

DuxEsto

MAGAZINE

McMenamy House
House Sorting Ceremony 2019



ACADEMICALLY
DRIVEN

PAGE 6

AUTHENTICALLY
FAITHFUL

PAGE 10

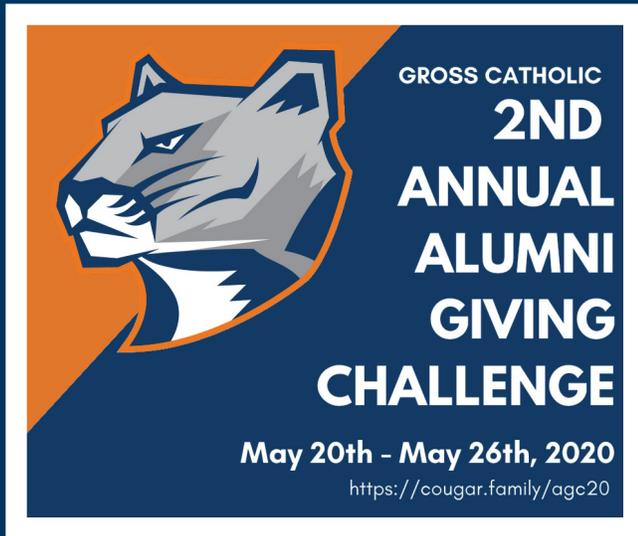
ALUMNI FEATURE

PAGE 16



GROSS CATHOLIC
FAITHFUL • COMPASSIONATE • DRIVEN

Upcoming Virtual Events



Dux Esto Magazine

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The Gross Catholic Advancement Office made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this magazine. Please accept our apology for any errors or omissions.

“Never, ever give up on hope. Never doubt, never tire, and never become discouraged. Be not afraid.”

St. John Paul II



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am writing this in solitude here at Gross Catholic while school, as we know it, has been suspended due to COVID-19. My thoughts and prayers continue to be with all of you during these unprecedented times filled with challenges and uncertainties. My own feelings of anxiety are completely calmed by prayer and the knowledge that our community is strong. We are hopeful. We are not discouraged. And any fears are quelled by a call to action.

In responding to this situation, I have never been more proud of Gross Catholic! Our faculty and staff have risen to the occasion. Our teachers have embraced the challenge and have relied on their professionalism and the abundance of available resources to continue educating our students. Our students have accepted their new reality with resolve and a positive attitude. Our parents have partnered with us and are supporting our efforts and continue working alongside us. All of us are teaching. All of us are learning. And we are helping each other as we go along.

However, as these days have turned to weeks and now months, it has become abundantly clear that our school is much more than books, curriculum, testing. We are people. We are community. We are family. The loss we are feeling is for each other and for the connectedness we feel to each other. And it is here that we must remain hopeful. That we not be discouraged. And that our fears be subdued by the knowledge that we remain family, during these times and always. And that the challenges of the present will only make us stronger in the future. We will be better than ever and even more grateful for the gift of the Cougar Family.

We are proud of our school. We are proud of our community. And we are grateful for all of the blessings we continue to receive.

I remain confident that with God's grace and protection, we will return to our old way of life. Things will be the same, yet we will be different. Better. Stronger. Faithful, compassionate, and driven.

May God continue to bless each and every one of you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Dorothy A. Ostrowski". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Dorothy A. Ostrowski
President

We invite you to honor your loved ones by enrolling them in Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) Memorial Society. This special memorial, created in 1983, serves two important purposes:

- It is a meaningful way to remember loved ones daily in the Masses and prayers of the students and faculty of Gross Catholic High School.
- It affirms your belief in Catholic education by supporting the students of Gross Catholic. Gifts to the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Memorial Society are accepted throughout the year as we support your prayer intentions.

The Cougar Family prays for the enrolled member of the OLPH Memorial Society daily. Please join with us as we prayerfully remember our loved ones, especially those who have preceded us and live in God's presence.

i If you would like to receive OLPH Memorial envelopes to enroll a loved one, please contact the **Advancement Office at 402.734.2000.**

MEMORIALS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2019 - MARCH 31, 2020

IN HONOR OF

Theresa Cavanaugh
Al and Clare Goblirsch
Rich Handzlik

Chuck and Kathy Monico
Dane Sinnott
Peg Swanson

IN MEMORY OF

Roland "Rolly" Acker
Elizabeth "Betty" R. Bartman
Fr. Fernando Benliro
Sharon L. Bloechle
Kyron A. Bogacz
Raymond Braniff
Robert Broghammer
Joseph Burkardt
(Ret) Lt Col James Michael Burson
Gene D. Byrne
Stanley J. Canova, Jr.
Stanley J. Canova, Sr.
Shirley Carnazzo
Mary Casart-Havener, '86
George Chonis
Boyd Clements
Marjory Clements
Gloria J. Cottone
Bonnie Culhane
Gary DeVaughn
Eleanor Drzaic
Frank Fonfara
Richard Franek
Dale Fuchser
Regina Fuksa
Mary Ann Gaddie
Michael Geaghan
Lori Gigliotti
Anthony Grazziano
Rose Greisen
Bruce Hansen
Lester Hegge
Marlowe D. Holstrum
Darci Homan

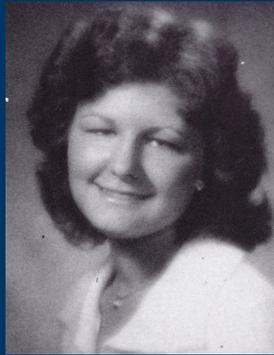
Marjorie Kaminski
Dean Klein
Suzie Klosterman
Joseph R. Knott
Jean Therese Koenig
Timothy Konold, '08
Julia Kopiasz
Mary Koziel
Mary Ann Kramolisch
Ed Krance
James Kroupa
Douglas Lippoid
LaDonna Lockwood
Ralph D. Marasco
Joseph Martinez
Barbara (Deseck) McCook, '79
Mary Mendenhall
Ellen Morrow
Melba Moseley
Amy Lynn Niebling
Evelyne Nollett
Gerald Nystrom
Todd Nystrom, '90
Mary O'Riley
Dorothy Olechoski
Ronald Park
Daniel E. Pogge
Tyler Prosocki
Elizabeth Ripa
Fred Sacco
Patty Sacco
Dennis Schafer
Richard Schenkelberg
Anne M. Sloup
James "Jim" J. Sobczyk



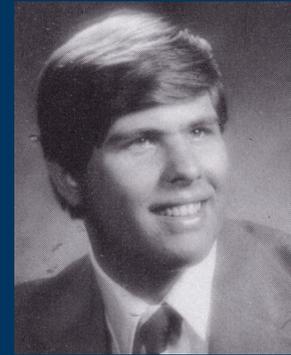
Please pray for our recently deceased members of the Cougar Alumni Family. May the souls of the faithfully departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

IN MEMORY OF (CONT.)

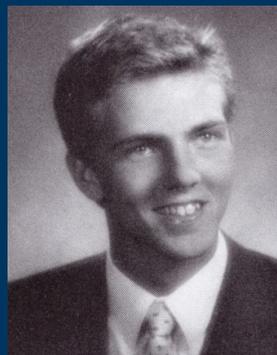
Paul Sopinski
Blanche St. Germaine
Rita T. Starr
Christine Stavneak
Marilyn Stoysich
Rita Stoysich
Fred Stranglen
Adelaide Szynskie
Austina Trudeau
David True, '88
Lyle Vaske
Chris Velasquez
Boris "B.J." Visty
Mary Votek
Michael J. Wees
Lloyd Welniak
Maureen (Duffy) Wilwerding
Kathleen E. Winbinger
Cecile-Marie Zielinski
James Zulfer



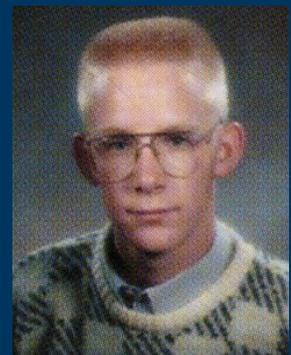
**Barbara Deseck
McCook,
Class of 1979**



**Wayne Swanson,
Class of 1979**



**Greg Busch,
Class of 1987**



**David True,
Class of 1988**

The Gross Catholic High School Advancement Office made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this report. Please accept our apology if we have misspelled a name or omitted anyone. If you notice such an error, please notify our office so we may correct our records.



Academically Driven



In his computer lab at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Dr. James Gehringer '10 creates a virtual reality game for children with cerebral palsy.

With a controller in each hand and a 3-D headset, children with disabilities can become part of an interactive rocket game. They can pull the plunger out of each rocket and make them blast off.

It is more than just fun, it's therapy. Working with physical therapists at the Monroe Meyer Institute, Gehringer programs the game so the body motions for removing the rocket plunger will improve strength and coordination in the children's weakened arms.

The rocket game is part of a suite of virtual reality games Gehringer is creating that will substitute or enhance physical therapy sessions.

"I'm making a major push to have it ready for summer," he said.

Gehringer has a doctorate from UNMC in Medical

Dr. James Gehringer '10 (right) in his computer lab at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Sciences Interdepartmental Areas with a specialty in rehabilitative sciences. How he got to this point in his career began with an interest in technology as a student at Gross Catholic High School.

Dr. Gehringer is just one of a growing number of former Gross students who have pursued and excelled in technology careers, inspired by classes and clubs with Steve Hamersky.

Hamersky, who is a one-man technology department at Gross, can name off the top of his head where some his former students work: Union Pacific Railroad, First National Bank of Omaha, Offutt Air Force Base, BBH Architecture and Mutual of Omaha. And those are just the ones locally.

The seeds of these careers sprouted in ground-floor classrooms in the back of Gross High.

Walking through Hamersky's three rooms today, you see tables of desktop computers, two practice fields for robotic competition, hand tools, circuit boards, wires, wireless controls, storage bins stacked with spare parts, and machines that drill, screw, cut and sand. It is technology that supports students' interests in everything from robotics to engineering to architecture to cyber security.

He apologizes for the mess. Yet the untidy atmosphere speaks to a nurturing culture of creativity.

"A lot of times in school, (students) are told what to do," he said. Structured courses that lay out all the work and procedures give students little opportunity to discover on their own, he said, to experiment, to problem-solve, to build and to get messy.

Hamersky teaches six elective classes: Engineering Design and 3D Modeling; Architectural Engineering; Robotic Engineering; Visual Programming and Game Design; Computer Security; and AP Computer Science.

Much of the curriculum he developed himself - studying lesson plans on the websites of colleges like MIT and Stanford - because of a dearth of technology lessons for high schools.

About 25 years ago, Hamersky started Gross' Engineering Team, then added the Robotics team 10 years ago and the Innovation team 5 years ago. The Cyber Security team and the Drone team were added in the fall of 2019.

Gross' Robotics teams rank among the best in the nation. There are four high school teams and one middle school team. In 2019, the middle school team won every tournament including the state championship and finished 8th in robot skills at the World Championship. One high school team finished as semi-finalist at the State Championship, which qualified the team for the World Championship.

In this year's Nebraska Robotics State Championship, two high school teams made the quarter-finals and one team finished in the semi-finals, which again qualified them for the World

"This gives kids the opportunity to be creative in a school environment without changing core classes," said Hamersky.

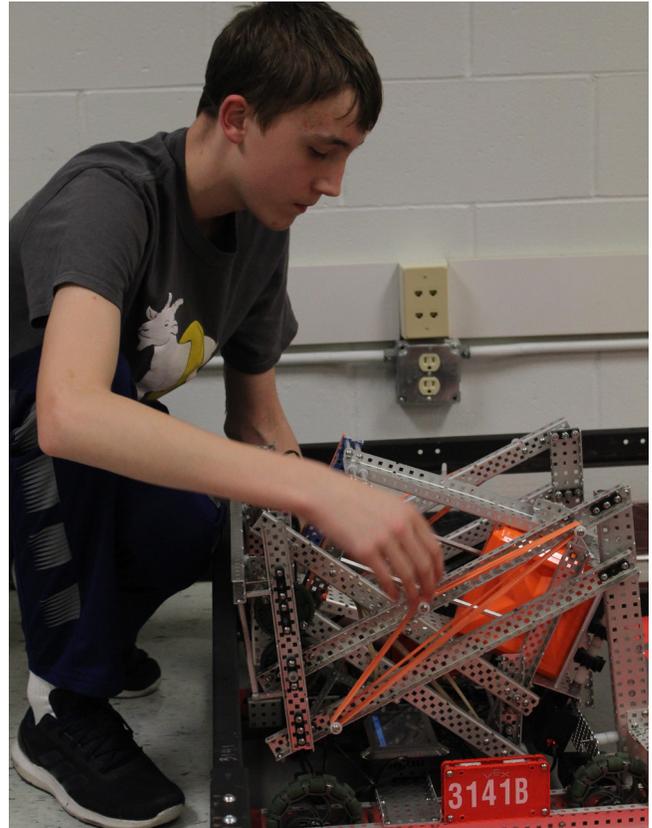
Championship. Another team qualified for the World Championship through robot skills.

"It's amazing that they are actually becoming well-known among the national teams," Hamersky said.

Gross, which fielded a robotics team at a tournament in China, is close to becoming one of the top 16 teams in the world, he said.

Through robotics, students apply mathematics and engineering, partner with other teams, and learn to communicate and to trust. But most of all, they have to build a robot and make it work, he said.

"Kids don't get a lot of opportunities to design and trouble-shoot complicated systems," he said.



Sophomore Nathan Schmitz works on his team robot for the Gross Catholic Robotics Team.

At UNMC, Gehringer said that is exactly what he does today.

“The skills that I use now reach back,” he said. “The foundation started back in high school.”

Gehringer describes Hamersky as “a teacher who knew how to lead you to figure it out yourself. His teaching strategies definitely set me up for success.”

Karla Jacobo agrees. The 2014 Gross graduate said she never would be working for Gallup Inc. in cyber security if it wasn’t for spending three years on the Robotics Team. She was the only girl on the team, which went to state and nationals each year.

“It was a bit intimidating joining the team,” she said, because she knew little about technology.

Her first coding task was to make the robot move in a square. She took the robot into the hall, and although it didn’t move in a square, it did move. She remembers calling to Hamersky to come and see.

“That was something real special,” she said.

After that, her competitive juices began to flow, and she spent more and more time building and programming.

Pursuing a degree in technology was a “happy accident,” she said. She did not have a real direction until Hamersky helped her fill out a scholarship application to the University of Nebraska at Omaha for women in technology. He asked her if she wanted to study computer science. Her response: “I guess so.”

“If it wasn’t for the robotics team, I wouldn’t have studied what I studied,” she said.

While at UNO, she was introduced to cyber security, which was more appealing than coding, she said. Beginning at Gallup as an intern, Jacobo now works as the lead for forensic and incident response, combing through spam filters and analyzing malware to protect Gallup’s technology.

“I really like problem-solving ... there’s something really rewarding about that,” she said. “It’s the same feeling as when you get that robot to run.”

Hamersky’s teams give students authentic career experience, whether it is the Engineering Team



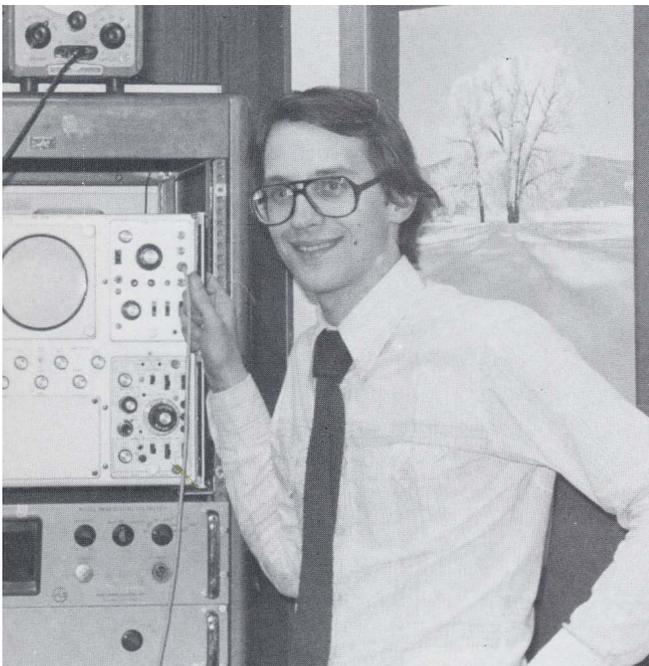
Freshman Shawn Pelchat makes modifications to his competition robot.

designing an orphanage in Haiti, the Innovation Team developing a “smart” public trash can that signals when it is full, or the Cyber Patriot Team practicing how to defend against hackers.

“It gives the students the opportunity to decide if it’s the right career fit,” he said.

If it is the right fit, then Gross graduates are in luck. There is an abundance of unfilled, high-paying, technology jobs in Nebraska, so much so that state and university officials are calling it “a workforce crisis.” The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce has created two initiatives aimed at bringing 10,000 tech workers into the Omaha market within five years. Nebraska Gov. Peter Ricketts and the legislature have proposed giving away millions of dollars in college scholarships specifically for high school students interested in technology and other highly skilled careers.

It is such a different world from when Steve Hamersky began teaching physics at Daniel J. Gross High School in the winter of 1977. His only tool for making calculations was a slide ruler.



Steve Hamersky pictured from the 1977 yearbook when he joined the faculty at the beginning of the second semester.

Hamersky had just graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in math and

a minor in physics when the Rev. Dave Paul, Gross’ principal, called. The school had a teaching position open mid-way through the school year. Paul recruited him through the university. He never applied for the job, but it seemed like a perfect fit.

Through the years, he pursued his interest in technology. In the 1990s, he almost finished a computer science degree at UNO. He participated in Research for Teachers in computer science for four years, and he taught Cisco certification classes at Gross and Metropolitan Community College for nine years. His knowledge of architecture and building is first-hand. His dad is an architect and he helped build their home in Lincoln. Hamersky also worked on construction crews.

“I learned from the trade side,” he said.

Hamersky is strategic in the variety of classes and clubs he offers at Gross. He wants students to explore - “try things out” - and make their own choices.

Gehringer said he first met Hamersky in middle school when he attended a couple of his summer camps. When he came to Gross, the 2010 graduate joined the Engineering Team and took physics and AP computer programming, where he learned JAVA and had his first formal experience writing code.

“I took these courses and had a ton of fun,” he said.

But he was also having fun in another area of interest - music. He was in band, jazz, swing choir and the musicals.

In his junior year, Hamersky asked him about plans for college. Gehringer told him he was torn between the arts and computer engineering.

“He was just kind of listening to my thoughts,” Gehringer said, not pushing him in either direction, but helping him figure it out on his own. “It was one of the major factors why I tried computer engineering.

“A teacher with a belief in me,” Gehringer said, “gave me the confidence to do it myself.”

Authentically Faithful

Gross Catholic's theology teachers Kim Matzen and Tracy Brousek are on a mission.

As co-chairwomen of the Mission Integration Team, MIT, they are passionate about developing ways to help faculty and staff put their Catholic beliefs into action.

"The mission is to be formed by Mary for the mission of Christ," Brousek said.

MIT is aimed specifically at helping teachers and staff deepen their faith. In their monthly meetings with team members from almost every department in the building, they create and promote opportunities for practicing Catholicism every day.

Weekly Masses, evening adult faith-formation and community service opportunities are just a few examples of MIT's work.

Dan Connelly, another theology teacher, gave a presentation on the Gospel of Luke during Lent, and then a talk on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels during Advent.

MIT provides support to teachers and staff going through illness or death in the family. Likewise, MIT helps celebrate when there are births and provides a "welcome" gift basket to new teachers.

After parent-teacher conferences, MIT creates an atmosphere of fellowship for teachers by sponsoring food and beverage, Matzen said.

"It's nothing grand," Brousek said. "But it's always needed and appreciated."

MIT is rooted in Marianist practice. Matzen, a lay Marianist minister, said the approach to faith-formation and community-building is "looking through the Marianist lens."

The Marianists, who founded Gross Catholic, work with MIT to develop a formal 4-year plan. Together they create 2-year benchmarks to show progress,

and Marianist brothers visit from St. Louis to keep abreast of achievement. The Marianists no longer have any brothers in residence, but through this plan's teachings, the faculty and staff will live their faith in such a way that the public will "know we are Marianists," Brousek said.



Gross Catholic Marianist LIFE Core Team at the Central LIFE retreat in Dayton, Ohio.

MIT also influences the student's faith journey through their organization,

Living In Faith Experience, or LIFE. This group has a core team of about eight students, who attend a Marianist summer religious camp. Once back at school, they plan Wednesday night gatherings around topics that include Faith in the Secular World, Different Forms of Prayer, and Stress. These 2½-hour meetings, with dinner, small group discussions and videos, attract between 40 to 70 Gross students.

Another part of the MIT plan is community service, which the faculty shares with students. During Homecoming Week, the school hosts a service day. Other opportunities during the year might include raking the yards of the elderly in the community or help at events at the Kroc Center.

While Gross requires students to complete 25 hours of community service each year, MIT is coming up with ways to teach younger students how to get involved. They help them identify opportunities to serve, then show them it is easier to go to events with friends or in a group, Brousek said.

"We try to help facilitate this," Brousek said. "We try to make it more of an invitation to serve rather than a mandate to serve."

“We need a deeper, more articulate reason,” Brousek said of working with students to develop a spiritual meaningful experience. “We are part of the body of Christ . . . he tells us to do it so we do it.”

For older students, their senior community service project involves social justice and Catholic doctrine. They are taught that they are responsible for helping those less fortunate.

Although Gross Catholic has had a formal service program for about 15 years, Brousek said, it has only been in the past few years that MIT has addressed the question of why we must.

Purposefully Compassionate

Before freshmen even take their first steps into Gross Catholic, more than half of them have gotten a jump start on their service hours.

The summer before school starts is a busy time with several opportunities for service, said Admissions Director Michala Jacobson. At the same time, volunteering for service projects is a good way for incoming freshmen to meet and get to know one another in a casual, non-academic environment.

The Kroc Center and the Food Bank of the Heartland are just two organizations that need volunteers. Between 60 and 70 freshmen volunteered at one or both organizations during the summer months.

“It says a lot about the students,” Jacobson said.

Jacobson, along with Campus Minister Michele Sweetmon, are co-directors of Freshman Formation, which is building on the successes of the former Freshmen Transition Team.

Through six freshmen assemblies in the first semester and in homerooms, the new students are given the tools to make the best of their four years at Gross.

“What you put into your high school experience is what you get out of it,” Jacobson said.

The freshmen assemblies are designed to empower the new students to get involved in clubs or teams, she said. They learn life skills - organization and time-management. They learn the history of Gross Catholic and what it means to be a Marianist. And they learn they are not alone.

“We need to help students feel welcome.”

Those freshmen who do come from the same elementary schools tend to cling to existing

friends. Jacobson said Freshmen Formation mixes up those clusters of friends and encourage teens to “step outside their comfort zones” to build new friendships and grow through new experiences.

At the end of the first semester, Freshmen Formation has a celebration ceremony that congratulates students and recognizes their growth and effort. During the second semester, freshmen are more independent in making choices and friends. But Jacobson and Sweetmon keep in contact to make sure each student is getting involved.

When students are involved, they are more likely to stay, Jacobson said.

“We want them to stay connected with us all four years,” she said.



Gross Catholic students volunteering at the Kroc Center.

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE GIVING LEVELS

We hope you'll join us at the following giving levels, however, gifts of any amount are appreciated and benefit our students.

PLATINUM
\$10,000 and above

GOLD
\$7,500-\$9,999

SILVER
\$5,000-\$7,499

BRONZE
\$2,500-\$4,999

ORANGE & BLUE
\$1,000-\$2,499

Go to grosscatholic.org to make your contribution to the Dux Esto Annual Fund.

 Please contact the Development Office at **402.734.2000** or grosscatholic.org/annual-fund for more information.



DUX ESTO ANNUAL FUND



As a Catholic school, we rely on generous support to make up the difference between tuition revenue and the full cost of providing a superior academic program. The Dux Esto Annual Fund is our annual giving program that invites all friends of Gross Catholic to invest in our mission with a financial gift.

WHAT ABOUT TUITION?

We greatly appreciate and understand the financial sacrifice our families make to provide their children with an education at Gross Catholic. However, tuition only covers a portion of the cost to educate a student at our school. The remaining amount is supported by advancement efforts like the Dux Esto Annual Fund.

WHY DOES ANNUAL GIVING MATTER?

When you support the Dux Esto Annual Fund, your gift goes to work immediately to strengthen and support Gross Catholic's operating budget, mission and commitment to providing families with an affordable Catholic education.

The Dux Esto Annual Fund provides day-to-day support for every aspect of our school, including:

- Tuition assistance for the students we serve. Over 80 percent of Cougar families receive tuition assistance.
- Competitive salaries for our dedicated and talented faculty members.
- Preservation of buildings and grounds. As we look towards the future, we recognize there are many needs that must be addressed to ensure we maintain our beautiful campus.
- New educational technologies, leading-edge programs and so much more!

Together with other Cougar alumni, students, parents and friends, we can achieve remarkable results. Last year, our generous donors made gifts ranging from \$10 to \$50,000 – and together our community raised nearly \$300,000! Now that's a mighty Cougar impact!

THE PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

The President's Circle involves leadership giving to the Dux Esto Annual Fund at the \$1000 level or higher. Members of the President's Circle are among Gross Catholic's most faithful donors, and they play a vital role in the effort to be certain that every family is able to send their child to Gross Catholic High School.

We hope you will prayerfully consider joining the President's Circle. Of course, Dux Esto Annual Fund gifts at all giving levels are appreciated and have a transformational impact on our school and students.

VICE PRESIDENT OF ADVANCEMENT



Stephen Driscoll was born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska and graduated from Gross Catholic in 2010.

As a student, he was involved in numerous activities including athletics, band, Marianist LIFE, and student council where he became president his senior year. Stephen went on to study at the University of Nebraska where he earned his bachelor's degree in Emergency Management and Journalism.

During his undergraduate, he joined Phi Kappa Theta, a men's Catholic fraternity, and in 2013 worked as a journalist for Catholic News Agency and EWTN in Rome, Italy. After graduating, Stephen worked at the University of Nebraska Foundation as a Director of Development for UNO for nearly four years where he strategically planned, implemented and raised vital funds.

Throughout the years he has remained active at Gross Catholic as a Marianist LIFE moderator and a member of both the Advancement and Alumni Committees. In 2019, Stephen became a member of the Gross Catholic Board of Directors and served on several committees before accepting the position of Vice President of Advancement in March 2020. Stephen is an active leader and member at St. Frances Cabrini parish.

STUDENT LIFE



“WELCOME TO . . .”

Members of the freshmen class congregate quietly on the gym’s west end bleachers, sitting and talking among themselves while cradling lighted tea candles.

Across the gym is the rest of the student body, on their feet, clapping, chanting rallying cries, holding up placards and fist-pumping the air.

It is Sorting Day at Gross Catholic.

Taking a page from Harry Potter, each of the freshmen are about to learn into which “house” they will belong during their high school years and beyond. There are four - all familiar names to Gross alumni: Willett, Barrett, Middleton and McMenemy.

“We don’t have magic here,” said Campus Minister Michele Sweetmon. There is no sorting hat to determine their fate. Instead, the students carry

their candles during the ceremony in the name of Jesus to “share their light with the world.”

Dividing the student body into four houses has many advantages, Sweetmon said. It creates a sense of camaraderie among students from freshmen to seniors. It builds leadership as students take on service projects and other responsibilities. And, using the Trinity as a model, everyone in the house learns they have individual gifts and talents they can put to use to strengthen their community.

Each house has about 100 students and 10 to 15 faculty members. Each has a color, a crest, a motto and house t-shirts. Each has house pride and school spirit.

“A lot of what we do is compete,” she said.

Houses earn points for almost everything they do. There are points for making the honor roll, attending sporting events, club activities or performance, participating in outside activities where students take a stand on a moral issue, and taking part in athletic and non-athletic games. At the end of the year, one house is awarded the Cougar Cup.

The sorting ceremony begins with a prayer. Then Sweetmon, wearing a robe, calls down the freshmen individually to a door that symbolically stands for the entrance to their new home.

Freshman Isabel Simpson stands before the door, ready to push it open. A student on the microphone delivers her assignment with dramatic flair.

“Welcome to Middleton House!”

As she walks through the door, the crimson-clad house members go wild. Simpson walks to the Middleton table at center court and leaves her candle. She is greeted with handshakes, high fives and a baggie of goodies.

“I was really excited,” Simpson said afterward.

She assumed she would be assigned to Middleton because she is a legacy - her sister, Elena, a junior, is from Middleton House.

“I love it. I think it is really cool,” she said of the uniqueness of Gross’ house system and the competitiveness for the Cougar Cup. There is a sense of belonging.

“Your house is kind of like your fam,” she said.

The house concept, first proposed by juniors on a leadership retreat, is in its sixth year. While other Marianist schools and some public schools divide students into houses, Gross was among the first and created different rules.

“Ours functions on a larger, more competitive level,” Sweetmon said.

The Student Advocacy and Leadership Team, or SALT, makes plans for the year, organizing games, managing communications and fundraising for activities.

Each house meets twice a month to conduct business. It could be about collecting canned food for Thanksgiving meals through Operation Others, or to plan two-months worth of school Masses, or to celebrate the feast day of the house patron saint.

While community service is part of each house, students do not earn any points. This is by design.

“What are the characteristics we want our students to have when they leave here?” Sweetmon asked.

Helping others is its own reward. It is what Jesus teaches. It is what is taught at Gross Catholic.

BARRETT



McMENAMY



MIDDLETON



WILLETT



ALUMNI

GROSS CATHOLIC ALUMNI ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COUGAR FAMILY

Joining the U.S. Air Force seemed like a natural dream for a 17-year-old daughter of a career airman.

It was for Yvonne Wilhelm Schilz, whose childhood was one of traveling the world with each of her dad's new assignments.

“Senior year I wanted to go into the military . . . inspired by my dad and mom.”

Back in the 1970s, she had two avenues to become an officer - go through officer training school after college or be accepted into an ROTC college program. Boys with the same dream had a third opportunity - qualify for a military academy.

Then fate intervened. President Gerald Ford opened the military academies to women in the fall of 1975 - Schilz's senior year at Daniel J. Gross High School.

“I remember watching that bill being signed on TV,” she said.

Now, she could dream bigger. She could attend a military academy, too.



Yvonne Wilhelm Schilz '76

In late June 1977, Schilz stepped foot onto the campus of the United States Air Force Academy near Colorado Springs as a member of the second class of women cadets.

She had loved the military life growing up and admired her father's service to his country. He served two tours in Southeast Asia (1966-67 and 1972). He was a radar navigator in B-52s and was “in the air” during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

One of the family's favorite assignments was in Germany, where he was an intelligence officer, flying an RF4-C reconnaissance aircraft. His final assignment was at Offutt Air Force Base as an intelligence officer aboard the EC-135 “Looking Glass” aircraft.

Schilz liked how the Air Force treated families, and the Wilhelms had a big one. Mom, the late Charleen Wilhelm, managed the reassignments and deployments with six children. But wherever they ended up, there was support and a community with other Air Force families.

“The Air Force connections became your second family,” Schilz said.

Schilz graduated from the academy in 1981 to start a career that took her to Mississippi, Florida, South Dakota, Alabama, Washington, D.C., Massachusetts and she has traveled in Europe. She served in Air Traffic Control assignments, including chief of Air Traffic Control at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and then chief for another three years at Offutt. She's been a strategic planner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was a Fellow on the Carnegie Corp. of New York Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. She was also a squadron commander and a group commander of multiple squadrons across the northeastern United States. Before retiring as a colonel in 2008, she worked at the Pentagon.

“I was never bored a day,” she said.

Schilz encourages women to consider military service. Every opportunity that was available to men is now available to women, she stresses. “That wasn't true when I started.”

Following Schilz into the Air Force was her younger brother Andrew Wilhelm ('80). Andrew, also influenced by his father, entered the Air Force through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on an ROTC scholarship. His career took him all over the world, from Central America to Europe, as a transportation and logistics officer. His last

assignment was with NATO Transformation Headquarters in Virginia, before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Schilz, the oldest of the Wilhelm children, entered Gross halfway through her sophomore year when her father was transferred from Michigan. Her brother John Wilhelm ('77) knew right away during their initial school tour that Gross was the school for him.

"It was just the atmosphere at Gross," she said. Students were talking, laughing and having a good time with each other after school. Teens shook her hand and welcomed her to the school. The late Brother Leo Willett, Gross's first principal, met with them, too. "For me, that was the Cougar spirit."

"(Gross) built on the values from home," she said of her spiritual life.

All six of the Wilhelm children received "a solid education" at Gross, Schilz said, benefitting from the sacrifices their mom and dad made for them to attend the school.

Both parents were long-time supporters at Gross. They were members of the Booster Club and the Marianist Society. Her dad worked in Gross's business office, and they invested in the school's future by establishing the Dave & Charleen Wilhelm Family Scholarship.

"I can absolutely say with complete confidence," she said, that she would not be as successful "if I had not gone to Gross."

Her sisters, Barbara ('84) and Karin ('89) Wilhelm agree. Both women have built impressive careers with the Walt Disney Company. Barbara began as a college intern at Walt Disney World Resort. Most recently, she returned from Shanghai, China, where she helped launch the Shanghai Disneyland Disney Gift Card program.

Gross' "Be a Leader" philosophy is echoed by the Walt Disney Company, Barbara said, through a popular quote from the founder: "Every leader is telling a story ... about what he or she values."

As for the other siblings, Phil ('78) is a senior manager at the 7-Eleven Corp. headquarters in Dallas, and John ('77) and his wife, Kathy Grasso Wilhelm ('79) continue to be active volunteers at Gross. John serves on the Finance Committee and

is grateful that the family scholarship is helping support current Gross Catholic students.

Today, Schilz is preparing to retire again - this time from her appointment to the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration. Since 2010, she has been in charge of a Commemorative Partner Program that honors Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.

As chief of the Commemorative Partner Program and POW/MIA liaison, her job is to oversee the more than 11,700 partner organizations that honor the 9.3 million veterans and their families who served between Nov. 1, 1955, and May 15, 1975. By partnering with businesses, hospitals, museums, schools and many other organizations, the program ensures Vietnam Veterans finally get the recognition they were denied 50 years ago.



Schilz with Gold Star wife, Barbara Guest, whose husband was killed in the Vietnam War, and her current husband, Chris Guest.

As a proud daughter of a Vietnam veteran, the Commemoration "is something I could be passionate about," she said.

"That's why it is important to honor these veterans," she said. "For many, it is the first time they had been thanked for their service."

Schilz especially likes to honor the women who served during Vietnam and before - women who blazed the trail for other women to follow.

"I thank them for the opportunities they gave to me and all who followed them because of their service."

GROSS CATHOLIC ALUMNI ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDINGS



Zach Johnk '13 and Ashton were married April 13, 2019. Many Cougar Alumni were in the wedding party including: Nate Zimmerer '13, Joe Coenen '13, Pete Lundak '13, Chad Bertagni '13, Nate Crnkovich '13, Zach Knicky '13, Max Connor '13 and Kayla Johnk '15.



Elizabeth Kochanowicz-Hunt '10 married Andrew Hunt on August 3, 2019 in Omaha, Nebraska. Elizabeth received her BSN RN from Methodist School of Nursing and is a CPN at Children's Hospital and Medical Center.



Jackson Overkamp '12 and Nicole (Gregory) Overkamp '11 were married on July 6, 2019. Their wedding party also included several Gross Catholic alumni including Jennifer Gegzna '11, Joelle Overkamp '14 and Tony Caniglia '11.



Anton Rice '12 married Taylor Gillogly on Saturday, December 14th, 2019 in Milwaukee, WI. There were over 40 current students and Cougar Alumni in attendance. They also had 14 states represented at the wedding, including New York, Arizona, Nebraska and Philadelphia.

BIRTHS



Chris '03 and Christine Conzett welcomed Madison Grace on February 8, 2020 at 4:01 pm in Charleston, SC. She weighed 8 lbs 10 oz and was 21 inches long. She joins big brother Hudson.



John '08 and Colleen '08 (Hassett) Dostal welcomed Giada "Gigi" Gray on March 14, 2020. She weighed 7 lbs 5 oz and was 19.5 inches long.



Michael '05 and Kyla Stutzman welcomed Mary Michele on December 12, 2019. Mary weighed 8 lbs 8 oz and was 20.5 inches long.



Matt '08 and Justine '08 (Sacco) Sullivan welcomed Ryan Matthew on November 11, 2019. Ryan joins big sister Haley and brother Sam.



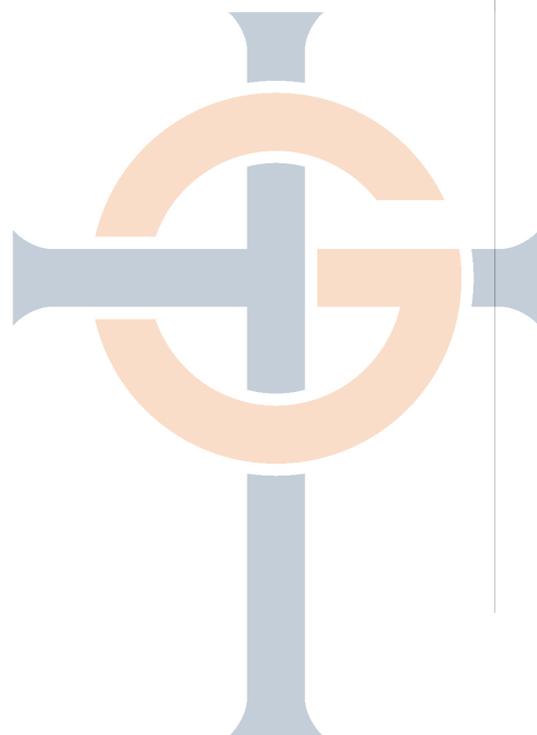
Tommy '08 and Mallory Van Haute welcomed Cameron Jean on January 15, 2020. She weighed 6 lbs 15 oz and was 21.5 inches long.



Brian '08 and Nikki (Koley) Wilwerding welcomed Brooklyn Marie on February 4th, 2020. She weighed 7 lbs 3 oz and was 20.75 inches long.



Mike '08 and Brianna '09 (Mixan) Zoucha welcomed Bernice Eileen on April 6, 2020. She weighed 7 lbs 3 oz and was 19.5 inches long.



AWARDS



Emily Buettner '15 won this year's BigIdea! Pitch Contest. The BigIdea! Pitch Contest is one event Center for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Franchising puts on where students can showcase their business idea and receive funding for their business idea. Her business idea, Plug, is a social recruitment platform that democratizes the recruiting process for athletes and recruiters.



Nate Crnkovich '13 recently moved to Los Angeles to work as a Traveling ER/Trauma nurse. In December he won the honor of representing the USA, in the 2019 Mister Supranational pageant! He traveled to Katowice, Poland for two weeks to prepare and compete against 40 other men representing their respective countries. On December 7th, he was crowned Mister Supranational 2019 and will now work with the organization and the Miss Supranational winner/organization over the course of the next year. His plan is to use the platform to fundraise and organize medical mission trips to help provide medical care to countries around the world who do not have access to it.



Catherine Smith '14 graduated from College of Saint Mary in December 2019. In January, she left for Ecuador to begin Peace Corps training. Once completed, she will be assigned to a school where she will teach English to students.

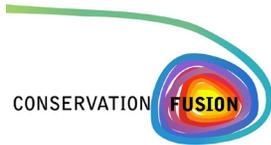


Nearly five years into his career as physical therapist for the 559th MDS Diagnostics and Therapeutics Flight – following 10 years in the civilian sector – Jason Wheeler's '97 dedication to his profession has earned him recognition as the Air Force Medical Service's Biomedical Clinician Civilian of the Year.

[ALUMNI BUSINESS]

FEATURES

Susie Louis, '92
CONSERVATION FUSION



www.conservationfusion.org

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Melissa Winkelmann Murtaugh, '01
INSPIRED BRIDE



Gown & Event Consignment

www.inspiredbrideomaha.com

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Jeffrey Leuschen, '04
LAW OFFICE of JEFFREY S.
LEUSCHEN PC LLO



www.jlomahalaw.com

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Mark Elman, '81 and Phil Knicky, '86
ELMAN



www.elmanprint.com

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Ryan Krejci, '01
IDEAL DESIGNS CUSTOM HOMES



idealdesignsomaha.com

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Amy M. Huck '90 and Sue Hebda, '76
AMY M. HUCK STATE FARM INSURANCE



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www.amymhuck.com

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Tim '78 and Theresa Gillespie, '78
OFF THE WALL



www.otwsoccer.com

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FEATURES

James Pull, '90
PREMIER EXTERIORS



www.roofingomaha.com

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Mark Adamson, '74
SUPERCUTS



www.supercuts.com

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Theresa Beck, '79, Stephanie Hile, '04
and Jenny Christian, '11
THE DIAMOND ROOM



the.diamond.room
diamondroomomaha.com

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John Fahrer, '74, Kylie Fahrer, '06
and Jill Fahrer, '12
SCRIPTOWN



www.scriptownbrewing.com

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Dan Ellingson, '04
THE TOOTH DOC



2thdoc.org

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Chris Wichita, '95 and Kevin Kielion, '82
WICHITA HEATING AND COOLING



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Gross Catholic High School is a faith and family based community committed to developing Christian leaders through academic excellence in the Marianist tradition.

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Gross Catholic is an Archdiocese of Omaha school and is sponsored by the Marianist Province of the U.S.

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We work with committed families and students, one-on-one, to arrive at a fair, feasible Individual Tuition Plan. Individual Tuition Plans are confidential, based on your family's revenue and expenses, and respectful of your families needs, To learn more about how Individual Tuition Plans work, visit grosscatholic.org or contact:



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