whether he was teaching and coaching or carrying out the duties of the alumni office, his hours were long, and, as he said, required he be “on” all the time.

“So when I could get away, I didn't want to have to be social and engaged,” Feitel said. “When we purchased a vacation home in 1989 in upstate New York, I never had a phone installed – didn't want anyone to reach me when I was away.”

“Just wanted to spend the weekend or day enjoying the 60-mile views from my deck while sipping on a glass of fine wine or unwinding while fishing the local rivers.

“You know the old saying, ‘A bad day of fishing is better than a good day of work.’ ”

There's some truth in that, of course, but also in this: Rich Feitel always puts in a good day's work. 🌿



there should be. Anyone that can put up with me for 54 years deserves sainthood!”

For Feitel, three mentors stand out: The late Brother James Boyle, C.F.X., a former principal; Bill McKenna, a longtime administrator who died in late 2018; and former teacher/football coach Larry McHugh.

“They all taught me that you have to earn the respect of students, athletes, and co-workers - not to just expect it because you are a teacher, coach or boss; that there are times when you will have to make very tough decisions that are in the best long-term interest of an individual or program, although it would be much easier to ignore it; there are times when you have to be stern when dealing with people/situations; and there are also times that require compassion.

“Learn to know which response is needed and when. I have tried my best to incorporate these life lessons from these extraordinary men into my many years at Xavier and beyond, and I hope I have done them proud.”

That he has. Always available for the call. Well, mostly [we'll get to that later].

One such call came in 1982 when Brother James Kelly, C.F.X., asked Feitel if he would lead the effort to start an Alumni Association. He got it up and running with help from Bill Duda '69, Tom Tokarz '69, Ted Raczka '69 and Frank Marsilli '72.

Finding His PURPOSE



A few months after 9/11, Kevin Lacz '00 walked into the Navy recruiting office on Main Street in Middletown, took one look at a SEALs poster on the wall and decided to take on one of the toughest jobs in the world.

"A lot of kids have approached me and said 'I always wanted to be a [U.S. Navy] SEAL,' but I didn't really know what the SEALs were until I walked into that office and started talking to a recruiter," Lacz said. "I saw that poster and said 'I want to do that.'"

Lacz might not have known much about the SEALs, but he knew he needed to do something after 2,977 people were killed in the attacks on 9/11, including family friend Bruce Eagleson, whose sons Kyle '97 and Tim '00 graduated from Xavier.

"I just remember waking up [on 9/11] as a naïve college student and turning on the TV and seeing the implications and realizing that there are people that hate our way of life," Lacz said. "It was an eye-opener for me. ... I remember being like - I need to join the military."

In a moment, Lacz's life changed. After struggling through his first year of college, and searching for direction, he had found it.

"This was my reset point," Lacz said.

Over the last 19 years, that decision has loomed large in Lacz's life, taking him on a remarkable journey. And through it all, from the

unrelenting weeks of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training, to some of the most deadly fighting in the Iraq War that earned him a Bronze Star and eventually led to a role as himself in the film, "American Sniper," Lacz has remained true to the ideals he learned as a young boy and at Xavier.

"You can be whatever you want to be as long as you work hard," Lacz said. "It doesn't take money to determine if you're going to work hard. That comes from within. That is something I learned early on from my parents, at Xavier, and on the SEAL teams. You determine your own success."

At Xavier, Lacz found that success as both a student (he was ranked 25th in his class), and as an athlete (he played soccer and golf and swam). Yet, in college, he lacked the same motivation.

"I went down to James Madison and I failed miserably, I had a 0.7 GPA," Lacz said.

As a sophomore, he improved, but he was still lacking motivation. Then 9/11 happened.

"I looked at where I was and I was like 'I'm confident in who I am and what I can do and I'm willing to go somewhere different and do something radically different,'" Lacz said.

When he got to BUD/S training, which has an attrition rate of nearly 80 percent and lasts for 24 weeks, he found what he wanted. The sleepless days. The prolonged periods of stress. The unrelenting mental challenges. BUD/s is a grueling test of stamina, leadership and teamwork, and Lacz ate it up.

Still, he was challenged in ways he could not have expected.

Before the start of the fourth week of BUD/S, known as "Hell Week," Lacz got a call from his mother.

His grandfather, a World War II veteran, who had joined the NAVY after Pearl Harbor and served as motivation for Lacz's own enlistment, had died. Sam Ozycz had gone in to the hospital to replace the battery in his pacemaker, and he had died during the procedure.

"I had the option to forfeit that hell week and start with the next class and go home for the funeral or stick with my class and do the training," Lacz said. "That was the real moment I had to assess how committed I was."

He stayed in. And nearly three years later, Lacz was in Ramadi, Iraq, for his first deployment as a member of SEAL Team 3 with Charlie Platoon, Task Unit Bruiser, which became the most highly decorated unit in the Iraq War.

"Sometimes I would just sit up on the gun and I would have to take a break for second and ask myself if I'm really here right now," Lacz said. "I think it all goes to show it doesn't matter where you are, you can always change that direction."

With Charlie Platoon, Lacz endured some of the most intense fighting during the Battle of Ramadi, but for him it was exactly why he joined the military. He was in the thick of it and ready to do his part.

"As a SEAL that's the deployment you want," Lacz said.

Lacz, who received the Bronze Star Medal for braving enemy fire to carry a fallen team member, credits the unit's overall success to its members.

"I don't think we could've been as successful if not for the individuals in that platoon," Lacz said. "I feel that was a perfect concoction of hard-charging, true frogmen."

One of those in his platoon was sniper Chris Kyle, who later wrote the bestselling book "American Sniper" and whose life was the basis of the movie by the same name.

"Chris' relationship with me was like that of a family member - he treated me like a little brother," Lacz said. "He was a person who does not come along very often in your lifetime."

After their enlistment, Lacz and Kyle's friendship continued, and eventually led Lacz to helping with Kyle's book "American Sniper." But Lacz's connection with the book and Kyle's story did not stop there. Lacz worked with screenwriter Jason Hall on the details of the screenplay and was brought in to serve as technical advisor and instruct Bradley Cooper, who was playing Kyle in the movie.

"While we were working, [Cooper] was like you need to play yourself in the movie, I was like why don't you just work on Chris and we'll figure that stuff out," Lacz said.

Cooper eventually convinced director Clint Eastwood to audition Lacz for the role. "I got a call from the casting director, they said, 'We want to offer you a contract to act in American Sniper and be a technical adviser, and we're leaving for Morocco in two weeks. Do you want it?'" Lacz said.

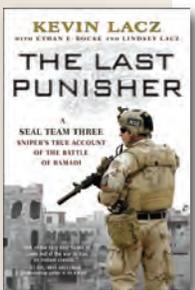
Kyle was murdered before the screenplay was finished and never got to see the success of American Sniper, but his legacy lives on and Lacz remains close with Kyle's family.

"He has become a household name and he is aligned closely with what American exceptionalism and what American patriotism is," Lacz said.

For Lacz, a physician assistant who owns a lifestyle and performance medicine medical practice in Florida, it has been a remarkable life.

Over the last two decades, he has gone from some of the heaviest fighting in modern warfare, to playing himself alongside Bradley Cooper in an Oscar-nominated movie. He has written a New York Times best-selling book (The Last Punisher) about his times with the SEALs and he has helped start a charity for wounded veterans (Hunting for Healing). But through it all, one important lesson has remained from that day he decided to change his life and become a SEAL.

"Failure is not a career-ender. The more times you get knocked down, as long as you get up, you're going to be stronger." X



EXPLORING EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Brian Farrell '86 Is Seeking To Make A Difference At Xavier

When Brian Farrell '86 speaks with Xavier students now, whether it be at XLI or other functions for the school, he often shares the same story.

Before leaving Randolph Road for St. Michaels College in Colchester, Vt., he had one main concern - he wanted to know if he was going to stay friends with the guys he had already bonded with at Xavier.

"What I kept hearing was that the best friends you are going to make are the friends you make in college, and that concerned me because I thought I had some pretty good friends in high school," Farrell said.

It turns out he had nothing to worry about. Nearly 34 years later, those friendships have not gone anywhere. In fact, they remain as strong as they did back in high school. Jeff Misenti '86. Al Maturo '86. Today, Farrell can rattle off the names of several Xavier classmates, who he can still count on.

"My best friends in high school remain my absolute closest friends today," Farrell said.

Despite graduating years ago, those relationships have motivated Farrell to stay connected. And this year they have helped him as he takes on two new roles at Xavier - alumni association president and board member.

"You carry something with you when you leave Xavier," Farrell said. "You always know you have a community. You can choose not to engage and interact, but you know that it is there for you and it is open."

As the president of the alumni association and as a board member, Farrell wants to use that fraternal bond to help alumni wherever they may be in their lives.

"I'm still a student of Xavier, now I'm just learning in a different way," Farrell said. "My lessons will be different and how I will contribute will be different, but I'm establishing goals and moving forward on those goals."

Farrell hopes to build a strong support system for alumni. Whether they are opening a new business or looking for a little

bit of a boost for an old one, he wants to make sure other alumni are there for them and helping them succeed.

"We have had alumni associations that have been strong, and we have had alumni associations that have not been for whatever reasons," Farrell said. "I think we're at a point where we have a great opportunity to connect our alumni and create networks where we can support moving people forward."

A highly successful attorney, Farrell has always tried to give back to the Xavier community. He sees his new position as a way to show gratitude for what the community has given not just him, but his family.

In 2018, his son, also named Brian, graduated from Xavier. Two years earlier, his daughter, Hannah, graduated from Mercy. Farrell's wife Kathleen, a second-grade teacher, also went to Mercy and graduated in 1985, but the pair met after college and have been together for 25 years.

"Xavier supported Brian with out of the box ideas and out-of-the box thinking," Farrell said. "There is true gratitude I feel."

At Xavier, much like his father, the younger Farrell was able to create his own opportunities and make his own path. When he graduated from Xavier two years ago, he left behind a Thespian society that he founded, and a memorable four-year run in the Mercy and Xavier Theater program.

"Your capacity or ability to make a difference in someone's life is pretty big - it cannot be understated."



"He decided that he was going to make Xavier his place," Farrell said.

The elder Farrell made a similar decision.

Instead of following his own father, who graduated from Notre Dame-West Haven, Farrell arrived at Randolph Road, eager

to take advantage of his opportunities, joining the soccer team, peer ministry and even the school play his senior year.

On the soccer team, one of the most successful in the school's history, he forged lifelong bonds.

"We were doing our thing because we loved what we were doing," Farrell said. "Everybody supported each other."

Looking back at his four years, he credits the administration and the faculty for making a difference, including the principal at the time, Brother James Kelly, C.F.X.

"Brother Kelly had a really keen understanding of boys and what they needed and how to deliver it," Farrell said. "There was genuine care - tough care, but he really cared."

That compassion stayed with Farrell. And it has informed everything from his parenting to his personal coaching at his law firm, where he's always looking to help develop future lawyers.

"Your capacity or ability to make a difference in someone's life is pretty big - it cannot be understated," Farrell said. "I like leading people, I like developing people, I like creating opportunities and exploring what people want for themselves and helping them get there. At the end of the day, if you wrap everything up, we are here to help each other be our best selves. Whether it is a corporation or a school or whatever it is, you want everybody to be their best selves." X



American Dream

Art Wrubel '83

“It’s the great American dream ... young man leaves Kraków on a boat, arrives in a new country apprenticing as a tailor’s assistant. Once he learned, he opens his own tailoring business which morphs into a department store.”



Art Wrubel '83 was speaking about his great grandfather Isaac, who in 1900 founded Wrubel's on Main Street in Middletown. “I think that’s pretty cool. From that standpoint I’m incredibly proud to be from Middletown and to be an American.”

And here’s a story that’s pretty cool, too. Another American dream ... young man leaves Xavier High School in Middletown, goes to the University of Pennsylvania, has a

family, does extremely well in the financial world, eventually owning his own hedge fund, and becomes part owner of a professional sports team, the Philadelphia 76ers of the NBA.

Art Wrubel would describe the story this way: Lucky guy goes to Xavier, is lucky enough to get into Penn, is lucky enough to choose the right friends, all of which leads him to where he is today. We won’t argue with that word luck. After all, he was representing the 76ers at the NBA Draft Lottery in 2016 when Philly landed the top pick which they used on one of the young stars of the game, Ben Simmons. Yet we all know luck goes just so far. Wrubel worked hard and learned from many people along the way, whether it was high school, college or out in the financial world. He soaked it all in.

“[Former Headmaster] Brother William Ciganek,” Wrubel says without hesitation when asked who might have been the biggest influence at Xavier. “He took an interest in me, told me I was smart, and when someone like that tells you you’re smart, that makes you feel good.”

When Wrubel thinks back to Xavier, he uses such phrases as “the spirit of charity and generosity” and “being a better person.”

As his mind keeps working, it crystalizes into this: “Xavier provided a firm foundation on how to think about all these things. What I learned from Xavier was a foundation on how to live one’s life, and that helped corroborate familial values my parents taught me. There was a path to be the best person I could be which dovetailed with what my parents talked about. But at that age sometimes you need to hear from more than just your parents.”

He pauses. “My parents got much smarter in the four years I was at Xavier,” he says with a laugh.

If Xavier helped get Wrubel into Penn, then Penn helped shape the rest of this life. “It was a life-changing experience,” Wrubel said. “I would not be talking to you today if not for Penn.”

His closest friend today, Josh Harris, is the billionaire principal owner of the 76ers. Harris was a year ahead of him at Penn. There are other friends, also Penn grads, in the ownership group.

“The notion of owning a sports team was something that never seemed terribly realistic,” Wrubel said. “But the more we worked on it, the more excited we got. We were led by Josh’s perseverance, tenacity and expertise. It was very complicated, and I learned a lot. The more we worked on it, the more excited we got. We were doing it after hours. It became very spirited ... midnight phone calls.”

The ownership group held a press conference in the Palestra, home to Penn basketball and one of the most historic arenas in the country, when they were awarded the team in the fall of 2011. Yet they would not see their team in action for about two months, until a new collective bargaining agreement ended a lockout.

“That first night was surreal because of all the buildup,” Wrubel said.

It would be the beginning of meeting many legendary 76ers.

“For me, I’m sort of a sports historian, so the notion of Julius Erving calling me and saying let’s smoke a cigar. ‘What me? Seriously? Cool, let’s do it.’ Or spending time

with World B Free, Darryl Dawkins, Moses Malone, the last two sadly no longer with us,” Wrubel said.

“This has given me a different perspective on relationships and human beings and leadership and who to admire and why. Some of the guys who I was wary about meeting because I wasn’t sure if they’d be a nice guy because they didn’t look like nice guys on the court have turned out to be some of the coolest guys I ever met. Dr. J would kill a guy on the court, do it with a smile on his face in a classy way. As much of a beast as he was on the floor, he’s such a cool guy in real life. The nicest thing about a lot of these legends is that they are just good people.”

Now back to the American dream.

“Owning a sports team in the city where we went to college, and watching the Doc hold a trophy up with Big Mo,” Wrubel said of the 1983 NBA champion 76ers led by Erving, Moses Malone, Maurice Cheeks, Bobby

Jones and Andrew Toney. “We’re part of that? We’re really part of that? Well, not really because we didn’t do anything, but we get to carry the torch from that legacy forward.

“We also realize we are not the owners of a basketball team; we are basically trustees of a public trust. That’s the way we look at it. We bought one of the franchises that has been relevant throughout the history of the league ... we have a huge responsibility not to mess it up.”

Philly has not won an NBA title since 1983. Wrubel, Harris and the others would like nothing more than to give the 76ers another one. Building a team, building a culture takes time.

“Your chance for success is greatly enhanced by doing the right thing, whatever that might be, and if you’re humble and stay within yourself, good things can happen,” Wrubel said.

The Wrubels sold their iconic Main Street store in 1964, a year before Art was born. He’s heard the stories, just as he has of his great uncle Allie Wrubel, who wrote many songs for films, first under contract for Warner Bros., then Disney.

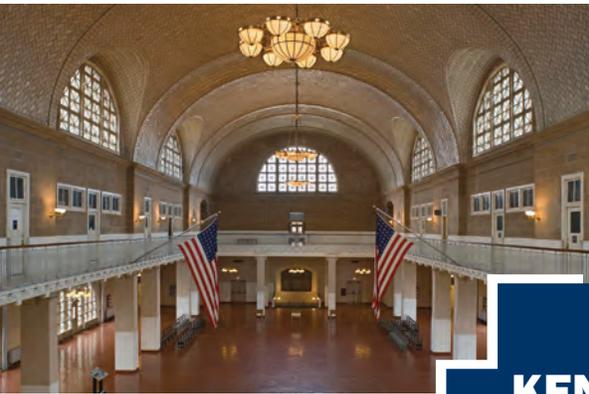
A lot of those stories would be bandied about in 2004 when the Wrubels had a reunion attended by 100 descendants of Isaac and Regina Wrubel. There could be only one place for that reunion: Middletown.

“It was awesome, and it gave the younger generation some perspective on how we all got here,” Wrubel said. X



ARTHUR M. WRUBEL





KEN CHAMPION '75

ELLIS ISLAND ... STATUE OF LIBERTY ... UNITED NATIONS

Ken Champion '75 Has Built A Career Preserving History

There's nothing little about Champion, from his physical stature (6-foot-7) to his stature in the construction management business.

Champion played basketball for Artie Kohs at Xavier, and the Falcons' 1974 team went to the Class A semifinals. Champion had a school-record 56 blocked shots that season. Champion and his wife Mary have five grandchildren, four boys. He thinks they will be on the tall side. "I have a feeling Mike Kohs will be looking for them," he says of Artie's son, now the Xavier basketball coach.

The Xavier experience remains special to Champion.

"I liked the discipline, the support and confidence that teachers, coaches and Brothers, in no particular order, gave you," Champion said. "You're a young man and impressionable, and you listen ... they give you a heck of a foundation, and a lot of confidence."

He carried that to Central Connecticut State University, where he played basketball, got a degree

in construction management, met and would later marry his "college sweetheart" Mary, and charge forward to a fascinating career.

He's led plenty of multi-million dollar projects, not to mention many that have topped a billion dollars, a far cry from the treehouse days.

"They're very high-pressure deliveries," Champion said.

"It goes back to the wiring that Xavier gave you: how to react, how to deal with things, how to keep your composure, how to have faith. And it's a confidence ... you were expected to do the job, do the right thing."

One of his commercial projects was a \$5 billion phase of Hudson Yards. He also managed major terminal builds for Delta Airlines at LaGuardia and JFK Airports in New York.

"Hudson Yards, we were going six days a week, 3,000 construction workers," Champion said. "It's a massive undertaking. LaGuardia, JFK, same thing ... I don't know, it's a gift of peace and confidence that we know how to do this."

"You get everyone on the same page. Kind of like Xavier Falcons sports. You do your job, execute, and I walked out of there in 1975

with all the ingredients. It's what you can do with it ... you know, Falcons don't do well in the backseat. Xavier teaches you leadership, accountability, all that when you're a teenager, if you're open to it. If you are, you can do anything. I really believe that."

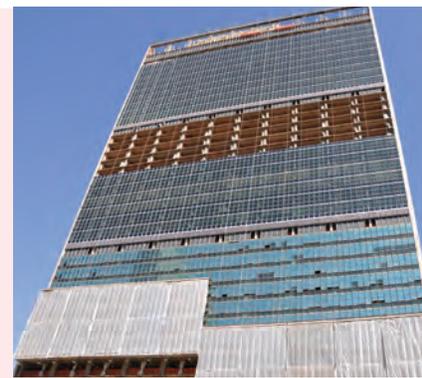
In the late 2000s, Champion was fishing at the end of a workday in Florida when the phone rang. The caller was Michael Adlerstein, with whom Champion had worked on the Ellis Island-Statue of Liberty project. Adlerstein had been Chief Historic Architect for the U.S. Department of Interior and now was Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations.

"I need you for one more dance," Champion remembers Adlerstein telling him. "Will you move to New York?"

Champion's response: "The U.N. ... I said absolutely."

The 2 million square foot campus had not been renovated in 60 years. These days, Champion says he is trying to take the foot off the gas a bit, fishing with the grandkids or taking them down to the basement of his home where there is a massive model railroad with various lines that took about five years to complete. What the heck, he's used to big projects that take time. **X**

"Imagine being on a ferry boat out to take over the renovation of the Statue of Liberty. A little kid from Randolph Road."



Ken Champion '75 has worked on some of the most famous landmarks and buildings in our country, among them the restoration of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, and the modernization and renovation of the United Nations.

He's come a long way from the late '60s when his parents were building a home in Clinton and the contractor gave him scraps of lumber to build a multi-level treehouse. One problem: when the leaves fell off the trees, the treehouse, not a work of art, looked like a shanty, according to Champion. Down it came.

"It has been quite a ride," Champion said of his 40-year career. He is the President and Founder of Champion Construction Management Services, Inc., based in Orlando, Fla.

His first big project was Walt Disney's Epcot Center, which opened in 1982. The Statue of Liberty project was completed in 1986 for a centennial celebration.

"Imagine being on a ferry boat out to take over the renovation of the Statue of Liberty," Champion said. "A little kid from Randolph Road."

Kevin Loney '95

Developing More Than Football Players

At Bowdoin, Kevin Loney's Job Stretches Beyond The Field

Kevin Loney is 25 years removed from Xavier football, but not from the values imparted.

Loney is an assistant football coach and director of player development at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine.

He played for Coach Tony Jaskot '69 at Xavier, and in 1994 was the recipient of the Larry McHugh Senior Award for leadership.

"Student-athletes hear what you say as a coach and see what you do," Loney said. "I got to see how Tony operated, things he said and did ... he lived his credo all the time. Things he would say are the things he would do, and I wanted to emulate that. To this day, when I make a big decision one of the people I run it by is Coach Jaskot."

Tim Feshler, who took over for Jaskot for the 1995 season and was another who set an example for Loney, is a confidante, and helped get Loney into coaching. Feshler

asked Loney in the spring of his senior year of high school if he wanted to help out. Now Loney has made six coaching stops.

Bowdoin has a long football history, but the team did not play this season, the coronavirus pandemic shutting down fall sports on campus.

"It's tough," Loney said. "We have a great group of guys who are passionate about the sport and have worked really hard. Some [seniors] might come back next year, but some just cannot for various reasons."

The games on the field may have shut down, but so much that surrounds football did not. Recruiting never ends, and Loney has four states in which he recruits, including Connecticut. Bowdoin football players were able to practice in the fall, even if they could not play. And, as director of player development, Loney's job is filled with non-football duties.

He helps first-year players navigate academic resources. He works with players to get internships, connect them with the career planning office and alumni. If anyone is struggling with non-academic issues, Loney will find the proper resources for them. And he directs the program's community service projects, one of which is Be The Match, part of the national bone marrow donor registry.

"Two deaths really affected me," Loney said, "one of our former players at Notre Dame (Asaph Schwapp, 26, Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma) and my cousin Shari (also 26, from a disease called HLH). HLH is Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis.

"Both of them worked with kids, both were awesome people, and bone marrow transplant matches could possibly have saved them," Loney said.



The skills for Loney's role as director of player development were honed at Xavier under the guidance of Andrea Hoisl, then in charge of the Campus Ministry Department. Loney became a Peer Minister.

"She became a great mentor for learning about how to manage personalities, run retreat programming, and deal with logistical issues that would come up," Loney said. "I think the skills of managing people, and organizing and planning big group events at a young age, and certainly dealing with young men on uncomfortable topics while being disarming, and getting them to let their guards down, are a major part of my arsenal professionally, and I thank Andrea for introducing me to a lot of that at Xavier."

Loney said Xavier was great at challenging him academically and getting him out of his comfort zone. Rich Magner, who retired after the 2019-2020 academic year as Director of Guidance, was one who encouraged Loney.



"He'd call me in and get after me a bit, and that was great," Loney said. "He pushed me and saw my potential."

Loney left his comfort zone after his freshman year at Dickinson College, during which he did not play football. In the fall of 1995, after seven straight Centennial Conference championships, Dickinson went 7-2-1. "That spring in practice you'd have thought they went 0-10," Loney said. "I wanted to be a part of that mentality."

He had to wait. He was injured in the preseason of his sophomore year but served as the team manager before making it to the field his junior and senior years.

"Things he would say are the things he would do, and I wanted to emulate that."

Loney's father spent a good deal of his career as Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at NBC. His mother is a preacher in Hartford. Loney was a religion/history major at Dickinson College and has worked with the Athletes of Color Coalition on the Bowdoin campus.

So he had a keen eye on the events of the summer, during which there were large anti-racism rallies triggered by the death of George Floyd, who was black, at the hands of a white police officer in Minnesota in late May.

"There is a big, wide cross section of people who are starting to see the world the way people of color see the world, which hasn't happened in a long time," Loney said. "We're the hands of Jesus. This is an opportunity we have. If we want this to be different in the future, we have to fix it."

"All of this shouldn't be right or left, liberal or conservative. I go back to morality: what's right and what's wrong." **X**





Tom Tokarz '69 played high school football at Xavier and college football at Wesleyan. He has coached at the high school, college, semi-pro and pro level. That's quite the football resume.

Yet, there is so much more to Tokarz than football.

Tokarz, with a Bachelor's Degree from Wesleyan and a Master's Degree in Management from Rensselaer in Hartford, went on to have a long career in Human Resources for the State of Connecticut. He retired in 2016 after close to 32 years but has been doing part-time work for the state.

He has long been involved in community service, for many years in Cromwell government where he was on the Town Council and chairperson of the Zoning Board of Appeals, among other duties. He also is a former Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. Somehow in the 2000s he also found time to host a local cable access show, "In the Locker Room," with another former Xavier football player, Stan Stachura '68, and Alan Schumann '78.

Tokarz was at Xavier and his wife Kathleen at Mercy at the same time. They had some of the same friends, but they never met until 20 years later. Married for about 30 years they now live in Old Saybrook, 100 yards from the water. What does Tokarz do? He dives back into helping out: he's vice president of the Fenwood District Association in Old Saybrook.

"The variety of spiritual, cultural and athletic programs at the school emphasized the value of participation and made an impression on me."

"I think my attraction to community action clearly began at Xavier. The variety of spiritual, cultural and athletic programs at the school emphasized the value of participation and made an impression on me," Tokarz said. "Then at Wesleyan the degree of political and social activism was intense. Not getting involved didn't seem to be an option.

"Those early experiences helped formulate my outlook on trying to help out and 'giving back to the community' in the words of the coach, Larry McHugh."

When Tokarz was playing at Wesleyan, one of his fraternity brothers was Bill Belichick.

"One of my favorite stories is that he was nine years old breaking down Navy football games," Tokarz said. "And who was he doing it with? His father,



COMMUNITY-MINDED

Tokarz Chose Not To Stand On The Sidelines But To Get Involved

who was a famous football coach for 40 years; and Roger Staubach in the kitchen at the Belichick house on the Naval Academy grounds. So when he came to Wesleyan he had seen more football certainly than the rest of us -- and probably more so than some of the coaches.

"There wasn't anything you could talk about in football that he didn't have some knowledge of or an opinion of, and sports in general ... one of the themes even back then was how do you build a great team, how do you build a perfect team."

Belichick's father was on the Navy staff at the time, and Staubach would win the Heisman Trophy at Navy and two Super Bowls with the Dallas Cowboys. Belichick, of course, would become one of the greatest NFL coaches of all-time; he has led the New England Patriots to six Super Bowl titles.

Tokarz not only played for McHugh at Xavier, but he had two coaching stints with McHugh at Xavier. He played with and against former Xavier athletic director Tony Jaskot. He played halfback, wide receiver and defensive back during his Wesleyan career and is a member of their all-decade team from the '70s. He spent a year on the Baltimore Colts' staff primarily breaking down game film, getting that job in 1976 because he was recommended by Belichick, who was leaving the role. The Colts were 11-3 that year.

"There was a lot of talent on that team," Tokarz said, "and being in Memorial Stadium with 70,000 people ... the building used to shake with all the cheering."

Tokarz also coached the New England Crusaders, a semi-pro team, at his alma mater, Wesleyan, and at Trinity College. He's in the Middletown Sports Hall of Fame.

"From Larry I learned a lot about people and coaching and how to motivate and teach people, and playing at Xavier was great," Tokarz said. "We were a rising program, playing top-level football. After playing for Wesleyan I came back for a practice and the next thing I know I was on the coaching staff [in 1973]. It was an honor to be there."

Tokarz and Jaskot played together at Xavier and faced each other when Jaskot was a quarterback at Southern Connecticut and Tokarz in the defensive backfield at Wesleyan. When they met in the fall of 1972, Jaskot threw two second-half TD passes and Southern beat Wesleyan 31-21.

"I've known Tony since 1956, kindergarten at St. Mary's," Tokarz said, "and we played a lot of sandlot before we ever got to Xavier. I once said I've been on Tony's team and I've played against him many times, and I've usually fared better on Tony's team. A great athlete, competitor and great guy."

Tokarz helped start the first Alumni Association at Xavier and has remained connected. Belichick routinely autographs a football that gets auctioned off at the Alumni Golf Classic, which raises money for financial aid.

Tokarz has been able to see the side of Belichick most don't get to see. Two of Tokarz's favorite photos are of his grandkids crawling all over the smiling Patriots coach at preseason camp and one of McHugh and Belichick together at camp. Says Tokarz: "I call that photo 'Two of the best coaches I know, in no particular order.'"

And then he tells this story.

"Of course Larry writes him a Larry letter, a handwritten letter," Tokarz said. "Bill says the guy wrote me a handwritten letter, unbelievable, and he's a legend and won more championships than I ever thought about before getting into coaching. And he's just impressed Larry writes to him, so that's the kind of guy Bill is."

Here's the kind of guy Tokarz is. As a Human Resources executive, Tokarz has spent his life working with people, trying to help them. He has found it rewarding, just like his community work.

"I'm very proud of the life Tom has lived," McHugh said. "Loyalty and always being there for his family and friends is something I admire."

He was there for his stepson Dennis, who died in 2016 of ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease.

"ALS is something I hope I never see again," Tokarz said. "Dennis had been such an alive, vibrant guy, involved with his kids, with neighborhood kids, with coaching kids in lacrosse and football in Glastonbury. He had 500 people come to his wake ... that was tough to deal with.

"His legacy are his children who are thriving. Zachary graduated from the University of Rhode Island, Ariel is at the University of New Haven, and Jack's a freshman at Virginia Tech. We're all so proud of them." ❌



Two Greats: Bill Belichick and Larry McHugh

B E T T E R *together*



Left To Right

PIA DOGBEY, MD
Waterbury Hospital,
Internal Medicine Faculty

SELORM DOGBEY '22

RUPERT DOGBEY, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

With Trust And Respect, The Ayepahs And Dogbeys Have Formed A Special Relationship



JAMIE AYEPAH '22

MICHAEL AYEPAH, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

RINA AYEPAH, MD
Yale New Haven Hospital,
Internal Medicine

Selorm Dogbey '22
Jamie Ayepah '22



THE BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP

From Ghana To Xavier, The Ayepah And Dogbey Families Have Remained Committed To Each Other

When Selorm Dogbey '22 turned 16 earlier this year, he surprised his parents.

Instead of rushing to get his learners permit, he did the opposite of most kids his age.

He waited.

If his best friend Jamie Ayepah '22, who turned 16 three months later, was unable to drive, Dogbey was not going to drive either.

"Selorm was not going to leave his friend alone on the bus as he drives to school," Selorm's mom Pia Dogbey said. "That's how close they are."



Selorm participates in an Open House event at Xavier

Although the decision might have caught his parents off guard, Selorm was just doing what his parents would have done.

He was standing by his friend.

Growing up, Selorm and Jamie have seen firsthand the power of friendship in their own parents' relationship.

Since the moment they met at medical school in Ghana as students to this past year working to help stop the spread of COVID-19

as doctors in New Haven and Waterbury, Pia and Rupert Dogbey, and Michael and Rina Ayepah, have been there for each other.

From Ghana to New Haven. From medical students to doctors. From college friends to loving parents. The Ayepahs and the Dogbeyes have been united in the same shared path. And whatever they have taken on, they have taken it on together.

"Their relationship has kind of changed our whole definition of friendship," Selorm said. "If you ask a lot of people, they'll probably say friends come and go – that's kind of a common notion. But seeing how their friendship has lasted through continents, it has shown us that you stick with your friends."

Now more than 28 years after they first met at the University of Ghana in Accra, chasing their dreams of becoming doctors, the Ayepahs and Dogbeyes are more than just friends.

They are family.

Whether it is holidays together, or simple tasks like carpooling back and forth to Xavier, the two families are constantly supporting one another.

"No matter how far you move from home, having something that is always constant in your life becomes like a north pole, it helps you find your focus," Rupert said. "I'm grateful for this friendship we have with the Ayepahs."

As a young mom, Pia joked that trips to the pediatrician were always a challenge when it came time to properly identify her children.

"We would go to the pediatrician and they would say how many children do you have and as I was saying two, Selorm would start saying four (Selasie is the Dogbeyes youngest son and the Ayepahs have a daughter, Traci)," Pia said. "The pediatrician would look at us and try and figure out who was lying."

Throughout their lives this has been a common theme. Both Jamie and Selorm refer to each other's parents as their aunts and uncles.

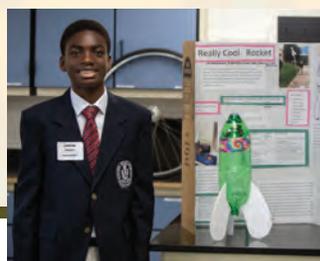
"We raised our kids like they are siblings and sometimes they go out to school and tell people they are siblings," Rupert said. "It has been like that for so long."

At Xavier, each has found their way as strong students and positive teammates – Selorm is a member of the soccer and track and field teams, Jamie a part of the Robotics team. But they are always there for each other, meeting up to help each other with school, or to talk through anything happening in their lives.

"It is very rare to have the relationship Jamie and I have where

you grow up with someone that is not related to you," Selorm said. "As I have always said, Jamie is like a brother to me."

Their parents share a similar bond.



Jamie is a member of the Xavier Robotics team

“This is our family away from home,” Pia said. “What moves me and what strikes me is when our parents and families come to visit, and you see it in their eyes. They see the bond between the two families, and they are at peace and know we have a family away from home.”

The relationship between the four doctors, who all come from different cities and different ethnic backgrounds in Ghana, might have started as students, but it did not truly take off until the Dogbeys surprised the Ayepahs with an invitation to become roommates.

“We were having a hard time finding our own place so Rupert and Pia graciously agreed to host us until we could find our own apartment, and we lived with them for about six months or so in the same house,” Rina said. “We enjoyed each other’s company so much that it was very easy to maintain it from then on.”

So much so that when it came time to apply to the same residency program in the U.S., all four applied to St. Raphael’s Hospital in New Haven, which is now part of the Yale New Haven Hospital system. And remarkably, they were all accepted.

“Even when we were wishing for it, we knew it was unlikely,” Rupert said. “It was just one of those remarkable things.”

Michael and Pia applied first to the residency program at St. Raphaels and the spouses followed. For Pia, Match Day, when doctors find out where they will spend their residency, brought strong emotions.

“People said, ‘Pia, why are you crying? I thought I saw Rupert up there,’ and I said ‘I know,’” Pia said. “I didn’t take it for granted that he would end up there. I started bawling when I saw we were all in the same residency.”

Before reuniting in Connecticut, Michael and Pia spent close to a year going back and forth to the U.S. as they took a series of exams, while Rina and Rupert remained in Ghana with Jamie and Selorm, who were newborns.

Through that experience, the couples got even closer.

“It reemphasized the sense of community we have with each other,” Pia said.

Since relocating from Ghana to the U.S. to work as doctors in internal medicine, the Ayepahs and Dogbeys have moved three times. And each time, they have made sure to move together.

“As soon as one family found a home, the other towns were not an option,” Pia said. “The kids actually said, ‘could we build a tunnel from one house to another,’ so they don’t have to ask permission to go to each other’s house.”

Together, the Dogbeys and Ayepahs have shared a special journey. And whether it be Rina’s help during Pia’s pregnancies or Michael’s last-minute addition as a groomsman at the Dogbey’s wedding, they can count on each other, just like their sons.

“We come from different backgrounds, and we are not the same people, but we respect each other the same and love each other the same,” Pia said.

This year, the families’ friendship has taken on a different kind of significance as they have all dealt with the pandemic from the front lines.

“Their relationship has kind of changed our whole definition of friendship. If you ask a lot of people, they’ll probably say friends come and go – that’s kind of a common notion. But seeing how their friendship has lasted through continents, it has shown us that you stick with your friends.”



“This year has been really different and difficult, and I can’t even imagine if Rupert and Pia were not there – I think things would’ve been harder,” Rina said.

Michael, Rina and Rupert all work at Yale

New Haven Hospital in internal medicine and Pia is a member of the internal medicine faculty at Waterbury Hospital. But for each they remain grateful and honored to be helping as doctors.

“Being on that side – the side where you are the one providing care – is actually a privilege and you are fortunate to be on that side,” Michael said. “As scary as it may be, you are on the side where you are well and taking care of someone that is not well and not sure what the outcome is going to be. That is what is keeping me going through this pandemic.”

As the pandemic has gone along, the four have been able to talk through their days together as doctors and friends.

At Xavier, their sons share a similar confidence in each other.

“We can go to each other if we have anything going on in our lives,” Jamie said. “It has always been like this. ... The key is just knowing the other person.”

For Selorm and Jamie, the parents’ friendship has not only provided them with a powerful lesson, but also motivation. Nearly 28 years after their parents met in the capital city of Ghana with one shared dream, Selorm and Jamie are eager to follow their parents’ path and become doctors once they graduate from Xavier.

“Our parents’ journey was tough, but knowing they went through it is inspiring,” Selorm said. “If they can do something extremely difficult like that, we can do it. We know that we are capable of doing it because of who our parents are.” 🌸



Luke Dalton '95 & Alissa DeJonge, Mercy '95

A few months ago, Mercy President Alissa DeJonge '95 and her husband Luke Dalton '95 went looking for DeJonge's high school diploma.

The couple, who met at a Xavier football game in the fall of 1994, never found the diploma, but they did find something else they recognized – DeJonge's valedictorian speech from senior year.

"When I read it, I realized I could still say this now. It was a simple message, it was not very long, but it was poignant," DeJonge said. "As a high school student I was just beginning to realize what was important to me and it has continued."

Class Acts

Plenty has changed in DeJonge's life, but some things will always remain, like her love for Mercy High School, and her loyal editing partner.

As class valedictorians, DeJonge and Dalton got together to help each other as they drafted their speeches. Now 25 years later, the couple, and their four-year-old son Pierce, have returned to the place that brought them together.

In July, DeJonge, who had previously worked as an economist for Advance CT, took over for Sister Mary McCarthy, R.S.M., as the first lay president in the history of the school.

"As we were going through the process, I couldn't help but think that it was a perfect fit," Dalton said about his wife getting the job. "She knows the mission of Mercy and the culture, and she has this outside knowledge of how to carry it forward for the next generations. I never had any doubts that this was the right move and the right fit for her, and for Mercy."

From their first date (a trip to the movies to see "Outbreak" in the spring of 1995) to that trip to the Cromwell Ruby Tuesday to review their valedictorian speeches, the couple, who have been married for 13 years,



"Luke supports me with anything I want to do – and that is when I thrive. I think that is why our connection runs so deep."

has always shared an appreciation for the same values. Family, education, community – they matter deeply to both DeJonge and Dalton. So in some ways it is no surprise that they're back on Randolph Road helping a new generation of students.

At Mercy and Xavier, they both embraced every opportunity they were given.

They loved their classes, they loved their teachers, and they loved their schools.

Still, they never imagined this. The fourth head of school in the history of Mercy High School? A return to Mercy with an opportunity to give back and lead? At first, DeJonge did not know if it could be her, but as she did a little more research and thought more about the job the more she started to realize this was the opportunity she wanted.

"I would not have applied to any other jobs than Mercy – I was only applying to this job," DeJonge said. "I was looking for a way to impact the community more directly. Then this came up and it kind of clicked at the right time."

After previously serving on the Mercy Board of Directors for 15 years, including three years as the chair, DeJonge had an idea of what Mercy needed in a leader after the retirement of Sister Mary, but she also brought a different perspective to the position.

"I thought I could take my expertise understanding economic trends and data analysis and public policy and non-profit ideas and apply them to a school," DeJonge said. "In today's world, especially private education, you really need to sell the school and tell the story of the school. Having gone through Mercy and understanding what Mercy High School in Middletown means, and then applying this non-profit business experience, I thought it could be a nice combination."

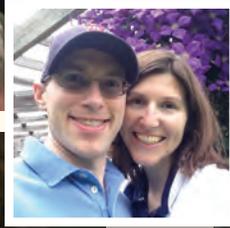
On March 31, 2020, she got the call. She was hired.

"There were tears of joy for sure," DeJonge said. "I could not believe it was actually happening."

More than nine months later, she still has to pinch herself when she sits in her office and watches as the buses roll into the school. For more than 45 years, this was Sister Mary's office. It was Sister Mary's view, but now it belongs to DeJonge, and she is doing everything she can to follow in the footsteps of Sister Mary, while also making her own impact.

"Sister Mary really laid this foundation and set this culture, and I was part of it," DeJonge said. "I feel that I understand that foundation and where we come from, and now I want to take that and help it to grow and take it to the next level. I want to take all the gifts I have received and give them to the community."

Her husband believes she is ready to do just that. "She is very dedicated," Dalton said. "She is not afraid to look at things differently and adapt to the current environment, but also carry that



common thread of Mercy traditions through different times. Right from the beginning, what I recognized in Alissa was that she was not going to do something just because someone else wanted her to do it or because that was the thing to do. If she was going to do something, it was because she could see a clear path that made sense to her."

Through high school and college graduations, new jobs, and everything else life throws at you, the one constant for both DeJonge and Dalton has been each other.

They are each other's biggest supporters, and when the time calls for it – motivators.

"Luke supports me with anything I want to do – and that is when I thrive," DeJonge said. "I think that is why our connection runs so deep."

That type of support has always been evident in the relationship, especially at the start. After going over their speeches together, both DeJonge and Dalton gave each other a ticket to their graduation.

"I think we just realized that we kind of liked each other and it grew from there," Dalton said.

As college students, they encouraged each other as they attended top academic institutions. Dalton went to Dartmouth for his undergraduate and graduate degrees, and DeJonge went to Boston College as an undergraduate and Yale as a graduate student.

"We both knew our priorities were to do the best we could with our education, and we supported each other through that," Dalton said. "We both enjoyed learning and valued education a lot."

For Dalton, his love of science and math led him to engineering, where he now has five patents to his name and helps make equipment that enables the generation of hydrogen gas from renewable energy like wind and solar. Along the way, DeJonge has been there as his rock.

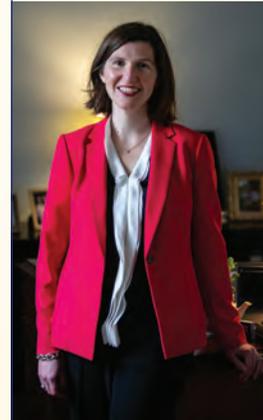
No matter what comes next, they work together. Whether it is a new job like the return to Mercy, or simply preparing dinner, they represent a united team.

"Whatever we are doing, whether it is just sitting around reading a book or a magazine, or going to the beach, we always have fun together because we are just on the same wavelength," DeJonge said.

When it comes to this new chapter in their lives, both DeJonge and Dalton feel the timing is right for their family. From the moment they both chose Xavier and Mercy, the combined community has been good to them, and now they are ready to give back.

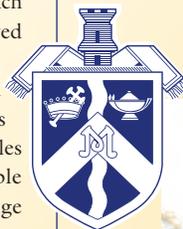
"To me if I can provide some support to this next generation like the way

I was provided support that is very meaningful to me," DeJonge said. "I think I am at a point now in my career where I really want to make a direct impact on my community, so getting up at that podium on my first day and being able to say what I wanted to say to them, really started me on that journey."



Gratitude. Community. Support.

Over 25 years ago, Dalton and DeJonge addressed the same themes as Xavier and Mercy valedictorians. Now they are ready to spread the message once again. ✕





perkfect PARTNERS



**Xavier And Mercy Alums
Joe And Johanna Perazella Have Found
Just What They Needed By Opening
Their Dream Coffee Shop**

When Joe Perazella '05 and his wife Johanna traveled to San Diego in 2014, they had only been dating for less than a year, but that did not stop them from a hatching a plan together.

Inspired by a visit to James Coffee, the couple started thinking about creating their own café back home in Connecticut.

"We were there, and we looked at each other and we're like – we need this," said Johanna, who graduated from Mercy in 2003.

It would take almost four years from that moment, but the couple got their spot.

In the fall of 2018, the Perazellas opened Perkatory on North Main in Middletown, fulfilling their shared dream.

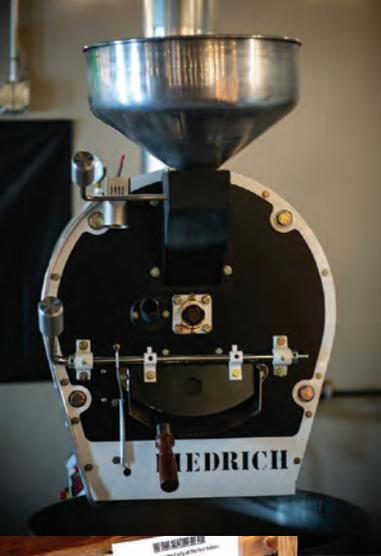
"We wanted to have a place where people can connect, build relationships and come together and congregate," Joe said.

Whether it is the logo, which features a skeleton raising the shaka, the universal sign for hang loose, or the posters paying tribute to southern California skate boarding culture, Perkatory is unlike any other coffee place you've seen in Connecticut.

"There is a general feeling or idea with craft coffee that it is intimidating. You go into a craft coffee shop and you do not really know what you want, and there's this feeling that the baristas are going to judge you," Joe said. "We wanted to remove that. We wanted to be able to offer really good coffee in a really relaxing environment that everybody can be comfortable coming in and ordering. We have the punk rock music on and the dim lights. We wanted to make it a place we would go to and hang out."

“We wanted to be able to offer really good coffee in a really relaxing environment that everybody can be comfortable coming in and ordering. We have the punk rock music on and the dim lights. We wanted to make it a place we would go to and hang out. ”





With its raised ceilings and big open spaces, Perkatory strikes a welcoming vibe.

Even the name hints at the type of atmosphere both are aiming for with the café. Perkatory is defined as “the anguished prolonged period spent waiting for a fresh pot of coffee to finish brewing.”

“We do not claim to be the best coffee shop in the world, we just want to have fun with coffee,” Joe said. “We felt that was lacking in the industry.”

Since opening, the café has become not only a destination for good coffee, but a place for the community to come together. Before COVID hit in March, Perkatory had hosted different events, including a night for autistic children. City workers, students, retirees. Throughout the week, the cafe is a hub of activity. “We want the customer to feel a part of what we have here,” Joe said.

For the couple, coffee started as necessity. When they first met, Joe was working long hours and in need of any sort of pick-me-up he could get, and Johanna was working in Pennsylvania and traveling back and forth to Connecticut. But now, the world of coffee, and Perkatory, which added a second location in Southington this year, represents so much more.

Before opening the shop, Johanna, who has Type 1 diabetes and stage 3 kidney disease, was told she was going blind.

“I will need a kidney transplant, it is just when – I will lose my vision, it is just when,” Johanna said. “Unfortunately, with diabetes, it is not like you just have diabetes, you also have 15 other things that go along with diabetes. And one of them unfortunately is that I am going blind.”

That diagnosis was all her husband needed to know. Johanna was working at a doctor’s office and spending every day staring at a computer screen. Something had to give. Perkatory had to happen.

“That was a big part of why we did this – just to get her in a better situation,” Joe said. “I knew her job staring at a computer screen was not helping her eye situation.”

Their time together is something neither takes for granted. “As corny as it sounds, he is my soulmate, and being able to be here with him and doing something that we both love has really made me extremely grateful for every little thing we get to do,” Johanna said.

Eventually, Johanna will lose her sight. The couple understands that and is prepared for what lies ahead. But Joe also believes the change in jobs has helped.

“Every time she goes to the eye doctor now, he does not say she needs surgery – he is like ‘you look good,’” Joe said.



“Before every time she went it was, ‘You have to get laser surgery or an injection.’”

As a couple, the Perazellas face everything together, big or small.

“Both of us are willing to make sacrifices for the other, and we’re both very vocal,” Joe said. “If something is bothering us, we bring it up and solve it right then and there, and we work on it. And if it becomes an issue again, we do the same thing.”

When it comes to the business, both occupy different roles. Joe is the roaster, and in charge of merchandise. Johanna handles customer service, and the café’s long list of cleverly named lattes.

“We always say – we have such good communication,” Johanna said. “Our marriage is different. We own two cafes. We are parents. Our marriage is just not a typical marriage. We have so many different levels. It is a lot.”

The Perazellas never met while they were at Mercy and Xavier, but the husband and wife share many of the same traits and values. Both credit Xavier and Mercy with helping them to get to this point.

“We both went to Mercy and Xavier kicking and screaming, but once we graduated, we said ‘thank goodness,’” Johanna said. “If we did not go to Mercy or Xavier, we wouldn’t be here.”

At Perkatory, the Perazellas have also seen the power of being part of both communities.

Since opening, Johanna has met so many Mercy alumni who have stopped in to support the business, and Joe has formed a friendship with Tim Boyle ’13, who is in his third season with the Green Bay Packers.

Last year, Boyle stopped by Perkatory to surprise the Perazellas on Joe’s birthday after hearing he was a Packers fan.

“A couple of our customers know how big a Packers fan I am and they were like you have to go to Perkatory they’re big Packers fans,” Joe said.

The Perazellas have since traveled to Green Bay as a guest of Boyle.

“That’s like the epitome of the Mercy and Xavier community right there,” Johanna said.

The relationships, the opportunities, the moments. For both Joe and Johanna, Perkatory is an opportunity to be together, doing something they have always wanted to do. And they don’t want to see it end anytime soon.

“I think we are just really happy, and we don’t want anything to change,” Joe said. “We just hope things get to stay like this.” X



[Left] Joe Rappoccio '18
[Above] Vinny Rappoccio '22

FAMILY VALUES

The Rappoccio Family And Their Company, SignPro, Share Many Similarities With Xavier

When the coronavirus pandemic hit last March, and businesses were being shuttered across the state, Pete and Suzanne Rappoccio, the owners of SignPro in Southington, made a promise to each other.

No matter what happened, or how bad it got, the pair would not furlough, or worse let go of any of their 70 employees at the company, which specializes in custom signs, banners and vehicle wraps.

"We said to each other we would figure it out and get through it," Suzanne said. "We don't know any other way."

The couple did not go to Xavier or Mercy when they were teenagers, but their family, and their business share many of the same principles as the school's.

Discipline. Trust. Respect.



It is not only the Xavier way – it is the Rappoccio way. Whether at their business, or Xavier, Pete, Suzanne, and their two sons, Joe '18 and Vinny '22, are committed to helping those they care about.

"It is the same thing you learn at Xavier – you are there for people thick and thin," Pete said. "When there are hard times, you've got to figure it out."

This spring, and throughout the summer, the Rappoccio family has done its best to do just that – adapt.

With the pandemic in mind, Pete started to think of ways to help and use the company's 3-D printer that can print six feet tall and five feet wide.

"It was not really a business deal – it was what can we do to help everyone get through this," Pete said. "We changed gears immediately with COVID-19. I kind of had a vision of what was going to be needed and how do we get there."

In no time, SignPro was manufacturing shields, sneeze guards, barriers for buses and whatever else was needed.

Seven months later, they have done barriers for over 1,000 transit buses, and produced more shields than you can imagine. But for Pete, who started the business when he was 20, that is what the business has always been about – solving problems for his customers in a trustworthy way.

"Our clients do not always know what they need, but they just need us to come up with a solution," Pete said. "You've just got to get it done."

Over the last 30 years, that commitment has allowed SignPro to go from Pete's bedroom at his parents' house to a business which services customers throughout the United States and Canada, and includes such recognizable brands

as UConn, ESPN, Dunkin' Donuts Park, Rentschler Field, Edible Arrangements, Moe's Southwest Grill, and Oakley sunglasses, to name a few.

"I think it comes down to one word – dedication," Pete said when discussing the company's success.

At Xavier, their sons have learned the same thing, while developing lifelong bonds.

It could be soccer, peer ministry, football or National Honor Society. You know what you are going to get when you have a Rappoccio on your team or in your class – they are going to be dependable, and they are going to give you everything they've got. Joe played soccer during his time at Xavier and Vinny is currently a member of the football team.

"I just think the family gets it," Associate Director of Advancement and Football Assistant Coach Greg Jaskot '00 said. "They are very caring people. They care about the community that they are part of, and they want to help... They are just good people."

Through the years, the Rappoccio sons have learned their work ethic from their parents, and the family business. During the summer months, and when they are not doing sports or other activities, the two brothers have been a part of the family business, working in different departments and getting no special treatment.

"They have been here since they were young," Suzanne said. "We eat, drink, breathe and sleep SignPro. Whether it is at home, at the dinner table, in the car driving around, these kids have heard it."

That type of dedication did not go unnoticed. Joe, who goes to UConn, has already started putting in long days and is ready to join the family business full-time

when he graduates college, and Vinny recently told his parents and his brother he would follow suit when the time arrived.

"We were taught that work ethic as kids," Joe said. "We were taught how to work and how to work hard. You are handed a responsibility and you have to perform."

When they were looking at high schools for both Vinny and Joe, Suzanne and Pete were looking for schools that would reinforce those values, while also providing their sons with the types of bonds they appreciate as a family.

Soon enough, they landed on Xavier.

"I feel that Xavier has a lot of the same values and morals that we have as a family," Suzanne said. "It was a good fit for us."

Said Pete: "I think that being an all-boys school it brings about a great brotherhood and develops a camaraderie. They know they can lean on each other."

Now as they prepare to see their youngest graduate in 2022, it is not only their children that have developed a connection. Throughout the last six years, Pete and Suzanne have fallen in love with the culture of Xavier, and have helped with several rebranding projects, including recently putting up all the new COVID signs and decals, and a few years ago, donating the X on the front of the building.

For the Rappoccio family, they would not have it any other way.

"We believe in the school," Suzanne said. "We like to give back. That's just who we are." 🌸

"It is the same thing you learn at Xavier – you are there for people thick and thin. When there are hard times, you've got to figure it out."





Left to right, Brady '22, Drew '83, Erin Malloy, Mercy '86, Owen '17, and Noah '21

COMMON GOALS

Whether On The Soccer Field Or Off It, The Stevenson Family Has Made The Most Of Its Time At Xavier And Mercy

In the Stevenson household, pick-up soccer games usually brought with them unwanted house repairs.

Broken fence posts? Sure. Ripped screens? Of course. Damaged vinyl siding? You bet.

It was all just collateral damage for four soccer-loving teenagers in the same house, dreaming the same dream.

“They are very competitive, even when they played against each other in the backyard,” mother Erin Stevenson said. “It was do-or-die. They went all out.”

Over the years, Drew, who graduated from Xavier in 1983, and Erin, who graduated Mercy in 1986, have seen firsthand the damage four teenagers and a soccer ball can do to a home. But the couple, who met after college and married in 1997, would not change a thing.

All those broken posts and damaged screens were just

part of the journey for the family, which has seen its children log more minutes and score more goals for the Mercy and Xavier soccer teams than they could have ever imagined.

Since 2015, the Stevenson four – Owen '17, Lindsay '20, Noah '21 and Brady '21 – have combined to score over 70 goals for both programs.

**Noah '21, Brady '22
Owen '17, Drew '83**



“It has been a wild ride to watch them go through all this,” Drew said. “I think we are just grateful that our kids got to go here [Mercy and Xavier] and are getting this experience.”

When Brady graduates from Xavier in 2022, it will officially mark the end of an era for both Mercy and Xavier soccer. Since 2015, a Stevenson has been on the field for either program, and often they have led the attack. But for the parents, who were adamant that their children get the same experience they did at both schools, the last few years have been about much more than wins and goals.

Both Erin and Drew, whose siblings also went to Xavier, wanted their children to receive the same type of foundation they got as students.

“When you look at your roster and see a Stevenson on there, you know you have a high-quality player and a high-quality person that is going to do everything in their power to help their team win.”

–Coach Brian Fitzgerald '99

“At both schools you learn about integrity and making good decisions and developing strong relationships,” Drew said. “That’s what we wanted for them and we knew this was the best environment for that.”

As a student, Drew, who was also a soccer player, was mentored by Brother James Boyle, C.F.X, and the relationship always stuck with him.

“I had a very special relationship with him,” Drew said. “He knew who I was, and he appreciated me. He never wanted me to change, but he wanted to guide me to make better decisions and be a better person. He believed in me. When I came in, I did not do well on the entrance exam, but Brother Boyle never gave up on me, and a big part of who I am today is who he wanted me to be.”

Nearly 27 years later, Drew’s former soccer teammate on those great ‘80s

teams, Dave Sizemore ‘86, one of the school’s two Academic Deans at the time, looked out for his oldest son Owen in the same way.

“Mr. Sizemore was a big part of my academic success; he really took time out of his day to have conversations with me,” Owen said. “Even though I hated it at the time, I appreciate it now.”

For Drew, who sent his sons to Xavier for this reason, it was always relationships like this that made Xavier much more than a school.

“We definitely had that brotherhood and that bond,” Drew said. “Dave bleeds Black and White. He was a good friend and then a good supporter of our kids.”

Noah and Brady have had similar relationships with other members of the faculty and staff. Brady cites his soccer coach Brian Fitzgerald ‘99 and religion teacher

Bill Garrity as being there for him, and Noah references Peter Lyons, the Director of Campus Ministry, and Fitzgerald.

Through these relationships, the brothers have learned what their dad always told them about Xavier.

“It is about the friends and the bonds you make, and the life lessons you make from being part of a team,” Noah said.

As members of their respective teams, the Stevenson siblings have always tried to do everything they can to be the best teammates possible.

From a young age, their father, who coached each of them growing up, instilled certain values, like teamwork and hard work.

“Whenever we were playing we would look over to see his face and whatever that expression was we knew how we were playing,” Brady said. “It has taught us to never be satisfied.”

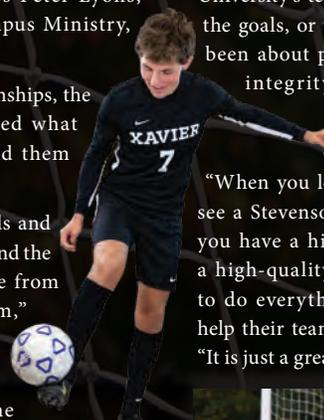
At Xavier and Mercy, those values were always evident.

Despite the family name, the siblings arrived that first day of practice ready to win their spot on their own and do everything they could to leave their legacy.

“When I put on a soccer jersey, I’m wearing a history of the Stevensons that came before me,” Noah said. “There is a certain level of pride that comes with that. You need to play to the expectations of how everyone played before you.”

If their performance on the field is any indication, they have done that. After graduating from Xavier, Owen played for Salve Regina, and in 2020, Lindsay, who scored 47 goals at Mercy, was part of Central Connecticut State University’s team. But more than just the goals, or the scholarships, it has been about playing the game with integrity, just like their dad taught them so many years ago.

“When you look at your roster and see a Stevenson on there, you know you have a high-quality player and a high-quality person that is going to do everything in their power to help their team win,” Fitzgerald said. “It is just a great family.” 🍀



A Call TO Help

FROM AN EARLY AGE, DAN LYONS '21 HAS BEEN MOTIVATED TO GIVE BACK AND SERVE THOSE IN NEED



After being homeschooled his entire life, Dan Lyons '21 arrived at Xavier High School with his eyes wide open.

"It was like going into a different country," Lyons said. "It was a completely new environment and I had never seen anything like it, but at the same time I was so interested in it."

Whether it was the sudden change in academic requirements or the different social setting, Xavier presented plenty of new experiences and challenges. But the one area he needed no introduction to was the school's commitment to service.

Since a young age, Lyons, the second youngest of nine children, has always shown a desire to help others.

"He has always had a gentle, nurturing way," his father Peter Lyons, Xavier's Director of Campus Ministry, said. "He gets what it means to be a part of something. He's always been that way."

During his time at Xavier, Lyons has made two trips to Harlan County, Kentucky, where he has helped build new homes.

This summer, he was planning to visit Harlan County, in the heart of Appalachia, again, but the trip, which typically lasts seven days, including two long car rides, was canceled because of the pandemic.

"Sometimes I almost feel like it is a calling or a duty that I have to go out and help people," Lyons said. "Every single day is a blessing. And just because you have the blessing does not mean you should keep it to yourself. You should be able to share it. I know I'm the best version of myself when I'm doing this."

In September, Lyons, who wants to go into a medical field after graduating, had already logged 528 service hours (from freshman year to junior year, students need to accumulate 30 service hours total). And that's not even counting his time in Peer Ministry. But for Lyons, whose siblings Eric '16 and Matt '18 went to Xavier, it is not about the hours.

"Part of the service I realized was not even the manual labor, it was connecting with people," Lyons said. "The service is not just the act. In a way, it is the intent. ... You just make these connections."

Right away, his father noticed the impact the service work was having on his son.



"He has always made it a point to connect with the people he is serving," his father said. "He learns their stories and practices what we call 'the ministry of presence.'"

For Lyons, the time he spends helping is essential to who he is. And certainly not new. Growing up, he made trips to the local food pantry.

"Everyone was just so happy when this stuff was being done, so I just thought why not do more," Lyons said.

Soon enough, those trips morphed into something more, and so did his leadership.

After spending time with Catholic Youth & Family Ministries, located in Garrison, N.Y., he decided to take on a more active role as a youth leader.

With CYFM, Lyons was part of several teen retreats, including their biggest, Day by Day Agape Retreat, which is put on by teenagers with adult moderators. Throughout the four-day session, there are a lot of discussions (mixed with singing and dancing), which help the participants reconnect with their faith by working with others.

"Going to the retreat was like taking this huge backpack off, it was really nice," Lyons said. "The impact it has on you is absurd."

Over the last few years, he has taken what he has learned at DDA and other retreats – how to communicate with others and how to lead – and used it during his trips to Kentucky.

"I had my experience, and I said, 'This was just the best time of my life. This has to be shared,'" Lyons said. "I realized if I had this experience and I can become a leader through these retreats, I can literally help other people have this experience. I learned how to talk to people."

Earlier on at Xavier, Lyons struggled to find that same level of comfort he has when he serves.

Despite a strong family history in the Xavier and Mercy community, he was anxious about how he would be perceived as a home school student. But after waiting to tell his friends he was homeschooled, he realized it did not matter.

"I realized it was not just me that was going into this foreign



environment," Lyons said. "It was every other kid. I realized I was not the only one adjusting."

As a son of a faculty member, Lyons has had to adjust to being at a school with his father, but his dad has allowed him to find his own way while supporting him. And along the way, Lyons has tried to take as much from his dad as possible and uses him as a role model.

"Every single day is a blessing. And just because you have the blessing does not mean you should keep it to yourself. You should be able to share it."

In the end, he wants to make his dad proud.

"He has so much respect for others," Dan said. "It is something I really admire. He's just the most compassionate person I've ever met."

His dad would say the same thing about his son.

"Whether he's leading a retreat for his peers, traveling to Kentucky to minister to the poor, or serving the Xavier community as a peer minister, he is a great example of compassion and someone who puts the needs of others ahead of his own," Peter Lyons said. "If he were not my son, I'd be jealous of his dad." 🌸



Doug Farrington and his children, Bryan, Rheanne and Kevin, volunteering with My Brother's Keeper, a Christian service organization that, among other things, gathers goods for families in need at Christmas time.



Doug Farrington did not, as he puts it, “have the privilege of attending” Xavier, but it’s safe to say his life was influenced forever by the school.

His two sons graduated from here, Bryan in 2005 and Kevin in 2007.

“I often said to people that I believed they could get a great academic education a lot of places, but at Xavier they also learned to be great human beings,” Doug said.

Doug learned a bit about himself, too.

“I became inspired to do for others by simply watching the people I met at Xavier,” Doug said. “I observed what it meant to care for and help others. Both the boys became involved with campus ministry and became passionate about what it meant to ‘Be a man like Jesus.’ I learned from them.

“Before being exposed to Xavier, I was all about work. Father Greg Galvin, the Xavier faculty and administration, and the Xavier students inspired me to do more. When my career led me to move the family to Massachusetts, the first thing I did was to join the Board of Directors of the Catholic Charities of Boston. This gave me a platform to help others. The second thing I did was to begin volunteering at Notre Dame Academy in Hingham, Mass., the high school my daughter chose to attend.”

Rheanne was inspired to go to Notre Dame Academy because she saw the experience her brothers had at Xavier. Doug and his daughter volunteered with the Appalachia Service Project for four summers, doing home improvement work in rural West Virginia. He then joined the Board at Notre Dame Academy.

Kevin is now a teacher at St. John’s Prep in Danvers, Mass., like Xavier a Xaverian Brothers Sponsored School.

“The values and character I try to model and encourage in my students are directly forwarded from those that I learned and developed on Randolph Road,” Kevin said.

How does that transfer to his students?

“My hope is that the first thing that comes to mind is that I genuinely care about them,” Kevin said. “Way before we worry about homework, or novels, or grades, I make sure that my students know that I am here for them, both to teach and learn from them,

but mostly to engage and encourage them to take care of themselves, set goals and push for them, and to put time, thought, and effort into the things that are important to them.”

Kevin also coaches the St. John’s Prep middle school hockey team, a sport he played at Xavier.

“Xavier hockey is, and has been from the very beginning, about family,” Kevin said. “From the start with Father Greg Galvin behind the bench, back in Mr. [Dan] DeConti’s playing days, the hockey team was always about being a part of the greater whole.

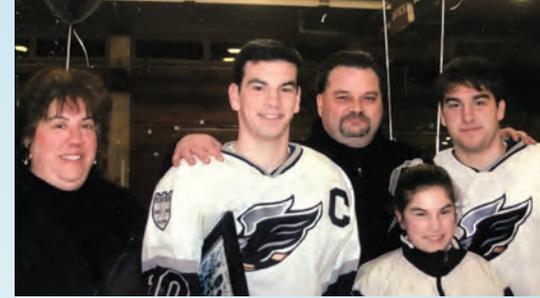
Life Lessons

Bryan '05 And Kevin '07 Are Grads, But The Whole Family Got An Education

“When my brother Bryan made the team as a freshman, I used to run the penalty box door and got to spend time hanging out with guys like Ryan McKinney '02, who made me feel like I was already a part of it and showed what being a Xavier man really meant. Two years later, I was playing JV with Coach DeConti '01 behind the bench, and as a sophomore I got to spend a year on varsity with Bryan before he graduated in 2005. I had one biological brother on the roster, but every guy in the locker room was a part of the family, and that extended to their families at home too.”

Bryan is responsible for the platform that Expedia Group uses to power its marketing campaigns. Like his brother, hockey remains a part of his life. At Xavier he was a captain of the 2005 team.

“I’ve always been passionate about hockey, but it has reached a fever pitch now that I can share it with my five-year-old [Luke],” Bryan said. “I love the technical aspects of the game, like the speed at which it is played and the skill required to execute at that speed, but my son has actually captured the best part about it. He recently said, ‘My favorite part is when they hug,’ referring to the huddles after goals and wins. And what makes that special is being a part of a team.”



Bryan Farrington '05 Kevin Farrington '07

Doug called Father Galvin, the former Xavier Chaplain, “probably the finest human being I have ever met ... His mentorship to the boys, and friendship to my wife and I, made the good times at Xavier great and the tough times better. He showed us all how to be better people.”

Father Galvin was so impactful that both Bryan and Kevin had him participate in their weddings.

“Father Galvin played the role of hockey coach, teacher, mentor and friend,” Bryan said. “He witnessed my wedding on behalf of the Catholic Church, and it was incredibly special to have him there nearly 15 years after we met in an ice rink at 5:45 a.m.

“One of my favorite memories was meeting with him a few times in Middletown with my then-fiancee, Jessica, and just catching up, talking about our marriage and the life that we want to build together. And also when he would get really mad at bad calls the refs would make. And when he told me that if we won a state championship that he would be made a Monsignor automatically. And I believed him. I guess I have a lot of favorite moments.”

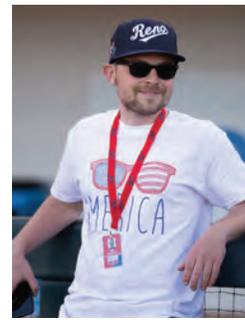
For the past few years around Christmas-time, the family has volunteered at My Brother’s Keeper, gathering goods for families. Doug and his wife Diane also sponsor a child in Guatemala through an organization called NPH USA. Doug has hosted multiple Alumni Receptions in Boston, where he is a partner at Marcum LLP. “My kids often say they are inspired by our generosity, but honestly it was them and their educational experiences that paved the path for us - starting at 181 Randolph Road.” 🌟



The wedding of Kevin and Caitlin had a Xavier flavor. From left, Fr. Greg Galvin, Nick Dominello '05, Dave Leone P'06, Darren Taillie '07, Kevin Farrington '07, Caitlin Farrington, Doug Farrington P'05 & '07, Dean Fredericks P'05 & '06. In front, Bryan Farrington '05, Tom Kalista '07.

A PAIR of ACES

Miles Away From Xavier, Two Graduates Team Up In Nevada



Vince Ruffino



AJ Grimm



Vince Ruffino



AJ Grimm '12 was talking about where he is and how he got there.

"It is crazy to reflect on how sending that one message impacted my life," Grimm said, "but what really changed my life was having the opportunity to attend Xavier High School and build lifelong connections and become part of a top-notch alumni network."

Grimm '12 now works for Vince Ruffino '10 about 2,800 miles away from Randolph Road in Reno, Nev. The Xavier grads work for the Reno Aces, the Triple A affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks of the Pacific Coast League.

Ruffino is Senior Marketing Manager and Grimm is Social Media Manager for the Aces. Ruffino works with the Aces General Manager on the overall marketing strategies of the club, specializing in digital marketing efforts and development. He oversees Grimm.

proud to say AJ has been promoted twice within the organization."

Normally, a minor league ballpark is a busy place on a summer night, but this year all across America they sat silent. For the first time in the 118-year history of the PCL, an entire season was wiped out, the coronavirus pandemic taking its toll. Yet it was no time to rest for Ruffino and Grimm.

They had to make sure the Aces remained front and center in the minds of fans. Engage the audience. Whether it was developing podcasts, hosting giveaways on the website or posting to social media multiple times a day, the goal was for "fans to have access to the sport and team they love without things exactly happening on the field," Ruffino said.

Ruffino says Xavier taught him to "keep striving and to overcome adversity." So there he was, facing an opponent unlike any sports had seen: COVID-19.

"I believe the expectation to succeed was cultivated at Xavier." -Vince Ruffino

"We knew of each other and were family friends as we went to the same grade school [St. Johns in Middletown], and my brother was friends with Vince," Grimm said. "We never interacted much in high school but were acquaintances. We had stayed in touch via social media and I had always known Vince worked in the world of sports. ... I was scrolling LinkedIn one day and saw Vince post a position with the Aces and decided to send him a Direct Message."

One thing led to another.

"After multiple rounds of interviews, our team agreed that he was objectively the best fit and we hired him," Ruffino said. "Since then, I'm

"To work in this industry, you have to absolutely love it because it is a grind," Ruffino said. "We are at every home game, typically pulling 12-14 hour days. While it is difficult, it is also the part of the job we love most - being at the stadium, with our fans, with baseball being played."

Without that, he said, it was hard at times to "stay motivated or to keep the fire." Yet, Ruffino and Grimm were able to use the time to build out digital strategies to be better prepared for the future.

Grimm said they no longer saw themselves as a "traditional baseball team, selling season tickets and putting together theme nights with giveaways, but instead as a media company, making content to keep our followers engaged in a year without Minor League Baseball."

Ruffino's father, Vincent, is a 1982 graduate of Xavier. Ruffino received a Bachelor's of Science in Sports management, cum laude, from St. John's University in New York. This is his third year working for the Aces after spending more than three years in the New York Mets organization. Grimm has a degree in Business Communications from Stevenson

University. His first job in the industry was with the Providence Bruins of the American Hockey League, but his passion always has been baseball.

Grimm prepared for his senior year by attending XLI, Xavier's weeklong summer program that builds leadership and camaraderie. He also played baseball at Xavier and said he would spend hours talking baseball with Guidance Counselor Mark Lambert, who was a college baseball coach for years. So he certainly feels at home with the Aces.

Ruffino was a member of the crew team and in Model Congress all four years; as a senior he was a Peer Minister and a member of the National Honor Society.

"I believe the expectation to succeed was cultivated at Xavier," Ruffino said. "The faculty and staff do a great job at demanding the most out of students and pulling it out of them while providing the resources to do so."

He thinks back to his crew days ... and the crew of friends he made.

"Some of my fondest memories, and the ones my XHS friends and I revisit most, would be from the crew team," Ruffino said. "We had a unique experience in comparison to some of the other sports. Each day, we had to board a bus and drive 30-45 minutes just to practice. All of that time together, each spring and fall, for four years really created a tight-knit group that had more than its share of fun.

"On that note, I'm especially appreciative of Coach [Bill] Braychak and all of his assistants. They were a huge part of our high school experience, creating memories that I would never trade and helping us grow as young men."

Ruffino was engaged in June in front of the ballpark. That big moment had been delayed from May until Nevada opened up a bit, allowing the ultimate audience engagement, a celebration with family and friends. X

Photo left: Vince Ruffino coaching basketball





Musical AdVancement

Vance's Company, *Playground Sessions*, Allows You To Teach Yourself

Chris Vance and Quincy Jones solve a musical problem.

©Adam Hart

Back in 2012 Chris Vance '94 was managing director of a brand invention company, and he worked on products he thought the world needed.

"Everyone was starting to learn things on YouTube; video games were used in ways to teach; there were music video games," Vance said.

It got him to thinking about "merging online learning with traditional music learning that had failed so many people."

He was one of them.

"I'd always wanted to learn an instrument and kind of failed, and I had recently taught myself Spanish using Rosetta Stone (a language software company). And I came from a family of educators; my mom was big in education in Glastonbury ... it just all made sense."



Virtual Piano Recital

Thus was born Playground Sessions, a music technology company whose software teaches someone how to play the piano through interactive lessons.

Last spring, during the coronavirus pandemic, when people had nowhere to venture and hope was elusive, Playground

Sessions offered a free class to learn a song on the piano, with the goal being to perform together in a Virtual Piano Recital after 30 days. The end result in June: 52 countries participated with more than 7,000 people learning the song, "You Raise Me Up." The video compilations of the submissions from around the globe went viral, garnering more than 2 million views.

"These were people learning – half of them had never played a note before – and to come together as a community, that was special," Vance said.

The co-creator of Playground Sessions is one of the most famous and influential names in the music business, Quincy Jones, who has a record 80 Grammy Award nominations. Rosetta Stone would come into play here, too. Jones was in an airport and saw a Rosetta Stone ad.

"He said where's the Rosetta Stone for music and fortunately for us, there was a recent article that had been written talking about what we were doing and building," Vance said. "I got a call from an agent in Los Angeles who says he represented a very important person in music who would like to meet me.

"I said who is it; I'm sort of busy now," Vance recalled with a laugh. "He says Quincy Jones and I said I'll be there. I spent 6-7 hours with him in LA. We went through the prototype, and he could tell I was very passionate.

"He said you're on the dirt road, and I'm thinking to myself that doesn't sound very good. He said he digs the dirt road ... and that we have to get this right. When the time is right, we'll figure out how

"I'd always wanted to learn an instrument and kind of failed." ~ Chris Vance

to build brand awareness. For now we have to think about how to use technology, new ways of learning, video content and gamification, all the things that were out there. We have to make sure it works for music, and when it does we have something very powerful."

That power was no more apparent than when the virtual piano recital raised the spirits of so many during such a rough time.

"Quincy said that music is the universal language; it is part of our culture," Vance said. "He has said that the last two things on earth will be water and music."

Another thing Vance learned from Jones is that "music can be no better or any worse than who you are as a human being. Think about that. Playing music, writing music is a real expression of oneself. If you accept that as truth, and I do, think about all the music he's done, he's been involved in, so what type of human being does that make him ... he's just an incredible human being. He's kind, supportive. He demands stuff from you that you don't even know you have. He's creative, fun, can't say enough about him. His greatness shows up in his music,

but his greatness as a human being counts the most."

Vance's company employs about 20 people and has several million dollars a year in revenue. As he thinks back to his Xavier days, he uses words such as teamwork, hard work, discipline, educational rigor.

"The core foundation instilled in you, to be a man," Vance said. "So I have to show up for my team, my board, my investors, my customers in terms of integrity, my word, my promise, the spirit of what I am doing and the way I operate ... this is all foundational stuff and that's a big influence at a young age, no doubt about it."



For Vance the education piece at the heart of Playground Sessions is important. His late mother Gina was an administrator in the Glastonbury school system for 25 years and was heavily involved with Special Olympics in town. His father David worked for various colleges on the business side and remains involved with Xavier.

By the way, Vance can now play the piano.

"I solved my own problem .. can't live without my piano," he said. **X**



St. George still remembers the moment as if it happened yesterday. "When Finnian was a freshman in my Honors English class, he impressed me with his work ethic, confidence, and humility," St. George said. "Whether because of his upbringing, or because of his natural personality, Finnian was already living through example a lot of the values and dispositions we hope to instill in students at Xavier."

For Dowler, the XBSS Retreat played a huge role in encouraging him to step into more of a leadership role this year.

"To me leadership isn't always about being the loudest. You do not have to be the one giving the demands. But those that are on the right path and anchored and doing the right thing can have a positive impact."

"It is so hard to put into words what happens [at the retreat]," Dowler said. "It is not necessarily something that happens there – it is a feeling you get while you're there. And it lasts."

Using that feeling as guidance, Dowler has tried to bring that same level of compassion and kindness to those in the Xavier community.

"I like working behind the scenes and helping make sure things run smoothly," Dowler said. "I don't need to be the voice of the operation."

Still, that does not mean Dowler avoids stepping up.

Throughout his time at Xavier, he's always tried to offer his help to as many groups as possible.

"It would be nice if people remembered me as not the quiet kid, but the focused kid – the kid who was determined to get something done," Dowler said. "To me leadership isn't always about being the loudest. You do not have to be the one giving the demands. But those that are on the right path and anchored and doing the right thing can have a positive impact."

During his freshman year, a senior, Nicholas Ericson '18, looked after Dowler and shared important advice.

"He would drive me home and he would give me tips and tricks about Xavier – like how to meet new friends and how to live my Xavier life to the fullest," Dowler said. "He told me I should go for as many clubs and activities as possible."

So Dowler did.

As a sophomore and junior, he did his best to participate in as many clubs and activities as he could, including Model Court, and he worked hard to form genuine connections.

"His resume speaks for itself: Ambassadors Club, Model Court, Peer Ministry, XLI, Pro-Life Club, Big Falcon and the list goes on," St. George said. "He has done everything he can to be involved at Xavier, and our school has been a better community because of his involvement."

In four years, Dowler went from wanting to transfer out to not wanting to leave (his brother Cavan '24 has also joined him at Xavier). And as powerful as St. George's comments were that first year, they were not the only reason Dowler stayed.

Early on, Dowler noticed how tight he was becoming with his new friends.

"All of a sudden I'm hanging out with them every single weekend, and I had friends from every grade," Dowler said.

Four years later, those bonds of friendship are only tighter.

"These are guys I wouldn't have expected to know anything about, but all of sudden it doesn't matter what town we're from (we're all from different towns) and that we're all a part of different teams and clubs, we all share a connection," Dowler said. 🌸



STAYING THE COURSE

FOUR YEARS AFTER ALMOST TRANSFERRING, FINN DOWLER '21 HAS EMERGED AS A LEADER FOR HIS CLASS

FINN DOWLER '21 WAS READY TO LEAVE XAVIER.

Early on as a freshman, he had already started the process of transferring to Canterbury, where his two older brothers Jed and Will had gone. But his English teacher at the time, Kyle St. George, now the school's Academic Dean, saw something promising in him and made sure to tell Dowler.

"One day after class, he pulled me aside and said he thought it would be best if I stay," Dowler said. "He said he saw how I was doing and he thought I could be a future leader at Xavier. ... He saw that in me even before I could."

Dowler never completed that application to Canterbury and never followed his brothers to the boarding school in New Milford. Instead, he decided to stay at Xavier as St. George suggested, and it has made all the difference.

Over the last four years, Dowler has immersed himself into all aspects of Xavier.

He has traveled to Guatemala as part of the annual service trip, he is a Peer Minister, he is a leader on the tennis team, and last year he was selected as one of the six members of the junior class to attend the Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools retreat. As a senior, Dowler has not only confirmed St. George's prediction; he has embraced it.

"Some kids are just natural fits for Xavier's culture, values and mission – Finnian is one of those kids," St. George said. "When I heard that he was contemplating leaving Xavier, I felt that he needed to know what I saw. I felt compelled to do something to keep him here. I'm so happy that he did stay, because he truly has been a leader and a role-model at Xavier."





“He would literally bench himself if it made the team better. That’s the type of leader he is.”

As excited as he was to be captains with teammates Noah Stevenson '21 and Jason Salley '21, Houchin did not change his approach to anything. Instead, he remained committed to the same ideals and helped the Falcons win the Southern Connecticut Conference Division A championship.

“The captain title hasn’t changed how I treat the team,” Houchin said. “I’ve always tried to be the guy that picks people up if they are down or encourages them when they do well. I just want people to be open to everyone.”

In school, he is the same way, never afraid to make a joke or strike up a conversation.

“He can relate to anybody he comes in contact with no matter how old they are or where they are from,” Dean of Students Nicholas Cerreta '01 said. “He carries himself like a true leader. He looks, speaks and acts the way a leader is supposed to.”

This school year, Houchin brought those leadership skills from the soccer field to the hallways of Xavier as the student body vice-president with best friend Ryan Solomon '21, who is student body president.

“We just want to create a positive atmosphere,” Houchin said. “We want this to be the best year possible for the freshmen class and everyone else.”

For Houchin, that means leading by example, especially as the school deals with COVID-19.

“I think if we show how to act throughout the school year, I think that is one way to definitely leave a legacy and show how we can lead,” Houchin said.

As a freshman, Houchin joked with Solomon about running for student office. But now that he is in that role, he is not taking anything for granted, and it is not going unnoticed.

“He has a strong moral code and he uses it to guide every decision that he makes,” Cerreta said.

Before the school year started, Houchin wondered if he was going to be able to handle all the new responsibilities. On top of his role in student government, he also has responsibilities as a Peer Minister and with the school’s National Honor Society. But like most of what he has faced at Xavier, or in his life, he tries to keep an open perspective, and approach everything with the same level of optimism. And that willingness to jump right in and do whatever he can with the same smile on his face has helped him make a positive impact on his class and ensure he won’t be forgotten by his peers.

“He’s just always going to be there for you,” Solomon said. “He’s one of the most reliable kids I know.” 🌟

Liam Houchin '21



“He would literally bench himself if it made the team better. That’s the type of leader he is.”

–Coach Brian Fitzgerald '99

Leaving A Mark

Liam Houchin '21 Never Got To Play In A State Tournament Soccer Game During His Final Season With Xavier, But That Didn't Stop Him From Making An Impact

In September, Xavier soccer coach Brian Fitzgerald '99 named Liam Houchin '21 one of the team's three senior captains.

For Houchin, who had been a member of the team since his freshman year, it was a dream come true, but instead of preparing for a championship run, or the upcoming state tournament as so many captains before him have done, Houchin turned his attention to the future of Xavier, which didn't include him.

Despite the cancellation of the state tournament this fall because of COVID-19, Houchin still approached the season with the same intensity as if he was helping his team go for a state championship.



“The best thing I could do this season is to have the juniors and underclassmen step up a lot and realize they are important to the team,” Houchin said. “Going into this season with

a negative attitude wouldn't have gotten us anywhere. I think being able to adapt to how different this year is and keep a straight head is the most important thing I can do as a captain.”

Since the moment he arrived at Xavier as a freshman, Houchin has had a firsthand view of the program's resurgence. From the comeback season of 2018, where the team earned the No. 1 seed in the Class LL tournament, to 2019's 13-win campaign, the reliable center back has done everything he has been asked to help the program get back to the top of the state. And this past fall that meant taking an incredibly mature perspective on things.

“I just realized I might as well make the most of it,” Houchin said. “I wanted to relay to everyone a positive message.”

Surprising? Not for Fitzgerald and the coaching staff, who have always seen Houchin as the perfect blend of skill and leadership.

“That's typical Liam. He is always looking out for others. This kid does everything and then some to make the team better,” Fitzgerald said.



PLUGGED IN

At Xavier, Owen Padgett '21 Has Found The Confidence He Was Seeking

Sometime around the middle of his freshmen year, Owen Padgett '21 got up from his normal seat on the bus and started a conversation with classmate Rhys Snow.

Padgett, who had mostly kept to himself until that moment, is not sure what he said, but he certainly remembers why he did it.

"I knew there was so much more to get out of Xavier, so I took that first step to joining the Xavier community," Padgett said.

Over the last four years, Owen Padgett '21 has done more than just join the community – he's changed it.

A few years ago, Padgett, along with Tyler Sheehy '21, Nick Dighello '20, Billy Marquardt '19 and Brian Chua-Reyes '19, created the school's Esports team, which has become one of the most popular new activities at Xavier (not to mention one of its most successful).

"If you knew me as a freshmen and you met me now, you would wonder what happened. I think for me personally, there's been such immense growth from the Xavier experience."

"We span from Honors and AP kids to College Prep kids to kids that are involved in football or basketball or frisbee to those that don't necessarily do sports or a lot of clubs," Padgett said. "I think [Esports] brings together groups of people that wouldn't necessarily mingle and creates strong bonds between them. There's not really a group of people that can't get involved, so everyone who wants to do it does."

For Padgett, the team was a gamechanger. It gave him the chance to be a part of something bigger.

"There is no better advice when starting out at Xavier than to jump right in," Padgett said. "What held me back most freshmen year was the apprehension around the unknown and not knowing what to expect. But I think what helped me the most were the relationships that I formed

and the friends that I made that just convinced me to jump right in."

Since taking that leap, and taking on new responsibilities, Padgett has seen himself grow in different areas, too. After being a quiet kid in middle school, he has devoted time each month to helping kids through his church's Edge Core team, which helps middle school students build their faith through intentional relationships.

"I struggled to make lasting relationships, so I wanted to help others with that."

Padgett, who is part of the Life Teen program at St. Andrews Parish in Colchester, credits Xavier with helping to push him, but he has also gained confidence through unexpected ways, like through his lifelong passion for playing the bagpipes.

"Ever since I can remember, I've had the desire to play the bagpipes. It has just been something ingrained into my psyche," Padgett said. "As I learned to play

and grew more confident in my playing that also correlated into my confidence at Xavier making friends."

After getting a chanter (a learning instrument for the bagpipe) and lessons when he was 12, Padgett has gone from a Grade V piper (beginner) to Grade III (only 25 percent of pipers advance to this stage).

"It is something unique about me – something that not a lot of other people can share with others, but that's a gift I have," Padgett said. "There's not a lot of people that play the bagpipes, or even hear the bagpipes on a regular basis. But one of the biggest things I will carry with me always is the joy it gives me to share that with others."

Every night, Padgett says he practices for about 30-

45 minutes, and before the pandemic he met once a week with his band, the Manchester Pipe Band.

In 2019 at the New Hampshire Highland Games, Padgett was named the top overall piper for Grade IV. Padgett said he typically travels to competitions up and down the east coast during the summer.

"I think I'll do my best to play and keep this with me the rest of my life," Padgett said. "It has become a part of who I am."

Xavier's Esports team has made a similar impact on Padgett.

After getting the team running, Padgett has watched it morph into something much bigger than expected with three state titles in Rocket League and Smite.

When asked why the team has had such sudden success, he is quick to respond.

"While we might not have the best players in the state, I think that the brotherhood of the team and Xavier makes us more cohesive," Padgett said. "It was inevitable that with the bond we had as a team and as students and people that we would find success. ... In games like this, team work is paramount. There really is no better strategy than to just work together as a team and do your best."

For Padgett, that bond of brotherhood has made all the difference at Xavier.

"If you knew me as a freshmen and you met me now, you would wonder what happened," Padgett said. "I think for me personally, there's been such immense growth from the Xavier experience. There is just something about the Xavier community that constantly drives you to be the best version of yourself that you can be... I think the people here and the attitude here has been so good to me. There will never be a place that will hold the same place in my heart." 🌸





CARVING HIS OWN PATH

Pat O'Hanlon '21 Has Drawn On His Experiences As A Top-Ranked Moguls Skier To Become A Mature Leader At Xavier



WIPEOUTS. DIGGERS. YARD SALES.

If you are talking ski crashes, or whatever term you use to describe them, Pat O'Hanlon '21 has not only seen them all – he has experienced most of them.

Since he was old enough to put on skis, O'Hanlon has spent nearly every weekend from November to April hurling himself down a mountain to see how far the sport can take him in the freestyle discipline of moguls. And along the way, there have been bruises, lots of them, and plenty of crashes. But after every wipeout, O'Hanlon, who has competed against the best in the country in moguls, has gotten up, clicked back into his skis and done it all again for the sake of the sport he loves.

"I never really think about how much risk there is compared with other sports," O'Hanlon said. "I have grown up with it all around me and it is just kind of normal. It makes me feel like a little kid again. It is a lot of fun, flying through the air."

As a member of Stratton's Winter Sports Program Freestyle A team in Manchester, Vt., O'Hanlon has used that mix of fearlessness and dedication to rise to the top of his sport.

Last winter, O'Hanlon qualified for the U.S. Freestyle NorAm Tour, advanced to the U.S. moguls' selections competition in Steamboat Springs, Colo., and was ranked 40th in the country in moguls.

"Skiing has helped create a lot of bonds and given me a lot of life experiences. It is a big community like Xavier."

When asked what got him there, O'Hanlon made a joke.

"I just put in the work and hiked the jump a lot more than anyone else," he said.

For the last eight years, O'Hanlon has been putting in the work, and then some. Since joining the Stratton Freestyle team as a teenager, O'Hanlon has spent his winter weekends in Vermont and his summers traveling to Mt. Hood in Oregon and Lake Placid in N.Y. And when he is not on the mountain or traveling, he is working out at his home, watching videos and thinking about the runs he's going to make.

"I set the bar really high when I was really young," O'Hanlon said. "I wanted to be in the Olympics."

Still, you would not know it if you met O'Hanlon at Xavier, where he plays lacrosse and is a member of the Empower Leadership Club.

As bold as he is on the mountain, O'Hanlon is as quiet and unassuming off it. Besides his close friends, few know of his skills on the slopes.

"What's the point about bragging about it? It is kind of a different world," O'Hanlon said. "Skiing has helped create a lot of bonds and given me a lot of life experiences. It is a big community like Xavier."

At Xavier, Dean of Students Nicholas Cerreta '01 has seen O'Hanlon use those life experiences to become a better leader.

"Over the years, [O'Hanlon] has grown into such a dynamic leader," Cerreta said. "He started out as such a shy and timid young man. As the years have gone on he has matured into such a confident, outgoing, and genuine leader. He is always looking out for others or doing things to bring happiness into other people's lives."

Last year, that maturity was on display when he was forced to deal with a devastating injury.

After finally qualifying for the NorAm tour last winter, O'Hanlon tore his ACL on Jan. 26 and missed the rest of the season. But instead of dwelling on the loss of his season and the painful injury, he dedicated himself to a comeback.

"I definitely knew I was going to ski again," O'Hanlon said. "There was no way I wasn't going to ski again for the rest of my life."

So he stayed focused, went to physical therapy, and did his exercises. And after having ACL surgery on March 17, he was cleared to ski again this fall. For O'Hanlon, the sport meant too much to him to just give up on it.

"It has given me an appreciation for hard work and all the people I have met. It is really a great community," O'Hanlon said.

As memorable as O'Hanlon's success has been on the slopes, it is the skiing community that reminds him why he fell in love with the sport in the first place.

Growing up, he loved just exploring the mountains and being with like-minded skiers. Now as he prepares for his final season (he will not compete in college), O'Hanlon wants to give that sense of joy and adventure to the younger members of the Stratton Freestyle team.

"There are a lot of younger kids that see me as a role model," O'Hanlon said. "Before I leave, I want to inspire them and help the program however I can."

For those that know him at Xavier, it is not a surprise. When he was a sophomore on the lacrosse team, several upperclassmen, including Brendan Buckley '19, Jake Wozynek '19 and Trevor Earley '19, looked after O'Hanlon and served as role models. And ever since, he has been motivated to be the same type of leader for others.

"[O'Hanlon] has such a big heart," Cerreta said. "He spreads joy and love wherever he goes and has the incredible ability to always be able to put a smile on someone's face because of something he said or did for them. If I ever had a son, I would want him to be just like [O'Hanlon]."



INSTRUMENTAL *Relationship*

When twin brothers Anthony and Brian Satrohan, Class of 2021, were four years old, they started to play the piano.

"They were told they were gifted from the beginning," said their mother, Sharon.

Music has always been a big part of their lives – each can play multiple instruments – and among the beneficiaries of that is Xavier High School.

"In many ways, Anthony and Brian Satrohan have been the glue that has held the concert band together," music teacher Erik Elligers said.

"Both students are extremely talented musicians and have a deep love of music.

"With Anthony on tuba and Brian on percussion, they play a vital role in the group as the foundation of the ensemble's sound. Without competent musicians on those instruments, the rest of the band is not able to play with proper time and intonation. Anthony and Brian lead by example with strong musicianship, but they also lead their sections (low brass and percussion, respectively) by being patient and great teachers to other students. In doing so, they raise the level of musicianship across the board and help the entire concert band achieve a better sound."

Their talent extends beyond the walls of Xavier.

"In addition to his outstanding performance in the percussion section at Xavier, Brian also auditioned and was accepted to perform on mallet instruments in the Southern Regional concert band in January

2020. Anthony auditioned and was accepted to perform tuba in the Southern Regional Concert Band in January 2019 and 2020," Elligers said.

"Both students are also very talented as multi-instrumentalists. Brian has been a member of the Jazz Ensemble II for the past three years, with two years playing the drum set

and one year on electric bass. Anthony also participated in the Jazz Ensemble II on trombone for two years."

Anthony said the music program is very inclusive, whether you have little experience or are a seasoned performer.

"No matter what level you are, Mr. Elligers always challenges you to get better," Anthony said.

If Brian had to choose one instrument he said it probably would be the drums.



"In many ways, Anthony and Brian Satrohan have been the glue that has held the concert band together"

— Erik Elligers, Music Teacher

"The rhythmic bass of drums is what I use in all my other instrumentation," Brian said. "Especially guitar and bass, I like to get a very rhythmic feel in my playing, and if I lost my ability to feel rhythm like a drummer I don't feel like I could see music the same way."

There's something innate about how a musician feels the music, just as there is something natural about the bond between twins.

Brian said he often feels emotions more strongly in the presence of Anthony. "I can't explain it, honestly," he said. "It just hits me more when he is there."

Anthony also described the bond as "more like an emotional thing," yet difficult to put into words.

Their mother, Sharon, said they have always been very close.

"For instance, they have separate rooms," Sharon said. "They'll come out wearing the same outfits."

As they grow older, they have developed their own personalities.

"We used to do a lot of things the same, and dress the same, but we've developed different interests so we don't act the same as much as we used to," Anthony said.

Yet, some things don't change. They'll still get mistaken for one another at times. And they mirror each other academically.

Both won the Celestine Medal their freshman year (overall final average of A with no grade less than an A-minus in their major subjects). Both are Distinguished Scholars, members of multiple Honor Societies and each has been on the Headmaster's List at the end of their first three years here. That means they each finished the year with a final GPA of at least 3.75 with no final grade less than a B.

Both are members of the Peer Ministry Team and each attended XLI this summer, which is the Xavier Leadership Institute. So did their brother Reid Paiva, also in his senior year. Cole Paiva '19 also had gone to XLI.

"Cole said it was good, and I wanted to be a Big Falcon, be a role model for freshmen coming in," Anthony said. "They don't know anyone, the building is new, the classes are new. I want to be there to guide them through that." 🌻



REFLECTIVE, INSIGHTFUL, HARD-WORKING, CURIOUS, AMBITIOUS

*Aidan Higgins '22
Is A New-Age Explorer*



AIDAN HIGGINS '22 HAS BEEN CURIOUS SINCE HE WAS A TODDLER.

"Aidan has always enjoyed thinking and questioning," his mother, Patty, said. "He was the 3-year-old boy saying I just don't understand; there's no way Santa can make it all around the world in one night, can you explain that? There were many questions my answers did not satisfy for Aidan. He always approached things from a different angle. When he was two, someone accidentally turned off the light, and he said, 'Who turned the dark on?' Comments like that were frequent for Aidan."

His father, Matt, echoed those sentiments.

"He was always inquisitive and never accepted superficial explanations for the answers to any topic," Matt said. "Whether it related to behavioral matters of right and wrong or how best to move a soccer ball up the playing field. Aidan had to get to the fundamental mechanics and foundation of the matter to make sense of it."

His parents contributed to that thirst for knowledge by making sure

"He was always inquisitive and never accepted superficial explanations for the answers to any topic."

—MATT HIGGINS, AIDAN'S FATHER

TV and video games were not a part of his life. They gave him access to the internet, with guidelines.

"Aidan used the internet to explore topics of interest much like the early explorers used ships and the sea to discover new and different people, places and cultures," his father said. "With the world wide web as his ocean and an Apple computer his ship, Aidan was free to read, watch and explore. We provided him with a blank check to responsibly purchase any book he wanted from any bookstore, retail or online."

Aidan loves to read, write and watch films, which feeds his passion for storytelling. Last year he entered and won the William F. Buckley Jr. Fall Essay Contest, open to all high school students in the United States.

"Xavier has definitely fostered Aidan's enjoyment of writing, thinking and questioning," his mother said.

When it comes to current events, Higgins said he does not like being out of the loop. So this summer he worked hard to prepare and launch a website (www.KeepUpNews.com).

"None of us has the time to sift through every single news site and source; finding what you really need to read is half the battle," Higgins said.

Working with Rob Mullins '22, they provide quick summaries of the major stories of the day with a link to the source's reporting.

"Aidan truly enjoys learning and seeking knowledge," his mother said. "Even when he is not in school, he seeks opportunities to learn. He independently took a yearlong coding boot camp so that he could learn to code a website

for his company. Aidan has told me personally 'that the pursuit of truth in its many forms and expressions is my foremost directive.'"

What also shaped that idea was freshman Civics class with Brother Thomas Ryan, C.F.X.

"Brother Ryan, almost every day for about five minutes, would go through the major events that happened the day before in the news and in American politics," Higgins said. "And when I was taking that class, I was more knowledgeable about current events and understood more about the political climate than I had before.

"He's really amazing, and it's a great class to take as a freshman because you really need to understand how government works to understand the modern political climate and history."

Xavier Academic Dean Kyle St. George, who has taught Higgins and worked with him on the school newspaper, The Kestrel, has called him "reflective, insightful, hard-working, curious and ambitious."

Higgins also enjoys nature and hiking.

"Aidan spent every possible moment in our back woods when he was younger," Patty said. "He has also always been interested in wild animals, and their protection. ... I think Aidan's connection to nature spurred him to become involved in activities at Xavier that encourage protection of the environment, such as founding the Xavier

chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, in which he organizes beach clean ups to protect the ocean, as well as joining the Recycling Club."

This year at the Opening of School Mass in September Higgins was awarded an academic scholarship for having the highest unweighted grade point average in his class for the 2019-2020 school year.

As we look back to Mr. St. George calling Higgins curious we think about this part of our conversation with Aidan. He said he was seeking answers in middle school that he could not get, which caused him to fall away from his Catholic faith. That changed when he got to Xavier. He mentioned his religion teachers helping him understand, restore and grow in his faith. He also said Mr. St. George's freshman Honors English class played a large role in the formation of his world views and the understanding of his moral code.

"My teachers in general have helped foster my interests," Higgins said. "Xavier has done a lot for me, and the teachers here are amazing, absolutely amazing. So is the curriculum; it builds off what has come the year before."

Higgins said he wants to go a liberal arts college to "expose myself to as many varying beliefs as possible, as many varying intellects and backgrounds as possible, so I can further understand the world.

"Once I accumulate enough knowledge I will accumulate enough wisdom, and once I accumulate enough wisdom I'll know how to be happy. Wisdom leads to happiness, and happiness is a shared goal of every human."

Sounds reflective and insightful, just as Mr. St. George said he was.

Whatever Higgins does in the future his mother is sure of a few things.

"Aidan loves to create, and he is always coming up with new goals and ideas," Patty said. "When he sets a goal, he will fight tooth and nail to reach it."

Higgins lives in the Rockfall section of Middlefield, so he's not far from Wadsworth Falls State Park, which has trails leading to a reward, a roaring waterfall. There also are trails around the Wadsworth Mansion at Long Hill. We can just picture a novel set against these backdrops.

So, Aidan, give us an insight into what story you'd tell in a novel, if you choose to write one. A pause.

"I don't want to give away my secrets." 🌸



ALL THE TOOLS

Whether He's In The Classroom Or Playing A Sport, Drew Kron '22 Brings The Same Level Of Discipline

Drew Kron '22 earned varsity letters in basketball and baseball as a freshman. As a sophomore he was the starting quarterback on the varsity football team. These things don't happen often.

Then again, a student-athlete of Kron's ability and character only comes along every so often. At the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, after COVID-19 had thrown a curveball to all students, Kron did what he usually does. He handled it, ensuring that he would end up on the Headmaster's List, which meant he had a year-end grade-point average of 3.75 or higher, with no course average below a B.

Kron had a formula: he'd start the day with schoolwork, get in a good workout in the early afternoon, then wrap up the day with schoolwork.

In the summer he played for the CT Rivals AAU baseball team, which gave him even more of a spotlight. In a big tournament in early August called the Future Games he went 4-for-7 with two home runs, two singles, five stolen bases, four runs scored and four RBI. A scouting report from Prep Baseball Report said Kron "is a very skilled player, as there is not much he can't do on the field."

By mid-August, even before his junior year began, he had made a verbal commitment to play baseball at UConn.

Baseball coach/Dean of Students Nick Cerreta '01 and football coach/social studies teacher Andy Guyon, contacted separately, had virtually the same thing to say about Kron. They mentioned character, integrity, work ethic, leadership, the ability to rise to the occasion and instill confidence in others.

"Drew is a special young man," Cerreta said. "His work ethic in the classroom and on the diamond is second to none."

Said Guyon: "Drew lives the Xavier mission in *all* that he does."

Kron said he thinks sports has helped him with academics and vice versa.

"If you have a bad day or a bad quiz or test, you can't get down on yourself," Kron said. "You have to work harder and fix what you need to fix. Just like in sports, if you have a bad game, you have to fix what needs to be fixed. So I see a lot of similarities between the two, with discipline, and having the same mentality for everything, trying to be the best you can be in whatever you do."

Had he pursued the game, we'd certainly be writing about his basketball exploits. Kron hit a buzzer-beating, game-winning shot in a one-point win over Glastonbury in a freshman game.

"He is certainly a great athlete and, yes, he could play any sport," Xavier varsity basketball coach Mike Kohs '84 said. "He could flat-out score. We certainly would have loved for him to stick with hoops."

Kron has been on the radar of college coaches for a while.

"He has always been a self-motivated individual," his father Ken said. "He knows what he wants, and what he needs to get there. He knows the importance of education and fully understands the impact of getting good grades. He also knew the better he did the more opportunities he'd have."

Schools such as North Carolina, Duke, Xavier and St. John's wanted him for baseball. Since he had two years of varsity football remaining, those options were still developing. But in the end he wanted baseball, and he wanted UConn. He said it just felt right as he was very comfortable with Coach Jim Penders and staff. As Kron said, now that he has committed he can concentrate on getting ready for the next level.

By the time he gets to Storrs, UConn's new on-campus baseball facility will be open. The 1,500-seat state-of-the-art stadium was scheduled to open last March, but COVID-19 forced cancellation of the UConn baseball season, so the stadium will open in the spring of 2021.

It's conceivable he could try to play baseball and football at UConn, but any such decisions are a ways off.

Kron also has his sights set on UConn's competitive business program.

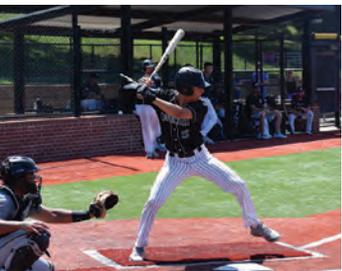
"Xavier opened a lot of doors for me," Kron said.

And behind those doors he said he has found life lessons: be respectful, be early, be organized, live the same way each day.

"Xavier has taught me how to speak, how to act ... which has helped me a lot, whether it's talking to coaches or other adults; raising my maturity level, that all came through Xavier," Kron said. 🌸

"Drew is a special young man. His work ethic in the classroom and on the diamond is second to none."

-Nick Cerreta, Xavier Dean of Students and baseball coach



LESSONS FROM HOME

Inspired By His Mother, A Captain In The Hartford Fire Department, Malcolm Wilson-Toliver '21 Is Always Working To Become A Better Person

As a freshman, Malcolm Wilson-Toliver '21 was all over the place.

He was missing homework assignments, leaving his belongs scattered throughout the school, and struggling to keep up with the demands of being a Xavier student.

Before long, his math teacher at the time, Dan DeConti '01, had seen enough, and pulled him aside one day after class.

"He told me: 'Look man, you're not going to be here long if you don't get this right,'" Wilson-Toliver said. "I appreciated that. To be honest, it sounded like the conversations I have with my mom."

If there are two things that appeal to Wilson-Toliver it is his mother, Shelly L. Carter, a captain in the Hartford Fire Department, and some good old-fashioned directness. So with DeConti's push, he made some changes.

"I buckled down, put my shoes on and stopped acting like a child, and just started working," Wilson-Toliver said.

Whether it is taking on a difficult subject in school or deciding to give a new sport like wrestling a try as a junior, Wilson-Toliver has never backed away from a challenge. Since coming to Xavier, he has approached everything with that same conviction. If there is a way to get through something, he will find it.

"Malcolm is a competitor, and he approached his improvement in the classroom as a competitor," DeConti said. "Some days were great and everything clicked and on other days he struggled but he never let those struggles or missteps prevent him from continuing to work. Malcolm's willingness to push himself and work hard in the classroom is a direct example of his wanting to always compete."

At Xavier, Wilson-Toliver has seen his grades improve steadily, and his impact grow on the various teams he has been a part of, football, basketball, track and field, and most recently wrestling. Last winter, he competed for the first time and helped Xavier win a state wrestling championship. And through it all, he's tried to keep the same mantra.

"Do what you want to do and give it 100 percent – that's what my mom taught me," Wilson-Toliver said.

This spring that mindset was tested.

With his mom working in Hartford and the pandemic spreading, Wilson-Toliver and his younger brothers temporarily moved to Cincinnati to live with his older brother, Miles, where his mother thought they would be safest. What was originally supposed to be two weeks turned to one month, then two months, and finally in the end four months.

"It was not fun," Wilson-Toliver said. "It was bearing down on me that maybe I wasn't going to see my mom. I would sit in my room and cry. I was sad."

Stuck in a place he did not know and unable to work out or see friends, he gained weight, and became depressed.

"I could physically feel myself getting larger," Wilson-Toliver said. "It is not comfortable. I hated it. I knew this wasn't me."

When he left Connecticut for Ohio, Wilson-Toliver was 260 pounds. When he returned, he was 315 pounds. However, through it all, he knew he had to be strong for his younger brothers, Brendon and Brandon.

"You learn by going through things," Wilson-Toliver said. "I learned how to be an older brother by having a hard time being an older brother. I knew I had to be strong for them."

Since returning to Connecticut, Wilson-Toliver, who now weighs 280, has looked back on those days in Cincinnati at the start of the pandemic and tried to be a better person.

"Before I left, it was Malcolm, Malcolm, and Malcolm. Malcolm is doing this, Malcolm is doing that, but then I realized that is not always about Malcolm," Wilson-Toliver said. "You cannot sit here and make an assumption that it is always about you. If it is always about you, what is the point? What is the point in having a team?"

Sports have certainly helped.

After returning to Xavier this summer for football conditioning, Wilson-Toliver started to feel better.

"You never know how important something is until you don't have it," Wilson-Toliver said. "This type of stuff is not a quick fix, this type of stuff takes maybe years to get back to your normal self, but I know I need people around me. That is what I was missing in Cincinnati. My mother says it takes a village to raise one kid. And I'm still kid."

A kid becoming a young man, who seeks to help others. Take football this past season.

Although 11-on-11 competition was canceled this fall for Xavier football, Wilson-Toliver still approached the season committed to his team.

"I may not be able to have a season (the teams may get to play this winter in an alternative season), but that does not mean my younger teammates won't have a season later on," Wilson-Toliver said. "I want to be a good role model and treat people like their brothers. I need to be strong for them. I want to give them a sense of happiness. I want them to be happy. I want them to know I care about them and everybody on the team cares about them."

This heightened maturity may have been kicked into gear because of his recent experiences, but Wilson-Toliver has always had strong role models to follow. He credits his father Brainard Carter for always setting a positive example ("he taught me that life is punishing and you have to work through it"), and his mom for constantly motivating him.

"I used to wake up and want to be the Hulk when I got older. She's basically the hulk to me – I want to be like her," Wilson-Toliver said about his mom. "She loves everyone, even the people that don't love her. She believes that if you love people, eventually good things are going to come your way. That is what my mom has taught me. If you willingly give yourself, good things are going to happen."

At Xavier, he is trying to live that same message.

"If you strip down all the sports and the championships and the medals and everything else, it is really about what you brought to the table that makes you special," Wilson-Toliver said. "I believe I can bring joy and smiles. That is what I feel I have been brought here to do." 🌟





Owen Ou '21 and Alan Liang '23



Jason Li '22 starts his school day at 8:15 p.m. and ends it at 2:26 a.m., when most of us are fast asleep. He's about 7,000 miles away from Randolph Road.

In June, after his sophomore year at Xavier, Li went home to China. He planned to come back in August for the start of the 2020-2021 school year but could not because of COVID-19 travel restrictions. He is participating in Xavier's live, online distance learning, but there's a 12-hour time difference.



"I normally go to sleep between 4-5 a.m., and wake up at 11 a.m.," Li said on an early October day. "It's not a hard job for me.

In the past, no matter in China or in America, I always study until late at night. At the same time, I still have seven hours to sleep. So, it's not hard for me."

That would seem to be a sacrifice, going to school at strange hours, sleeping at strange hours.

"I don't actually think I'm making a sacrifice," Li said. "I am really glad to have the opportunity to study at Xavier High School."

Leaving home and heading off to college is tough enough, but what about being thousands of miles away from home in a strange country attending high school. And then not being able to go back home for the summer because of the uncertainty with the coronavirus. That's the case for Alan Liang '23 and Owen Ou '21 who stayed in the U.S. and thus have been separated from their family longer. That's called growing up fast. It takes courage.

"You have to figure things out; you have to learn how to solve things," Ou said.

Host families are there to help. So, too, is Xavier, as it is with any student.

Ou said what he misses about home besides his parents is the Chinese New Year. While Xavier cannot replicate that, it traditionally has gathered the students from China who attend Xavier and Mercy to celebrate the Chinese New Year in February with food and fellowship.

SEPARATED BY MILES BUT NOT BY MORALS

International Students Remain Committed To Xavier

"Teachers and staff have done a lot for me," Li said. "They helped me adapt to the new life in the first year. For the second year, they supported me with my grades a lot. And now, with this special year, they have helped me with remote learning."

Each year Xavier's international students seek to expand their horizons while preparing themselves for the future. The Xavier experience starts but does not end with education.

"There are really good teachers here, and good friends, and interesting clubs and sports," Liang said.

He remembers back to last year when he played the xylophone with the band at some home football games. A smile comes to his face. "That made me happy," he said.

Ou has not seen his family in over a year. It's a sacrifice made while looking down the road. He has his sights set on attending Brandeis and majoring in biology. He'd like to play tennis there, a sport he plays at Xavier.

"You don't only represent yourself; you represent your Xavier community," Ou said of tennis. "You want to show the best of you and the team when playing an opponent."

Many international students want to go to college in the U.S. and figure Xavier will help get them there. Xavier wants to help these students and knows they add yet another dimension to a community that brings together young men from all over the state. Xavier has 20 international students this year.

"Over the past six years, we have been fortunate to have just over 50 students attend Xavier

We hoped that our son, Jason, would become a young man who has excellence in scholarship, leadership and service. And we believed Xavier would be the best place for him to develop the skills and self-discipline needed for his future life. -Wenhua Wang, mother of Jason Li '22

from seven countries," Director of Admissions Nick Grasso '05 said. "I am greatly impressed with how these students have taken on the challenge of attending school in another country, whether it be for one year or four years. They have forged relationships across so many domains and are very much woven into the fabric of our community."

Li said he could have gone to a number of U.S. schools but felt Xavier was the right choice. So did his mother, Wenhua Wang, when they visited in 2018.

"I observed that students at Xavier were disciplined and polite," she said. "We hoped that our son, Jason, would become a young man who has excellence in scholarship, leadership and service. And we believed Xavier would be the best place for him to develop the skills and self-discipline needed."

Last year as a sophomore Li demonstrated leadership and service; he started to help other Chinese students acclimate to Xavier. And he certainly has self-discipline, starting school at 8:15 at night.

"I helped the new students know what they should do every part of the day. Also, if we had the same class, I helped them understand what the teacher was talking about if they have language obstacles," Li said. "I feel I have done something valuable with my advantage [helping other Chinese students]."

Li gets around the lack of in-person contact by emailing teachers, using WeChat to talk

to his Chinese classmates and Instagram to communicate with his American classmates.

The one advantage to not being in school?

"I don't need to bring a backpack full of books with me every day," Li said. 🌸



W

hat is your favorite thing about Xavier High School, Ethan Kerr was asked. The answer came quickly.

“The community,” Kerr said. “Definitely the community. There is always someone willing to help you out, and someone to look out for you, and someone for you to look out for, to make sure they’re doing well.”

The words “community” and “brotherhood” and “bonds” and “family” are oft-repeated by current students and alumni.

So why isn’t that just another cliché? It’s easy to toss words around. Why is that the reality of Xavier?

“It goes to the core of Xavier,” Kerr, Class of 2020, said. “Above everything else there is that community, the idea of working together and helping each other out. For me everything else stemmed from that — sports, academics — and that’s why I wouldn’t consider it a cliché.”

Xavier students quickly learn the importance of service to the outside world, of helping others. And it starts right here in the hallways of their own school, informally and formally.

One formal element is the Big Falcon-Little Falcon program that was established in 1993 when Brother Lawrence Harvey, C.F.X., was principal (the program originally was to be called Big Brother-Little Brother, but that met with concern from the Big Brothers organization).

“Freshman orientation, which was basically planned by seniors, did a great job at introducing ninth graders and transfers to the school, but we were looking at a way to accompany students beyond just that initial orientation,” Brother Harvey said.

Brother Harvey said one of the successes of the program was that “we were enhancing the mission of Xavier and furthering the culture of brotherhood that had always been a hallmark of the school.”

There is one of those words again – “brotherhood.”

The program is now a long established tradition.

“The benefits are numerous,” Director of Admissions Nick Grasso ’05 said. “One of the main ones is that it preserves the culture of Xavier where the upperclassmen help acclimate the freshmen to the school. They show them how everyone treats each other with respect and compassion. The seniors are able to empathize with the freshmen because they were in their shoes not too long ago.

“The values of the Xaverian Brothers charism shines through in the program. The seniors share their zeal for the school and activities that they do; a trusting relationship is quickly established; humility calls the seniors to an attitude of service; the simple things the seniors do (say hi in the hallway, text one another, etc.) make a big difference.”



The Culture Of Brotherhood

BIG FALCON-LITTLE FALCON PROGRAM TEACHES CARE, CONCERN & COMMUNITY

Big Falcon Hogan Beatty, another 2020 grad, surprised his Little Falcon on his birthday during the 2019-20 school year.

“Alex London’s birthday was on a Saturday, so I came in with cupcakes to celebrate his birthday on Friday and share them with his friends,” Beatty said.

Van Augur ’16 stayed in touch with Pier Bos ’19 throughout Bos’s time at Xavier and now that Bos is at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

“I frequently visited Xavier whenever I was home from school, and he was always one of the first guys I’d see. We’d always chat for a little bit, and stayed in touch throughout his college application process.

“It goes to the core of Xavier. Above everything else there is that community, the idea of working together and helping each other out.”

–Ethan Kerr ’20

“Relatively early on in Pier’s high school career, I felt he had gotten to a point where I had little left I could ‘teach’ him as a Big Falcon. Today, I think I’ve learned just as much (if not more) about myself and my faith from him than he has from me. He’s truly a stellar guy.”

Teaching, caring, it’s all a part of being a Big Falcon.

During the Xavier Leadership Institute in August, Dean of Students Nick Cerreta ’01 talked about the importance of the program to the more than 70 seniors who attended the weeklong program. One such senior was Nate Barber, who remains in contact with his Big Falcon to this day. Now it’s his turn to pass it along.

“I want to be just like my Big Falcon was, reach out all the time, and hopefully I’ll have the same relationship I had with mine so that four years later we’re still friends, still talking to each other,” Barber said.

Xavier finds out the interests of the freshmen and tries to match them up with seniors who are involved in those activities or sports. Each year the freshmen are asked about their experiences with their Big Falcon, and that data reveals such things as:

“He is a great mentor and a great friend.” ... “He’s just been kind.” ... “He’s helped me know more of what my year will be like.” ... “He’s given me tips on how to challenge myself.” ... “He drives me to school everyday and got me into the drama program.”

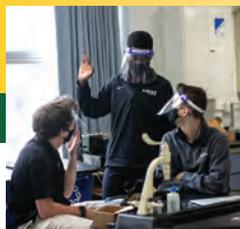
Care and concern. Not a cliché. A community. 🌸



FACING COVID-19 WITH ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020

MARCH 2020



On **March 12**, we left Xavier High School as a community unaware of what would come next. But from **March 10 to October 10**, the Xavier community came together and faced the pandemic together.

The key words during it all? **ADAPTABILITY** and **FLEXIBILITY**.

No matter what challenge appeared, the entire Xavier community stayed true to the Xaverian Mission. Here's a timeline of some of the most significant moments from the last eight months...

Tuesday, March 10: In an unprecedented move, the CIAC canceled all winter sports tournaments. The postseason for boys basketball and hockey had yet to begin; the Xavier swim team had just won the SCC championship for the first time in history but could go no further.

Thursday, March 12: The final time students are in the building for classes in the 2019-2020 school year.

Friday, March 13: Teachers have a professional development day on virtual distance learning.



Friday, March 13: The Mercy and Xavier Theater Program performs the one and only performance of "Mamma Mia!" in front of a small crowd of mainly family members.

Tuesday, March 17: Virtual distance learning commences for students and teachers.

Monday, March 23: The first video by Director of Campus Ministry Peter Lyons gets emailed to students, parents, faculty and staff along with a daily prayer provided by Brother Philip Revell, C.F.X. "One of our concerns going into quarantine was staying connected with our students. This was a simple way to provide a small connection every day," Lyons said of the video that was posted on YouTube and social media, and contained such elements as a scripture lesson, a prayer, a challenge, even a joke at the end. The name of the video became "The Unfortunate Adventure," and they would continue through the end of the school year.

APRIL

Thursday, April 16: Xavier is about a month into online distance learning, to which Headmaster Dave Eustis says, "I give great kudos to both our faculty and students. Both groups have had to jump outside of their comfort zone and shift the paradigm from in-person learning to online learning. It takes a complete team effort from planning to technology to curriculum development to deliver this product in a seamless manner."

Tuesday, April 28: Seniors and parents of seniors return to the school to pick up graduation lawn signs.



MAY

Monday, May 4: The Xavier Art & Photography Show opens for the first time as a digital gallery behind the work of the students, retiring art teacher Jayne Vitale and photography club moderator Bill Braychak.

Tuesday, May 5: The CIAC officially cancels the spring sports season in Connecticut once Gov. Ned Lamont announces that all schools will remain closed for the rest of the year.

Tuesday, May 5: The Academic Awards Night, held in the gym each year, is shifted to a digital production. The ceremony is for the freshmen, sophomore and junior classes. The senior awards would be announced after the Baccalaureate Mass as efforts are made to keep senior events as special as possible.

"Our world has changed dramatically in the past two months," Principal Brendan Donohue said. "We never anticipated being separated from our school community. We never anticipated following strict social-distancing guidelines and attending a virtual school. We never thought we would have to worry about things we always took for granted and wonder when we would see one another again. It has certainly been a challenge filled with fear and anxiety. However, with every challenge we are given an opportunity to respond and it is our choice how we respond. As principal of Xavier High School, I am immensely proud of the response of our faculty, staff, and our students."

MAY (CONTINUED)

Saturday, May 9: All spring sports athletes are honored. The lights are turned on at Larry McHugh Field at 8 p.m. and the names of our senior spring athletes are announced at 8:20 p.m. (20:20 military time). This event is closed to spectators but streamed on Xavier social media platforms.

Friday, May 22: The Baccalaureate Mass premieres on YouTube. Special awards and recognition for the senior class immediately follow.

Saturday, May 23: The Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2020 premieres on YouTube at the typical time of a normal graduation.

Sunday, May 24: A special Conferring of Diplomas Ceremony on the Xavier campus for all seniors and their immediate families is held with COVID-19 protocols in place. Seniors get the chance to celebrate graduation (although briefly) at Xavier.

JUNE

Monday, June 15: The Xavier Music Department premiered the first performance in its Virtual Music Series called "Spring" by the Strings Ensemble. A month later, the Xavier Chorus released their version of the classic: "I Saw The Light." Both were streamed over social media.



JULY

Monday, July 6: Xavier Summer Camps begin again, but with COVID-19 protocols in place for the safety of campers.



Wednesday, July 15: The annual Signing Day Ceremony, which was postponed early in the year, goes outside. In an effort to honor all future college athletes and stick to COVID-19 protocols, 13 student athletes are honored throughout the day at different times with only family in attendance.

AUGUST

Saturday, August 8: Wearing masks and adhering to COVID-19 protocols, the Class of 2020 came together at Xavier one last time for a farewell picnic.



Sunday, August 9: The 49th XLI in school history is held at Xavier High School. Despite not being an overnight retreat, and the change of location, the same practices and traditions return for the normal four days. The faculty once again wins the tug-of-war, masks and all.

Wednesday, August 26: It was a different type of Falcon Blast, but the annual event went off with several modifications.

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday, September 8: First day of school for all classes. This is the first time the entire student body has been in the building in about six months. The school has undertaken extensive COVID-19 precautions and implemented many protocols.



Monday, September 14: The Opening of School Mass is live-streamed into the classrooms from the gym. Father Frank Gilbert '74 officiates. The 58th year of school at Xavier is officially underway.

Wednesday, September 16: The football season is officially canceled after much back-and-forth, leaving soccer and cross country as the CIAC fall sports at Xavier.

Wednesday, September 16: The fall sports season Mass is held outside at Larry McHugh Field with students spaced apart in the bleachers and the altar on the field.



OCTOBER

Friday, October 2: The Cross Country and Soccer teams kick off the fall competition schedule with new protocols (limited fans, proper social-distancing) and victories. ❁

“If God were to give us an 11th commandment. I believe it would read: **Thou shall not be a bystander.**”

—Deacon Art Miller, The Archdiocese of Hartford

THE YEAR 2020 BROUGHT THE ISSUE OF RACIAL INJUSTICE FRONT AND CENTER. Although the quote by Deacon Miller was issued well before 2020, it certainly speaks to us today.

Xavier has long taught its students to treat each other with dignity and respect, that name-calling, bullying and hurtful language will never be tolerated.

“Xavier prides itself on being a school for everyone,” Headmaster Dave Eustis said. “Everyone has a voice and deserves the respect of the entire community. As our mission states, we focus on Christian values, and seek to support every student in his growth as a human being and to instill in him a sense of responsibility for the gifts which are his.”

Principal Brendan Donohue addressed students regarding racial respect during student orientations in September. Each class had a separate assembly at the start of the school year devoted specifically to Catholic social teaching, compassion, and respect for all in which Dean of Students Nick Cerreta and Principal Donohue addressed the students. Racial respect and compassion were communicated in a letter home to the parents from Principal Donohue.

“The death of George Floyd in May set off a series of events forcing us all to re-examine our own personal views on race and race relations, and the views of our nation as a whole,” Principal Donohue told the students as the school year opened. “The effects of the events that followed Mr. Floyd’s death and the deaths of several others have created significant civil unrest in

our country, leaving many to wonder how we can help to begin to heal these divisions. We, as a Catholic and Xaverian community, are obliged to examine our own practices and prejudices and to ask ourselves if we are part of the problem or part of the solution.

“All of us are called to treat one another with respect and with the human dignity with which we were all created by God. This will be a major theme for our school this year, and I am calling on all of you to take on the mantle of racial respect for all and to make sure racism has no place in our community.”

Deacon Miller came to Xavier before the start of the school year to talk to the faculty and staff about racial respect. He previously spoke to students in 2019, challenging them, but in reality all of us.

“There’s a big difference in what we say we will do and then actually doing it,” Deacon Miller told the students that January day in 2019. “It’s easy to say may the peace of Christ be with you, but will you do it out there when no one is looking at you.”

He echoed that in a late September phone conversation, using a football analogy. He said that while we learn things in various ways, at home, in school, at church, that is in effect the locker room. But the game is not played in the locker room. The game is played on the field, in real life situations. That’s when you need to stand up. If you see or hear something wrong, say something, do something.

“It’s a lifestyle,” Deacon Miller said. “You need to be an advocate for anti-racism all the time. No matter where you are, you live that. It is not what you say, but who you are ... and what you say comes from who you are.”

Xavier also started a new tradition this year, and will focus each year on one of the five Xaverian values. This year that value is compassion, defined in part by the XBSS network as the “tenderness of heart” that helps us “to see and hear the needs of all.” Compassion was chosen in part due to the racial tension in the country.

One of the initiatives for the Academic Council this year is to examine each department’s curriculum regarding racial respect and make changes deemed necessary; Campus Ministry will address racial respect in retreat programs; and the Cultural Diversity Committee will work toward monitoring and enhancing racial respect programming throughout the school environment.

In July the school administration met with three black Xavier alums, Bernie Hallums ’81, a member of the Board of Directors and a retired Manchester police officer; Alondre Rush ’07, a financial planner and assistant football coach at Xavier; and Parrish Holloman ’15, president of the Middlesex County NAACP Youth Council; to talk about ways of engaging the Xavier community on the issue of racial respect. Those meetings are ongoing.

Holloman says he keeps going back to the phrase, “See me as me.”

“Don’t look at people based on their circumstances, treat them as human beings, help them, don’t assume,” Holloman said. “They say ignorance is bliss, but not when it comes to racial respect. Even if you are afforded the chance not to have to deal with this, we need advocates. We need people to say, ‘I have this privilege. I don’t understand. People are not racist toward me, but I

want to help people who go through this.’ We need people to be active.”

Hallums said it is important for Xavier students to realize “you are part of an environment that will give you more tools in your life skills toolbox. Take advantage of them, understand that Xavier is inclusive of everyone, and let that education take you through the rest of your life.”

Hallums also said people need to look at themselves.

“How are we raising our children, and what are we teaching ... that there are some visual differences but we’re all the same, or are we doing something opposite of that?” Hallums said.

Rush hopes that we, as a country, stop reacting and become proactive.

“Most people are wired to react, but this is such an important time to switch the script and say, when the lights are off, now what are we doing,” Rush said. “When things are not in the news, what are we doing? Are we trying to make our communities better, leading by example, educating people?”

Donohue reminded students at orientation of the song “History Has Its Eyes On You” from the Broadway musical “Hamilton.” Amid racial issues and COVID-19, Donohue told the students that our nation and our community face several challenges.

“We are called by God to rise to the occasion, to answer the call and take a stand to make our world a better place,” Donohue said. “History has its eyes on you. How will you respond?” ✨

ANSWER ^{THE} CALL, TAKE A STAND: HISTORY HAS ITS EYES ON YOU

Academic Achievements & School Leaders

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SEMIFINALIST

Each year about 1.5 million students enter the National Merit Scholarship Program by taking their PSAT in their junior year. Of those students about 16,000 are recognized nationally as semifinalist for their outstanding performance. This year **Ryan Frier '21** was named a National Merit Semifinalist. He is now eligible to become a finalist.

COMMENDED STUDENTS

Those not named semifinalists were named Commended Students in the National Merit Scholarship Program: **Jordan Hetu, David Jerman, Jake Lion, and Eduardo Serrano.**

"I am very proud of the young men of the Class of 2021 who have been recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation," Principal Brendan Donohue said. "They continue a great legacy of Xavier men excelling on a national scale. They are all well-rounded students who contribute to our school community in so many ways. I am grateful for all of their many contributions."

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

These were awarded to those students who earned the highest grade point average in their class in the 2019-2020 school year.

Class of 2021: Ryan Frier

Class of 2022: Aidan Higgins

Class of 2023: Dominic Cusano

CELESTINE AWARDS

Each year the Brother Celestine Medal is awarded to students who have an overall final average of A, upon completion of the past academic year, with no final average grade less than an A-minus in their major subjects. This prestigious award can be earned only once during a student's four years at Xavier, and is the highest academic tribute the school bestows. Brother Celestine Killigrew taught history and religion, coached the freshman soccer team, and ran the bookstore at Xavier in the early 1960s. He died at the age of 25 as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile crash. The award was created to honor this beloved teacher's memory. He had a big impact on the school in such a short amount of time.

Class of 2021: Matthew Battipaglia, Mark Kowalski, Reid Paiva, Logan Saks, Macklin Stevens.

Class of 2022: Chris Andrei Abrientos, John Amatrudo, Matthew Fuffo, Stephen King, Aidan Muldoon, Aidan Pesce, Owen Pestka, Griffin

Prushinski, Matthew Reardon, Alexander Sauer, Keegan Truscinski, David Wright, Jr., Nikita Zuev, Austin Zwick

Class of 2023: Nicholas Cassarino, Ryan Crostowski, Dominic Cusano, Aidan Driscoll, Samuel Enes, Matthew Ewing, Tyler Ferguson, Aedan Frazer, Jack Gouin, Tyler Keithan, Rithik Kurup, Owen Lelko, Samuel Matt, Nicholas Miano, Peter O'Brien, Richard Oliveira, Wesley Ong, Sotirios Paul, Brendan Peary, Damian Peralta, Wyatt Pestka, Robert Quan, Nicolas Russo, Vincent Salamone, Miguel Santos, Henry Stearns, Matthew Whitaker.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS, CLASS OF 2021

Students must have completed a minimum of two AP courses prior to senior year and be enrolled in a minimum of three AP courses in senior year. Students must maintain a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA and must not have a grade lower than C in any AP course. For the Class of 2022 and beyond, the criteria has changed. A student must take a total of 6 AP courses (two of which must be before senior year and at least three during senior year). Students must maintain at least a 3.25 overall GPA with no grade lower than B-minus in any AP course.

Logan Barnes, Kyle Beasley, Ethan Cook, Dominick Delaney, Zachary Dolan, Ryan Frier, Timothy Gagliano, Wesley Harris, Jordan Hetu, David Parker Hunter, David Jerman, Cameron Kuselias, Jake Lion, Rohit Menon, Peter Mercugliano, Andrew Mitchell, Trevor Religa, Anthony Satrohan, Brian Satrohan, Eduardo Serrano, Rhys Snow, Macklin Stevens, Michael Stottlemeyer, Holden Whaley, Revanth Yalamnchi, Brendan Zawisa

2020-2021 OFFICERS AND PEER MINISTERS STUDENT ACTIVITIES COUNCIL

President: Ryan Solomon

Vice President: Liam Houchin

Secretary: Peter Mercugliano

Treasurer: Connor Silbo

Senior Class President:

Donny Frost

Senior Class Vice President:

Dan Lyons

Junior Class President:

Sheel Vallam

Junior Class Vice President:

Luke Solomon

Sophomore Class President:

Brendan Peary

Sophomore Class Vice President:

Ryan Chrostowski

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

President: Daniel Lyons

First Vice President: Liam Houchin

Second Vice President: Donny Frost

Secretary: David Parker Hunter

Treasurer: Andrew Mitchell

Chapter Historians:

Dominick Delaney, Anthony

Satrohan, Revanth Yalamanchi

PEER MINISTRY TEAM

Logan Barnes, Matt Battipaglia, Adam Carroll, Nucci Delaney, Ian Domeika, Finn Dowler, Donny Frost, Tim Gagliano, Jonathan Gonzalez, Wes Harris, Liam Houchin, Luke Lappe, Dan Lyons, Rock Menon, Peter Mercugliano, Vinnie Pagliuca, Reid Paiva, Trevor Rohrbacher, Jason Salley, Anthony Satrohan, Brian Satrohan, Connor Silbo, Rhys Snow, Noah Stevenson, John Tischio, Sam Voghell, Mason Waldron.

ALSO OF NOTE

The Class of 2020 valedictorian, **Alex Pralea**, finished with a perfect GPA all four years and is attending Brown University in Rhode Island. The salutatorian, **Akshay Khunte**, also is at an Ivy League school, Yale University.



Alex Pralea



Akshay Khunte

SILVER MEDAL FOR ENGINEERING TEAM

The Xavier High School engineering team (**Alex Pralea '20, Ryan Frier '21, Tim Rinaldi '20, Rithik Kurup '23, Zachary Dolan '21, Holden Whaley '21 and Eoin Wallace '21**) won the silver medal in the 2020 Real World Design Challenge in April. The event, normally in Washington D.C., was held virtually. The Xavier team spent eight months designing and developing a drone that would deliver packages in an urban environment. It was the second top two finish in the national championship in the last three years and came after Xavier advanced to the championship as a wild card entry.

E-SPORTS TEAMS WIN TWO TITLES

Xavier capped off an unbeaten season by winning its second Esports Rocket League title in a row, defeating Newtown 4-0 in the best-of-seven series at Central Connecticut State University. Xavier also won the Smite title in the 2019-20 school year. The Falcons compete in a third program, the League of Legends, which also qualified for the state tournament. All are PlayVS leagues.

MATH STAR IN THE MAKING

As a freshman **Soti Paul '23** not only was on the junior varsity Math Team but also the varsity team because his scores qualified him for varsity status. He was the highest scorer for Xavier at both the junior varsity and varsity levels. He won a trophy for being one of the top three freshmen in junior varsity competition and another for being one of the top three freshmen or sophomores at the varsity level.

THE SHOW GOES ON

The Mercy and Xavier Theater Program was forced to cancel two performances of its annual musical this past school year, but that didn't stop the group from delivering a one-night only staging of **"Mamma Mia!"** in front of a small crowd of mostly family in March. After working tirelessly on the project since the fall of 2019, the group delivered a heartfelt and funny show. The show served as a swan song for longtime theater member **William Lallier '20** and a memorable debut for **Mark Grasso '20** in the lead role.



LONGTIME TEACHER AND WRESTLING COACH CUNNINGHAM RECEIVES RYKEN AWARD

Michael Cunningham, a longtime teacher and wrestling coach at Xavier, was the 2019-2020 recipient of the annual Ryken Award. The award is annually given to an adult member at XBSS schools

who by his or her commitment and dedication lives the mission of the Xaverian charism of education. The faculty and staff nominate the winner.

As one peer said, "His students respect him for his unwavering commitment to their development as students, athletes, and citizens."





The FALCONS' Nest

XAVIER ATHLETICS



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Sometime around 11 a.m. on March 10, Athletic Director Matthew Martorelli called the **BASKETBALL, HOCKEY** and **SWIMMING & DIVING** teams down to the gym for an announcement.

Earlier that day, the CIAC, Connecticut's governing body for high school sports, had officially canceled the rest of the winter season's state playoffs due to the coronavirus pandemic. That abrupt end meant no state tournaments for Xavier hockey and basketball players, and the end of the season for the swimming and dive team, which had just won its first SCC title. The wrestling and indoor track championships had concluded.

"It was an extremely difficult day for our entire community, but especially our coaches and student-athletes," Martorelli said. "We were all heartbroken."

After the disappointment of that day, Xavier spring athletes continued to train and prepare for a spring season on their own as the school went to remote learning. But on May 5 the CIAC officially canceled that season.

"To so many students at Xavier, athletics is more than just a chance to compete. It represents a chance to be together with teammates and coaches that are very important in their lives," Martorelli said.

Despite that news, Xavier athletes stayed dedicated to their sports and their teams, and returned hungry to compete this fall season.

On Friday, Oct. 2, the cross country and soccer teams returned to action with victories over Branford and Daniel Hand, and Cheshire, respectively. And in early November, both teams claimed championships. The cross country team won the program's fifth straight SCC championship and the soccer team won the SCC Division A championship. Coaches Chris Stonier and Brian Fitzgerald were both named Coaches of the Year and Eamon Burke '22 was named the Runner of the Year for cross country. Jason Salley '21 was named Player of the Year for soccer.



In Karl Sundquist's first season as coach, the **HOCKEY TEAM** went 10-7-3. Seniors Aiden Hotchkiss and JJ Ford were named to the All-SCC team and led the way.

Behind George Luke '20 and Davon Colon '20, the **INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD TEAM** finished sixth in the Class L meet. Luke was second in the 1000 meters, Colon was second in the shot put, and Eamon Burke '22 was third in the 3200. Colon also was second in the shot put at the State Open and made the New England Championships for the first time. Luke and Colon were also named to the All-SCC first team after winning conference titles in the 1000 meters and shot put.



The **RIFLERY** team had two in the top 10 in average at the end of the year. Jacob Cink '20 and Brian Masselli '20 tied for sixth at 193.25. Xavier finished third in team average in the CT Rifle League.

FALL 2019 SEASON

The **CROSS COUNTRY TEAM** won its fourth straight SCC title and



its second straight Class L title, the latter when six of its runners finished in the top 20. Robbie Cozean '20 finished his stellar career by winning the Class L individual title and finishing second at the State Open and New England Championship. Cozean was named SCC Runner of the Year, and Chris Stonier was named SCC Coach of the Year.

The **SOCCER TEAM** won the SCC Oronoque Division with a 7-0-1 record and finished 14-4-2 overall. Brian Fitzgerald '99 was the SCC Coach of the Year for the second year in a row as the Falcons finished unbeaten in their division for the second consecutive season.

Anchored by the play of quarterback Drew Kron '22 at the helm and a determined Ryan Miner '20, the **FOOTBALL TEAM** went 5-5. Kron had a strong season, but he went down with an injury in the first quarter of the final game. His backup also was hurt, so in came senior Miner, the 2018 quarterback. In 2019 he was a tough and trusty receiver. Miner's pass to another senior, Kareem Grisham, brought Xavier to within an extra point of tying West Haven with just seconds left on the clock. Coach Andy Guyon went for the win and D.J. Wright '22 ran in the two-point conversion for a 22-21 victory and a .500 season.



After leading the **CREW TEAM** in 2019-2020, Akshay Khunte '20 is now a coxswain for the Yale Lightweight Crew team.



Student Spotlight

Tim Gagliano '21

Since arriving at Xavier from Our Lady of Mercy in Madison (now closed), **Tim Gagliano '21** has never been shy about stepping into the spotlight.

As a prominent member of the Mercy and Xavier Theater program, he has played significant roles in many of the program's plays or musicals since his first year. He has also been part



of the Xavier Chorus and Model Court. At the Christmas Concert two years, Gagliano stole the show with his solo in a Xavier version of The Drifters' classic "White Christmas." "It has been a pleasure seeing Tim grow and mature over the past four years. He is a true Xavier kid," Academic Dean Kyle St. George said. "He's outgoing, respectful, kind-hearted, fun-loving, hard-working, and overall a good student. Tim seeks to do the right thing in all situations. Even in the rare instances when he might have strayed a bit, he owns his mistakes and learns from them. In terms of overall character, he is a role model for all of his Xaverian peers."

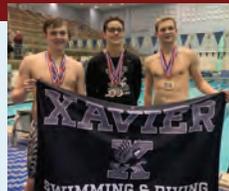
Gagliano's older brother Matt graduated from Xavier in 2014, but he has left his own unique mark on the school, and he will always be grateful for the opportunities he has received here and the friendships he will keep for the rest of his life.

"I think the culture of Xavier is the reason we become the men we are, and that stays with you for a long time," Gagliano said. 🌸

Noteworthy Achievements From October 2019 To October 2020.

WINTER 2020 SEASON

The **SWIMMING AND DIVING TEAM** won the program's first SCC swimming championship in the 26-year history of the league as Andrew Mitchell '21 was named Most Outstanding Performer. Before the season was shut down because of COVID-19, the team was considered a contender for a state title. Still, it was a season to remember as they finished the regular season unbeaten with a record of 12-0. The regular season included victories over Glastonbury, Fairfield Prep and Cheshire, the latter two perennial powers in the SCC. The victory over Fairfield Prep on Jan. 28 was Xavier's first over Prep since 2003. The Falcons also ended Prep's streak of 15 consecutive SCC championships.



For years, coach Mike Cunningham has been saying 2020 would be a special year for the **WRESTLING TEAM**. And he wasn't wrong. In February, the program continued its SCC dominance by winning its fourth consecutive league wrestling title, and its sixth in the last seven years. A week later the Falcons won the Class L title, their first state title since 2012, keeping everyone on the edge of their seats. The Falcons beat Simsbury by 2.5 points, 243-240.5. Mike Rapuano '21, James Lunt '20 and Luke Tischio '20 won individual titles. Rapuano and Lunt each had the trifecta: SCC, Class L and State Open individual titles. It was Rapuano's second state title in a row.

Led by a dedicated senior class, the **BASKETBALL TEAM** had one of its best seasons in years with a record of 14-8 and was poised for a potential run in the state tournament. Despite disappointment over the cancellation of the state tournament, the year was filled with several memorable moments. At the annual Arthur M. Kohs Classic, the team won the championship game to give coach Mike Kohs '84 his 300th victory at Xavier. Seniors Kareem Grisham, Marcus Williams, Andrew Brown and Stephen Kohs anchored the team's play all season.





May 22, 2020

Virtual Baccalaureate Mass

PRINCIPAL'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD AND SCHOLARSHIP: Samuel Martin won the award that goes to a graduating senior in the College Prep or Accelerated programs who has embraced the full Xavier experience in and out of the classroom. Martin was a Brother Celestine Award winner who attended XLI, was a Peer Minister, served on the Principal's Advisory Council and ran cross country.

BROTHER CELESTINE MEDALS: Five students from the Class of 2020 earned this honor in their senior year: **Samuel Baker, Cameron Bartolomeo, Peter Cavaliere, Justin Child, and Justin Cyr.** Over the previous three years, 34 members of the class of 2020 had been honored with the medal: **Nathan Barandon, Emad Cheema, Zachary Ciampi, Blake Courchesne, Robbie Cozean, Christopher D'Agostino, Jonathan Ford, Landon Ghiroli, Mark Grasso, Giovanni Imme, William Kaye, Sean Kelly, Akshay Khunte, Aidan Lally, Hyun Lee, George Luke, Aidan Lynch, Joseph Marcin, Samuel Martin, Vincent Miano, Antonio Milardo, Kevin Monaghan, Griffin Moore, Fabian Morales, Alexander Pralea, Zhenhai Quan, Dinesh Ramchandani, Nicholas Romeo, Jakob Slason, William St. Pierre, Luke Tischio, Khai Ton, Marcus Williams and Matthew Zablocki.**

It is awarded each year to students who at the end of the academic year have an overall final average of A with no final average grade less than an A- in their major subjects. It can be given only once during a student's four years and is the highest academic tribute the school bestows. The award is named after Brother Celestine Killigrew, who taught History and Religion at Xavier in the early 1960s and died as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident at the age of 25.

XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL PERFECT ATTENDANCE AWARD: Christopher D'Agostino never missed a day of school in four years.

A Unique Legacy

THE 2020 GRADUATION WEEKEND WAS LIKE NO OTHER.

The coronavirus, which had shut down the school in mid-March, prevented any mass gathering. So Xavier administrators, faculty and staff joined forces to celebrate the Class of 2020 with a Virtual Baccalaureate Mass and a Virtual Graduation Ceremony on YouTube. The weekend concluded with diplomas handed out in a drive-through ceremony.

“We would like to thank the entire Xavier community for all the hard work you put into graduation weekend,” wrote one family, saying the virtual events were “very well done” and being able to get the diploma and take some photos at the school was “awesome.” **”**





May 23, 2020

Virtual Commencement Ceremony

Brother Thomas Ryan, C.F.X., welcomed Xavier's 160 graduates to the "school's first, and hopefully, only virtual graduation." The script was the same as if the ceremony had been held in the gymnasium with valedictorian and salutatorian speeches, and The Most Rev. Michael Cote, Bishop of the Diocese of Norwich, speaking to the class just as he would have in person.

VALEDICTORIAN: Alex Pralea, attending Brown. *"Beyond the impersonal fact that I cannot see you and am currently speaking to a camera in front of a green screen, I, like you, feel disheartened by the current state of affairs,"* Pralea noted in the opening of his address. Later, he said, *"The arrival of COVID-19 was a gut-punch, but it has demonstrated the best of Xavier while teaching us multiple lessons at the same time."*

SALUTATORIAN: Akshay Khunte, attending Yale. *"If this whole situation has taught me anything, it's that none of us can really predict what the future has in store,"* Khunte said in his address. *"We will all face more unforeseeable challenges in our future, and must overcome them using the lessons and values instilled in us here at Xavier."*

LOYALTY & SERVICE AWARD: Mark Grasso won the most prestigious award the school gives to a senior. It is based on the student's consistency and quality of service to the school and the student's passion for all aspects that make up the Xavier experience.

FALCON ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Ryan Miner, football captain and wrestler, was recognized with the award that goes to a senior who "represents the very best that athletics stand for at Xavier."

May 24, 2020

Conferral of Diplomas

The Class of 2020 and their immediate family members were invited to the school for a special ceremony. Families arrived at staggered times, with graduates divided alphabetically to provide for social distancing. The families drove from the back parking lot (where they could take pictures), along the side of the building (lined with individual signs featuring the grad's name and photo) to the front of the building where Headmaster Dave Eustis handed them their diplomas as a professional photographer took their picture. Families then met in front of the X on the building for another professional photo.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION went to **Mr. Rich Magner '69**, who retired after 41 years as a teacher, coach, guidance counselor and the Director of Guidance since 1997; and **Ms. Jayne Vitale**, who started the art program, and retired after 34 years. Faculty members **William Garrity** and **Michael Kohs '84** were honored for 25 years of service. Kohs' son **Stephen** was a member of the Class of 2020.



2020 Legacy Families

A special award is presented at graduation to alumni fathers of graduating seniors. Each father receives an engraved medal with his name and his son's name as well as the years of their graduation.

- Mr. Adam Brown, Class of 1991, and his son Andrew '20
- Mr. Christopher Cahill, Class of 1990, and his son Owen '20
- Mr. Charles Carroll, Class of 1985, and his son Tucker '20
- Mr. Christopher Codeanne, Class of 1986, and his son Patrick '20
- Mr. Thomas Cooke, Class of 1984, and his son Thomas '20
- Mr. Ron Cozean, Class of 1981, and his son Robbie '20
- Mr. Richard Dighello, Class of 1987, and his son Nicholas '20
- Mr. Kyle Dillon, Class of 1990, and his son Liam '20
- Mr. Joseph Inglis, Class of 1986, and his son Alexander '20
- Mr. Michael Kohs, Class of 1984, and his son Stephen '20 (Stephen's grandfather Artie, who worked at the school as teacher/coach/athletic director from 1963-1997, was present for recognition on May 24 when diplomas were handed out).

- Mr. Gregg Lallier, Class of 1990, and his son William '20
- Mr. Michael Masselli, Class of 1986, and his son Brian '20
- Mr. Carl Pitruzzello, Class of 1986, and his son Eric '20



XAVIER ALUMS WORKING AT XAVIER

- Mr. David Applegate '98,
Science Department Chair/Mathematics
- Mr. Brendan Bell '05,
Assistant Director of Admissions/Religion
- Mr. Nick Cerreta '01,
Dean of Students/Physical Education
- Mr. Dan DeConti '01,
Assistant Director of Athletics/Mathematics
- Mr. Brian Fitzgerald '99, Spanish/Soccer Coach
- Mr. Jeremy Fowler '94, Religion Department Chair
- Mr. Nick Grasso '05,
Director of Admissions/Mathematics
- Mr. Greg Jaskot '00, Associate Director of
Advancement/Assistant Football Coach
- Mr. Mike Kohs '84, Business/Basketball Coach
- Mr. Jim Markham '99, Science
- Mr. Andy Mule '93, Mathematics
- Mr. Jeff Otterbein '72,
Associate Director of Communications
- Mr. Jim Royce '99, Social Studies

MERCY ALUMS WORKING AT XAVIER

- Mrs. Jacki King Aresco '81, Assistant Business Manger
- Mrs. Suzanne LeBrun Berry '83,
Office Manager, Advancement Office
- Mrs. Tracy Belzek Dardick '88,
Administrative Assistant,
Administrative Office
- Mrs. Donna Colavito Jaskot '74,
Assistant to the Headmaster and Principal
- Mrs. Lisa Markowski Keereweewer '76,
Administrative Assistant, Main Office
- Mrs. Melissa Peterson Kennedy '09,
Guidance Counselor
- Mrs. Beth Wendry Pattavina '86,
Guidance Counselor/Academic
Support Specialist
- Ms. Liz Whitty '75, Director of Advancement



Mercy Alumnae L-R: Beth Pattavina, Jacki Aresco, Donna Jaskot, Suzanne Berry, Lisa Keereweewer, Tracy Dardick, Melissa Kennedy, and Liz Whitty

MERCY ALUMS WORKING AT MERCY

- Ms. Daniela Aparo '94, World Language
- Mrs. Maria Bergan '73,
Executive Assistant to the President
- Mrs. Lori Broderick '80,
Main Office Administrative Assistant
- Mrs. Michele Dastoli '03, Theology/Music Director
- Ms. Alissa DeJonge '95, President
- Ms. Madison DeRita '15, Business-Technology/
Physical Education/Field Hockey and Softball Coach
- Ms. Ann E. Drewry '97, Dean of Students
- Mrs. Kerri Duque '09, English/Cheerleading Coach
- Mrs. Janette Dziatko '90,
Mathematics Department Chair
- Mrs. Lauren Daniels Geary '04,
Social Studies Department Chair
- Mrs. Jessica Hall '02, World Language, English
- Ms. Marie Kalita '76,
Communication and Public Relations Director
- Ms. Jennifer Oryell Larson '93, World Language
- Mrs. Cindy Otis '74, Assistant Librarian
- Mrs. Rena Reagan '84, Science, Mathematics
- Ms. Stacy Troiano '04, English/Basketball Coach
- Mrs. Mary-Clare Wamester '97, Director of Admissions

XAVIER ALUMS WORKING AT MERCY

- Mr. Mark Broderick '13,
Assistant Director of Maintenance and Grounds
- Mr. Thomas DeLude '98, Assistant Finance Director,
Transportation Coordinator
- Mr. Timothy Kohs '85,
Director of Athletics, Basketball Coach



XAVIER-MERCY CONNECTIONS

For more than 50 years, Xavier and Mercy have been intertwined in so many ways. Before Mercy was built its students went to school here. Boys on the first floor. Girls on the second floor.

Over the years there have been numerous families who sent their boys to Xavier and their girls to Mercy. There have been numerous marriages where the connection began at Xavier or Mercy, possibly a dance or another social outing.

From Mercy-Xavier Walk-a-Thon competitions that supported the operating budgets of each school to Donkey Basketball games for charity, the schools have combined to be of service to others. That may be no more apparent than the schools coming together for years in the MYARC (Middlesex Youth ARC, Inc.) program, a volunteer service organization dedicated to the philosophy that growth and personal development occur as a result of social interactions between persons with intellectual disabilities and the students of Xavier and Mercy.

**Two schools.
One family.**

MUSIC TO THEIR EARS

KELLY RICHARDS, MERCY '14, and JESSE FERRARA, XAVIER '14, met while participating in the Mercy-Xavier musical their freshman year. They started dating as juniors and went to the Mercy and Xavier proms together as juniors and seniors.

They ended up at the same college, Salve Regina, and each works at the same school, The New England Center for Children Inc., a residential school in Southborough, Mass., for children and young adults with autism. They both have Master's in Applied Behavioral Analysis.

They are planning to be married Oct. 8, 2021. Their best man is another 2014 Xavier grad, Alec Gilarde. The maid of honor is Mercy 2014 graduate Emily Brewer.

"The Mercy-Xavier musicals are some of the best memories I have from high school," Richards said. "We will be finding a way to incorporate them into our wedding."

The plan is for a medley of the top hits from the shows they were in. Kelly grew up in Middletown and Jesse in Killingworth.



Last musical at Mercy (left), and proposal (right)



Mike and Emilie Garemko and family

WORLD OF ROMANCE

It did not take long for MIKE GAREMKO '67, who graduated in the first class at Xavier, to meet his wife of 47 years.

"EMILIE JEANETTE was one of the first Mercy girls I noticed on the bus in 1963 as both schools opened that fall," Garemko said. "In the beginning Mercy was located on the second floor of Xavier, so we got to know them from the start."

Garemko and Jeanette met in the newspaper office. Back then Xavier's was called X-citing News and Mercy's was known as the Mercy-Go-Round.

"At the time she was smitten by a former classmate from her grammar school who was the son of a friend of her mother's, so my efforts would have to wait," Garemko said. "We would both take the bus downtown and go to the library to study (to be honest, I was more interested in learning about Emilie). Her mom worked at the bank next door, and when she got off work she would drive Emilie and me home because I lived right on their way home. How convenient?"

Garemko was a man on a mission. In 1965 they finally became boyfriend-girlfriend and went to four proms together.

After graduation he headed for Syracuse University and she was off to Wheaton College in Norton, Mass. The long-distance romance was tough to keep up. He eventually dropped out of Syracuse and joined the Army in 1968, serving in Vietnam and then in Germany. After his service time, he went back to Syracuse. After graduation she backpacked in Europe.

But Mike and Emilie eventually reunited; they were married after his sophomore year at Syracuse.

So this winding 10-year road that went through high school in Middletown, college in Syracuse, N.Y., and Norton, Mass., a military tour of duty in Vietnam and Germany for him, and a three-month backpacking adventure in Europe for her led to a marriage that is approaching 50 years. And it all started with a Xavier-Mercy connection.



XAVIER

- RICHARD RIORDAN '69,
Third Xavier graduating class
- CHRISTOPHER CAHILL '90,
Son-in-law; married to oldest
daughter Kelly
- JAY PROULX '96,
Son-in-law; married to
youngest daughter Shana
- OWEN CAHILL '20,
Grandson;
Son of Chris and Kelly

MERCY

- PAULA (DUNN) TRANCHINA '69,
Mother of Kelly, Melissa and
Shana Riordan
- KELLY RIORDAN CAHILL '90,
Daughter,
Mother of Owen and Emma
- MELISSA RIORDAN DAVIS '93,
Daughter
- SHANA RIORDAN PROULX '95,
Daughter
- EMMA CAHILL '20,
Granddaughter;
Daughter of Chris and Kelly

2019-20 Annual Report

School Income

Tuition and Fees:	\$9,759,450
Dividends and Interest:	\$37,663
Diocesan Subsidy:	\$60,000
Bookstore (net):	\$29,973
Other Sources:	\$93,596
Advancement Activities (net):	\$506,514

Total Revenue and Support: \$10,487,196

School Expenses

Instruction and Student Activities:	\$6,515,134
General Administration:	\$895,677
Plant Operations and Maintenance:	\$750,186
Faculty/Staff Benefits:	\$1,335,843
Construction Debt Service:	\$499,965

Total Expenses: \$9,996,804

Minus Restricted Endowment Contributions:	-\$94,463
Transfer from Endowment for Scholarships:	\$128,629

Unrestricted Net Surplus: \$524,558



\$1,065,735

Financial aid awarded in 2019-2020.

\$6,963

Money raised in the 2019 Artie Kohs Basketball Tournament.

\$396,153

Scholarship dollars awarded in 2019-2020.

\$4,200

Average financial aid awarded in 2019-2020.

\$94,577

Money raised in the **Students Helping Students Ad Drive**, in which students sell ads to local businesses. **100%** of the proceeds go to financial aid.

\$75,168

Money raised by the **2019 Xavier Alumni Golf Classic**, with **100%** of the proceeds supporting financial aid. **27%** increase from 2018.

\$9,685,170

The school endowment value as of June 30, 2020. The endowment is made up of individual restricted scholarships that have been set up by Heritage Society donors and the unrestricted endowment that was established by the school.

46%

Percentage of students who received financial aid in 2019-2020.



Thank You To All Our Donors

Honor Roll of Major Donors July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020

Gifts of \$25,000 and Above:

Saint Francis Xavier Founders Society

2019 Xavier Alumni Golf Classic
2019 Students Helping Students Ad Drive
Estate of David J. Anelli
The Foisie Family
Jane and Brian Hetherington '81
Mary and George Keithan '81
Estate of John J. Wall Jr. '68

Gifts of \$15,000-\$24,999:

Saint Francis Xavier Leaders Society

The Atlas Companies, LLC
Debbie and Jack Gastler '74
Raquel Rivera and Thomas Hutton '83
Jody and Michael Picard '83
Ray H. and Pauline Sullivan Foundation
United Way of Central and Northeastern CT
Xavier High School Home and School Association

Gifts of \$10,000-\$14,999:

Saint Francis Xavier Associates Society

2019 Arthur Kohs Basketball Tournament
Katherine Fagerburg and Vernon Baker
Gerri A. Roberts and J. Edward Brymer
Charles Schwabb and Co., Inc.
Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Inc.
Consulting Engineering Services, Inc.
DelFavero Family Fund
John and Patricia DelFavero
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Linda and James McLaughlin
Tricia and Neil Mitchell '93
Morgan Stanley Gift Fund

Gifts of \$5,000-\$9,999:

Saint Francis Xavier Stewards Society

Chaleen and Brian Abely
Colter Abely Achievement Fund
Monica and Geoffrey Astle '02
Benevity Community Impact Fund
Patricia and John Buckley
Cadance Aerospace
Dolan Family Charitable Fund
Nicole and Thomas Dolan '91
Mary Ellen and Robert Guere '81
Independent Charitable Giving Fund
Patricia and Lawrence McHugh
Jeffrey Muzio '84
Elena Ritoli McGurgan and Robert McGurgan
Sandra A. Piontek
Patricia and William Rotatori
Christopher Smith '99
Emily and Christopher Smith '76
Heidi and William Wrang '75

To see the complete list of donors to Xavier High School for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, please go to the www.XavierHighSchool.org and click on Honor Roll of Donors.



THE EFFECT ON STUDENTS

Students write a letter of thanks to those who fund scholarships that provide much-needed financial aid.

"It has really put a smile on my family's face knowing that we have an alumni group that values our education and cares for families that struggle financially."

"I've always been the type of person who loves talking about the 'whys' of life. Some people always wonder how things work, but I've always wondered why. Religion class is a great opportunity to ask these questions and get answers."

"The pandemic has greatly affected my family financially; however, with the help of your scholarship, I am able to return to Xavier with less financial worry."

WAYS TO GIVE

There are many ways to give ... and many reasons to give. Your support helps us shape the leaders of the future. As has been reinforced during COVID-19, #WeAreStrongerTogether. Thank you for all you do. To give, please go to the Alumni & Giving section on our website [www.XavierHighSchool.org] and click on "Making A Gift" or "Give Now."

WE REMEMBER: Brother John Collins, C.F.X., 1936-2020

Brother John Collins, C.F.X., died Feb. 7, 2020. He was among the founding Brothers when Xavier High School opened its doors in 1963. Brother Mark, as he was known at that time, was a popular religion teacher who also was involved in many other activities, ranging from moderator of religious activities to adviser to various Xavier-Mercy musicals.

TWO TRIBUTES:

Mike Garemko '67: *"I learned everything I ever knew about ecumenism from him. When we were privileged to be his student, the Church was alive with the reforms of Pope John XXIII and the Vatican II Council, and there was no one more excited than Br. Mark. He instinctively embraced the change that was in the air. He was also an advocate for civil rights, and I know he taught me personally to abandon prejudices that I had wrongfully grown up with. He was a deep and enduring influence on me. I remember him playing 'Got To Get You Into My Life' by the Beatles in class and making us think they were talking about God. To this day I hear that song and listen closely to the lyrics, and I still think his interpretation has merit. He was the only one who seemed to understand the impact of the whole rock scene on our generation. His was just an extraordinary mind."*

Greg Maszta '76: *"At a dark time in my life when I had given up on God, I was fortunate to encounter Brother John (as I knew him) in freshman-year religion class at Xavier High School. We compared the Gospel of Mark with the soundtrack from 'Jesus Christ Superstar.' Somehow this experience managed to keep an ember alive until faith finally re-ignited years later. I will always be thankful for having known Br. John!"*

ALUMNI Briefs



CHRIS FOSDICK '19 won the 118th Connecticut Amateur Championship by one stroke after being five down through 16 holes of the 36-hole championship. Fosdick had to choose between playing in the State Am and playing in the qualifier for the Travelers Championship. Witnessing the victory was Mike Kohs '84, his former Xavier golf coach.

Fosdick, a Division II All-American at Florida Southern as a freshman, has transferred to a Division I school, the University of Virginia, in the tough Atlantic Coast Conference.



TANNER KERN '15 ran 260 miles from the border of Canada to Bloomfield to raise over \$13,000 for Food Share, which is the largest anti-hunger organization in the Greater Hartford Area. From June 12 to June 16, Kern ran with his cousin Jordan to raise money for those in need. Together, the pair raised enough money to provide over 30,000 meals. Kern, who was an offensive lineman at Xavier and later at Lafayette College (Pa.), has lost 140 pounds since he started running two years ago.



In his second full season in the NASCAR Cup Series, **RYAN PREECE '09** had 12 top 20 finishes and two top 10 finishes through Oct. 4.

NICK ROMANELLI '14 attended the 92nd Academy Awards last February. Romanelli got the invite as an account manager for Film Solutions, a post-production company, which handles still photography for several major studios.

Since 2018, **DAVE SIZEMORE '86** has worked as a Santa for hire, bringing holiday cheer to all sorts of Christmas functions. But this past holiday season, **Santa Size** went virtual, offering special virtual visits, pre-recorded messages, and letters from Santa for children, who might have missed out on the traditional Santa visit. For Sizemore, who loves putting on the red suit, he knew he needed to find a way to keep the tradition going despite the pandemic.



BILL MCKENNA '88 retired as Chief of Police in Middletown, citing the time demands of the job and his desire to spend more time with family. In a statement at the end of June, he said in part, "I am very saddened, yet at the same time very excited to announce

my retirement from my position as Chief for the great City of Middletown. This decision was hard, yet after taking everything into consideration I feel that I am at peace with this decision and I am excited to pass the torch to the other great men and women of this department." McKenna was in the department for 25 years, eight as Chief of Police.

GEORGE V. KEITHAN, JR. '81: A member of the Board of Directors who heads the building and grounds committee, Keithan helped lead a group of Xavier students in an interesting exercise last spring, organizing the school's blueprint that dated back to the beginning. "I was worried that the life expectancy and usability of these plans for any future additions would be at risk," Keithan said. "That is when [Headmaster] Dave [Eustis] discussed the possibility of getting some students together to organize these plans, as a teaching moment, explaining what blueprints were and to hopefully unlock some old ideas.

JOHN BLASCHIK '73: On Feb. 24, 2020, Br. John Blaschik pronounced his First Vows at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Va. Having completed his first three years of formation, Br. John now continues his preparation for Final Vows, another three-year process. He was a former deputy state fire marshal and served on the Board of Selectmen in East Haddam.



CHRIS BROWN '96: An All-State thrower at Xavier and a two-time All-American at Purdue.

AMARI SPIEVY '06: Drafted out of Iowa in the third round of the 2010 NFL draft by the Lions; started for two seasons. Two-time All-State player helped lead Xavier to 2005 football title.

JIM FOLEY '88: As a sophomore set up the Falcons' top scorer, Baseball Hall of Famer Jeff Bagwell. Foley played at Stetson, finishing as Xavier's all-time leading scorer.

MARTY RYCZEK: Coached Foley and Bagwell in soccer at Xavier and has been the longtime athletic director at Nathan Hale Ray High School in Moodus.

MIKE FIALA '80: Played on Xavier's championship baseball team, went to Princeton, was drafted in the 11th round in 1985 by the Dodgers and pitched two years in the Dodgers' system.

THE 1980 BASEBALL TEAM: Only Xavier baseball team to win a state title; went 15-5 in the regular season and won four state playoff games for the Class L title.



Reunited & Motivated

EVERY YEAR, THE ALUMNI GOLF CLASSIC HELPS BRING TOGETHER GENERATIONS OF XAVIER GRADUATES TO SUPPORT CURRENT STUDENTS

“How’d you hit ‘em?”

The response came without hesitation. “A lot.” And that phrase could be used to describe much of what the Alumni Golf Classic is all about. A lot of fun ... a lot of money raised ... a lot of good golfers and, yes, some teams that needed a lot of shots to make it around the course in the best-ball format.

The 2020 event, despite the challenge of COVID-19, raised more than \$85,000 for financial aid behind the work of co-directors Rich Feitel and Associate Director of Advancement Greg Jaskot '00.

Former Xavier teacher and cross country and track & field coach Bob Michalski was honored at the 38th annual tournament. Michalski’s teams won 65 Class, State Open and New England titles. Many of his former student-athletes played in the event and/or sponsored a sign to honor him.

“It seems like so long ago I was doing stuff; I’ve been retired for 15 years. To think that this many people took a piece of what I was dishing out is so heartwarming,” Michalski said. “I’ve gotten a lot of honors but this is so meaningful because of the people ... they are not just runners, they are track men and students, it’s just amazing, And to see all those signs, wow, it almost knocked me out of my seat.”

About 40 signs from various cross country and track and field athletes lined the entranceway to the course honoring the man whose nickname was “Chopper.” Yet it was hard to find out exactly how that nickname came to be so we went to the source himself.

“Chopper ... oh boy,” Michalski said with a laugh. “It came from basketball, and I used to play one-on-one with a fellow teacher from the middle school when I first started teaching. I used to hack him a bit; he was much bigger than me. You do what you have to do. ... And it carried over to Xavier. Not sure how, but things get passed around.”





Fact From Fiction

SWIMMING POOL? BOWLING LANES? BARBERSHOP? *Solving The Mysteries Of Xavier*

“Iron Curtain Lifted” was the headline in the March 1964 issue of the *X-citing News*, which was the first student publication at Xavier. The school had opened about six months earlier, and now a mystery was solved.

Here’s the story as published:

“Recently the students at Xavier were taken on a tour of the Brothers Residence. The trip raised the ‘iron curtain’ surrounding their residence since September. On the first floor were the community room, TV, and dining rooms, where the Brothers spend their evenings, while the oppressed students are doing homework. In truth, a good portion of the Brothers’ nights are spent correcting papers and preparing the next day’s lesson.

“On the second floor there are private rooms, furnished with a desk, a bookcase and a bed, which is used every now and then to sleep in, because the Brothers do have to sleep. So now we all know about the Brothers’ life of luxury [luxury????].”

So whatever students might have been thinking, the reality was a comfortable yet sparse existence in a community setting. Yet imaginations of young people can run wild.

“It has been a rumor with the kids through the decades that there was a bowling alley and swimming pool in the school basement,” Brother Thomas Ryan, C.F.X., said.

There is no bowling alley. There is no swimming pool. Yet there was a barbershop, and cook’s quarters.

That rumor about the swimming pool has been passed down for a long time as a hoax and leads us to a satire story written by 2019 graduate Laurenz Mosquito in the school newspaper, *The Kestrel*, now an online-only publication [xkestrel.com].

The story begins: “The railroad club, headed by freshman Civics teacher Brother Thomas Ryan, C.F.X., unexpectedly announced last Tuesday the acquisition of Xavier’s basement swimming pool, which had previously belonged to the school’s brothers. As part of the acquisition, Brother Ryan announced that only members of the railroad club could use the establishment, causing immediate backlash from his congregational colleagues, none of whom are part of railroad club.”

We reached out to Mosquito. “I heard about it in my freshman year from upperclassmen. They’d say, ‘Did you know the Brothers had a swimming pool in the basement?’” Mosquito said. “It is a rite of passage, you might say.”

So that became fodder for his story.

“I needed to write a satire article; I felt I hadn’t done one in long time,” Mosquito said. “I wanted to write a topic everyone kind of knew about, and I could joke around about it.”

Bowling is another story. Back in 1961 planning was ongoing for Xavier High School. An architectural drawing of the campus is dated June 6, 1961, and now adorns a wall in the hallway to the administrative offices. There is no design for bowling lanes on that blueprint or any others uncovered.

However, on June 15, 1961, a packet from the architectural design division of AMF-Pinspotters provided “sheets [that] give a general description of the services and suggested requirements for planning a bowling establishment.” AMF-

Pinspotters was a subsidiary of American Machine & Foundry Co. It appears there was at least interest in what it might take to build a few lanes.

We checked in with Artie Kohs, the first hire when the building opened in 1963, and Larry

wealthy, and I think he figured this would give us a better chance. Both my brother and I went to college.”

Francesco went to Merrimack and then to the University of Rhode Island, earning undergraduate and Masters

“I came to Xavier in the fall of 1970. I never heard of a bowling alley being planned at Xavier, but it might explain what was a long storage room in the basement on the side of the building nearest to Route 9.” –BROTHER JAMES

McHugh, the first football coach, who was hired by Kohs. Neither of them knew anything about a bowling alley or lanes. Neither did Brother James Connolly, C.F.X.

“I came to Xavier in the fall of 1970,” Brother James said. “I never heard of a bowling alley being planned at Xavier, but it might explain what was a long storage room in the basement on the side of the building nearest to Route 9.”

He did remember the cook’s quarters, though. After all, there once were about two dozen Brothers teaching at Xavier and living in the Brothers Residence. The original blueprints had 30 bedrooms, more like dorm rooms, on the second floor for the Brothers.

“Brother Robert Sullivan [the first principal] brought Mrs. Napolitano, her daughter and two sons to Xavier from our former retreat house on Juniper Hill in Vermont where Mrs. Napolitano was the cook,” Brother James said.

Her son Ciro, now deceased, graduated in the first class in 1967. Her son Francesco graduated in 1969.

“Snow days weren’t a problem,” Francesco said with a hearty laugh. “And you couldn’t escape anything.”

Francesco remembers helping with chores inside the school and outside on the grounds. He said things worked out well all those years ago.

“Brother Robert was kind of a father figure. Our father had passed away,” Francesco remembers. “We weren’t very

degrees in civil engineering. He would spend his 40-year career largely in mechanical engineering at Connecticut companies, including Pratt & Whitney.

Francesco said one of mother’s talents was making use of everything, thus saving money for the school. He called it “filet of leftovers.”

“Her cooking was great,” Brother James remembered. “All homemade from scratch. Her Italian dishes were magnificent. Her homemade fudge was magnificent!”

McHugh remembers her, too.

“She was a wonderful woman who loved the Brothers and cooked for them like they were her family, and the Brothers, likewise, loved her and her cooking,” McHugh said. “Artie [Kohs] and myself were the first two lay teachers, and we did eat with the Brothers for lunch the first couple of years. It was excellent and free, but that benefit went away pretty quick as we both added some weight. I ballooned up 15 pounds.”

Back then the Brothers Residence also had a barbershop which was on the original blueprints as were the cook’s quarters.

“I remember the barbershop well as the Brothers trained me as a barber, and I gave many a haircut in the barbershop,” Brother James said. 🌸



Rich Magner '69 No Fan of Fanfare

When Rich Magner announced his retirement in February, effective at the end of the 2019-2020 school year, he wanted no fanfare.

He never has.

Magner is a 1969 graduate who spent a good part of his life here as a student-athlete, coach, teacher, guidance counselor and director of guidance. He went to Rollins on a baseball scholarship and played eight seasons in the Los Angeles Dodgers' minor league system. He returned to Xavier in 1979 and ended up coaching basketball and baseball.

When he decided to retire as baseball coach before the 2014 season, he went to athletic director Tony Jaskot '69. The team would not find out until the end of the season.

"I said, 'Let's not say anything about it.' That's pretty much it," Magner told the Middletown Press. "I've always felt the baseball season was about the players and not the coaches."

So it is little wonder that when we posted a brief item on his retirement on social media this winter that many people left comments honoring him.

"You always kept winning and losing in perspective, and the student or athlete came first, not the wins and losses," one said.

When the baseball field at Xavier was dedicated to Magner in 2016, he said little. Later he spoke to the Middletown Press.

"I planned to speak more, but emotion got the best of things,"

Magner said. "I wanted to thank my family and everyone ... but what more could I say? The other people said everything, although I'm not so sure most of it is true.

"Besides, the thing all the kids on the two teams want is to play the game and not listen to a bunch of old guys go on and on for half an hour. I know that's how I would feel. I've been there."

A sense of humor, a sense of honor. Always present in Mr. Magner.

"You taught me an appreciation for dry wit and common sense!" wrote one person. *"I was just a scorekeeper for baseball, and you'd still offer to throw me BP after your arm was dead from throwing to the team. Class act!"*

We could go on and on ... but Mr. Magner would not like that. 🌸



JAYNE VITALE'S Colorful Career

Jayne Vitale came to Xavier in 1986 answering an ad for a history teacher. She left 34 years later as an art teacher who made history by building the program from infancy.

At first, she said no to that art position.

"I went home and they called and asked me to reconsider, and I said OK, I'll do it, but I said I'm not planning on staying long, and 34 years later here we are," Vitale recalled when she announced her retirement last winter, effective at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Many commented on that Xavier Facebook post about Vitale.

"Hands down, one of the best souls I have ever encountered!" wrote one person. *"Always present and always involved in all things Xavier. She has shaped many young men over the years and each of us is better for having her as a teacher and mentor."*

Wrote another: *"I actually own one of Ms. Vitale's watercolors, which I acquired at a Xavier auction many years ago; it is a cherished possession."*

Vitale was Fine Arts department chair from 1999-2014. She was also a foreign language teacher, a department she chaired; was the longtime moderator of the National Honor Society and of the Italian Club, leading many trips to Italy. Those also inspired her to make jewelry.

"I'm happy to own some of Jayne's handmade jewelry inspired from her journeys to Venice ... a truly remarkable woman! Bravo!" wrote another on Facebook.

Last spring, with the students participating in online distance learning, she helped produce a digital art show. Chris Beaudoin '22 won the "Best in Show" award.

He was one of her many outstanding students over the years.

"She was one of the most helpful, caring ... one of the most kind and generous teachers I've ever had," Beaudoin said. *"She helped me in my art in any way possible. She just could not have been any better."*

The portrait of Ms. Vitale was drawn by Chris. 🌸



LOOKING BACK AT 20/20

After A Year Unlike Any Other In School History, We Asked Some Administrators And Faculty What They Have Learned



“Words like adaptability, flexibility, empathy, driven and success come to mind when I think back to the early spring of 2020. This wonderful community that we are all a part of rallied around each other together to deliver a quality online learning product just four days after school was closed. Equally impressive was how we all got together again in mid-July and prepared to open our building on-time and with full enrollment. The faculty and staff of Xavier continue to be singularly focused on delivering a high quality Catholic education to our students. I am blessed to be part of such a wonderful group of compassionate teammates.”

~DAVE EUSTIS, HEADMASTER

“It is not so much what I have learned as what has been reinforced. Without the wonderful technological marvels we now possess, we would have all gone home in March and school would have stopped. I have always known that human relationships are critical to a Catholic and Xaverian education. Remotely, our students can learn the Pythagorean Theorem, Newton’s Third Law, *Marbury v. Madison*, and *The Canterbury Tales* and they will know enough to pass a test or apply these lessons to their lives. Nonetheless, what makes a Xavier education special are the bonds and relationships formed by in-person instruction both in and outside the classroom. The pandemic has taught me to cherish and appreciate this fact more than ever before.”



~BRENDAN DONOHUE, PRINCIPAL

“The events of this past year have taught me a lot about the role of education in the lives of young men. Most importantly, it has taught me that what we do that is most valuable has little to do with curricula, lesson plans, lectures, assessments, etc. Being forced to shift Xavier’s educational program online this past spring taught me, and I think a lot of other people too, that it is the other “stuff” that makes Xavier truly special. It’s things like the daily banter between peers at lunch, the inspirational team meetings in locker rooms, the extra help sessions after school, and the pastoral conferences when students have hit rock bottom that matter most. In short, it’s the cultivation of enduring personal relationships that stands as the hallmark of a Xaverian education. This is the aspect of Xavier’s community that COVID-19 impacted most. Moving forward, it is my hope that adjusted priorities, born from our experiences last spring, can help us to continue to improve our abilities to meet the needs of our students whether online or on campus.”

~KYLE ST. GEORGE, ACADEMIC DEAN



“2020 has sure been unlike any other year I have experience. From a worldwide pandemic, to racial tensions, and even historical natural disasters we have all experienced some sort of loss. Our mental and physical toughness has certainly been put to the test. Looking back on the year I find myself going back to the old saying – “*The test of a man’s character is what it takes to stop him.*”

No matter how terrible life seems to get we must never forget to see all the wonderful things that still exist. 2020 was able to remind me about what I care about most – my relationships. Nothing is more important to me than the relationships I am blessed to have with my family, friends, colleagues, and most of all my students and players both past and present. With all the craziness that occurred in 2020 one could certainly expect that their relationships could have been negatively impacted either in the short term or the long term. However, I am happy to say that my relationships have never been stronger. As long as they are at the core of everything you do you will never lose them. The Xaverian Brothers taught me long ago the value of enduring personal relationships and I have never forgotten that. My hope is that all of you will do the same in your lives both now and in the future, and never lose sight of all the great relationships God has blessed you with.”

~NICHOLAS CERRETA '01, DEAN OF STUDENTS



“What I learned came from our beginning of school retreat this past August. Benjamin Horrigan, the XBSS Formation Director, noted that “*every interruption is an opportunity*”. Looking back all the way to March I now see an opportunity. This is an opportunity to become a better father, husband, son, brother, friend, colleague and mentor.”

~MATTHEW MARTORELLI, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR



“At the end of May 2020, I became a father. That alone brought on significant learning and growth, as I had to figure out how to care for my daughter and

open my heart to a new type of love. On top of that, our world faced the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, decisions about simple things became complicated, and it seemed that each day brought on a new challenge. During that time, I learned to focus on what is essential and carry out tasks in new ways. Just as I adapted to my role as a parent, I adjusted to living in a world with a highly infectious disease as always relying on God and family to persevere.”

~NICHOLAS GRASSO '05, DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

“With in-person classes ending last March, it wasn’t long before I realized how much I missed the day-to-day contact with the students – in the classroom, in the school store, in exchanging hellos in the hallways, in the Railroad Club model room, in after school one-on-one conversations. And then in mid-May, I stood in cap and gown before a camera in a solitary classroom to record my script as graduation emcee. Such an empty feeling – no overflow crowd in the gym; no chance to congratulate, shake hands, hug those seniors who had come to mean so much to me the past four years, no tossing caps in the air to signify their final act as seniors and to begin their status as alumni. What have I learned from 2020? Not to take anything for granted. Watching 600 plus students walking the hallways and in classrooms every day in masks and hoping and praying they will not be denied the ceremonies, the celebrations, the events, the memories, and the closure that so unfortunately were denied to the members of the Class of 2020 in their final months as Xavier men.”

~BROTHER THOMAS RYAN, C.F.X., SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER

“If the wild ride of 2020 has shown us anything, it’s that Xavier’s reputation for quick, innovative thinking is well-deserved. Taking our mission to lead by serving, we listened to parents, students, and teachers to make a solid plan for our 2020-21 school year. We are able to provide all of our students, where they are online or virtual, five full days of rigorous academics. Things may not look the same as they did in the past, but Xavier’s commitment to its students and community at large are unchanged. On a personal note, I feel that this era has made us as a community aware that we are in this together. Now more than ever, we have to lift each other up, support our colleagues, whether they are a parent, an administrator, or a student, so that we can successfully navigate into the future.”



~TRACY COSTA, SPANISH TEACHER



“When I think back on the COVID experience from the late winter and spring of 2020, the one thing that comes to mind is to not take things for granted. While initially the break from the hectic schedule was nice, eventually the days dragged and the interactions were missed. Viewing the sometimes long days working with various groups as a blessing and making the most of every interaction is what I will be taking from the experience moving forward.”

~DAVID APPLGATE '98, SCIENCE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

“The biggest lesson that I have learned from the chaos of 2020 is how much relationships mean to me. Not being able to see family and friends, colleagues, and my students had a huge impact on me. I have always valued the relationships I have, but I will not be taking them for granted anymore. Being creative and adapting, two things that are not my strong suite, have become essential this year and have made me realize how lucky I am to be a part of the Xavier family and have the privilege to come here each day and be surrounded by such kind, caring, and thoughtful people.”

~MEGHAN KEEFFE, SCIENCE TEACHER



Embracing Life

I Can See You ... Hear You ... So Close, Yet So Far Away

Watching a Yard Goats game in Hartford, taking in a concert on the lawn of Tanglewood, enjoying a leisurely dinner inside a restaurant on Main Street in Middletown, or meandering a bit while grocery shopping.

These are just a few things we figured would always be there whenever we needed them. While that sort of list is almost endless depending on your interests, the biggest thing taken away by COVID-19, and possibly never to be taken for granted again, is the desire for human interaction.

In the Bible we can find examples of the healing touch, the reassuring touch, the cleansing touch from Jesus. Touch is such a natural instinct, like breathing; who thought much about it until the coronavirus altered life? But we see the importance as people talked about what they should no longer take for granted.

"Personal relationships ... pat on the back, shaking hands or a hug, and how important being positive is during times of stress," said Larry McHugh, President of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce and former Xavier football coach and teacher.

Joanne Vidallon, mother of Allen '23, has seen many things as a nurse on the front lines of the coronavirus battle.

"Things that seemed 'small' were actually as important as 'big things' in life," Vidallon said. *"A simple hug, a kiss, a smile, inviting family and friends for dinners or even opening a mailbox without the fear of getting sick -- these are all things we've thought carelessly about. But most of all, we have learned to cherish health and life. Our health and life are precious gifts from God."*

Bryan Farrington '05 is hopeful that we all have learned a few things.

"I keep returning to three concepts: appreciation, empathy and compassion," Farrington said. *"I have a newfound appreciation for childcare workers, front line workers, teachers, and a host of other groups of people that do extremely critical work but can easily fade into the background when things are 'normal.'"*

"COVID has had the ability to smash together worlds (your home world and work world, for example) that typically don't intersect quite as often or quite as forcefully. When faced with these situations, it's been a helpful exercise to be reminded that everyone is using the tools they have to navigate this situation and we're all doing the best we can. It wouldn't hurt for humanity, whenever we return to normal, to continue to appreciate, have empathy for, and compassion for those around us."

Ken Champion '75, who owns his own construction management firm, thinks there may be a message in all of this, something to build on.

"I feel that God's recalibrating man," Champion said. *"I don't understand it yet, but I think we need to make changes in our daily lives. I think it's a message ... it's time."*

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-KEN CHAMPION '75

"I can figure out a lot of things and build a lot of things; I haven't figured this out yet, but that's what my heart is telling me."

Brother Thomas Ryan, C.F.X., has spent his life teaching our youth, and his classroom banter and interaction with the students is a testament to his love for the work he has done as a Xaverian Brother.

"I will never take personally interacting with the students for granted ... You can't take for granted how much the students do enhance your life," Brother Ryan said.

He reached out to more than 50 students by phone in May and June as part of an effort by Xavier to stay connected in as many ways as possible after the coronavirus shut down in-person learning in March. *"It was a really special experience,"* he said. *"Parents were very gratified that Xavier took that step."*

From the people who could not visit a loved one in the hospital or a nursing home to the grandparents who could not hug their grandchildren, you don't need science to tell you the benefits of human interaction: physically, emotionally, and socially. Then again, there have been many scientific studies on the subject that reveal touching releases so-called "feel good" hormones.

The coronavirus trapped them.

Technology enabled school to keep going in the virtual classroom until we could get back in person in September.

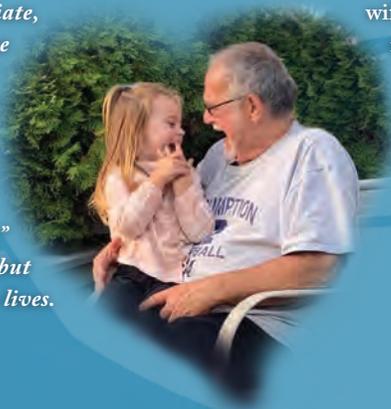
And, sure, video calls with family and friends were a nice diversion so we weren't totally out of touch, yet the Zoom Boom was nice for just so long. I CAN SEE YOU. I CAN HEAR YOU. SO CLOSE. BUT SO FAR AWAY.

Visits to see the grandkids, outside, six feet away, masks on, grew old too. And sad was the day last spring that our 3 1/2-year-old granddaughter instinctually went to hug her grandmother. And my instinct, to protect my wife, to protect my granddaughter, after everything that was drilled into me from media reports, day in and day out as the number of deaths and hospitalizations climbed in the state, was to stop it.

She was 3 1/2 years old. She cried. What was I thinking?

SHE NEEDED A HUG.

Jeff Otterbein '72,
Associate Director of Communications



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