

DuxEsto

MAGAZINE



AUTHENTICALLY
FAITHFUL

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DRIVEN

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Joy of Giving

Wednesday, May 18th

Click [HERE](#) to give today

Summer Camps

Check all of them out [HERE](#)

Alumni Giving Challenge

Sunday, September 18th thru
Saturday, September 24th

Cougar Classic Golf Tournament

Monday, September 19th

Homecoming Tailgate and Football Game

Friday, September 23rd

President's Circle Dinner

Wednesday, October 5th



For all class reunion event information please check out our website: cougar.family/reunions

Dux Esto Magazine

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for Dux Esto Magazine

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Check out year-round news and stories about the Gross Catholic community.

Front Cover: Several members from the charter class of 1972 gathered for a 50th reunion celebration at Gross Catholic on Tuesday, April 12th.

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.

A Binding Force



DEAR COUGAR FAMILY

Yearbooks are time capsules: troves of historic data intended for future people. In 1972, what did Gross Catholic's charter class wish to transmit to us 50 years later through the school's first yearbook? In that inaugural volume, senior editor Cathy Rice wrote that her staff tried to "capture the personality of Gross." The opening lines read:

Gross thrives on people, those who succeed, those who fail, but most of all, those who try. Gross is people and what they do — no matter how minute, unseen, or unknown; people taking a chance at becoming, attempting, producing, living. Each experience, happy or sad, serves as a binding force.

Today, Cathy (Rice) Beringer is retired after a satisfying career in the biotechnology industry. Reflecting on the sentiment above, she recently observed "for us the thing we learned was the importance of that first step, of taking action — taking a chance, not knowing the outcome."

From Cathy's student days to those of the graduates celebrated on these pages, the courage and promise of striving — of taking that first step — is an enduring aspect of the Gross Catholic ethos. High school is, after all, a period where we make our first steps in many realms.

Examples of our graduates taking on the challenge of first steps abound in this issue. A case in point is the spirit and determination of our robotics team. From modest beginnings 12 years ago in the physics room, the team is now a fierce competitor on the world stage (see page 6).

Another binding force connecting the generations of Cougars is the joy found in the relationships of students and teachers. The school grew quickly in its first four years. As the '72 yearbook notes, with that

increasing number the administration and faculty "tried to keep relations on a personal level" with students who together "have made Gross Catholic a responsive school." Bound by the school's mission to cultivate leaders for service, that responsive student-teacher partnership abides today, particularly in joint outreach efforts for the underserved.

Generations of Gross graduates are now forever bonded through a new tradition. Recently, the first class returned to campus to be honored by the student body on their anniversary (see page 9). After a ceremony inducting the charter graduates into one of the four houses — Barrett, McMenamy, Middleton, Willett — one alumna said,

"It was an inspiration attending Mass with all the students. The biggest takeaway is the confidence that the future indeed looks bright for those students and because of those students who are learning to walk life's path with God guiding them in our challenging world."

Graduates like Cathy Berninger began making their mark in a world very different from the one the Class of 2022 now encounter. But they went forth imbued in the traditions and values that unite all of us in the Gross Catholic community — and will for the class of 2072. In all their first steps, all their trying, they will know, and hold fast to, this binding force.

Dr. Thomas J. Curry, P'24, '26
President

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas J. Curry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "T" and "C".

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

OCTOBER 1, 2021-MARCH 31, 2022

IN HONOR OF

Patty Galas

Kristy (Holubar-Walsh) Zirngible '00

IN MEMORY OF

Albert Hamersky
Amber (Krystyniak) Minino '96
Bernadette Swiercek
Billie Ann Luis
Brian Mack
Brother Joe Barrett
Candiss (Dasovich) Woolverton '74
Candy Werve
Charol Pleiss
Chris (Flowers) Collis '83
Christine Stavneak
Constance "Connie" Vincentini
Cynthia Grotheus
Dennis Hogan
Diana Mae-Distefano
Dorothy Tessin
Dr. James Edney
Edith Winkelmann
Edwin Rasmussen
Eleanor Hamersky
Elizabeth Swoboda
Fr. Jim Smith
Irene Koziol
James E. Bauer
James McNamara
Jan "John" Jachym
Janet Duckworth
Jenifer (Yechout) Jennings '96
Jerry Porterfield
JoAnn Raur

Joanne Sosso
John "Jack" Hamilton
John Janda '93
Joyce Paukert
Joyce Shanks
Lauren "Sonny" Youngstrom
Louise Ortman and Betty Ortman
Madelyn Pettis
Margaret Kment
Marianela "Candy" Buglewicz
Marie Poly '03
Mark Kaipust '98
Mary Jo McNamara
Mary Stratman
Matthew VanMoorleghem
Matt White '96
Pam Mill
Patrick E. Neuhalfen
Peter Carl Mortensen
Randy Krzemien '96
Robert Duckworth
Ruth Hogan
Sally O'Rourke
Shawn Lavalley
Stephen Hannam '83
Taylor Kaipust
Thomas Walsh
Wayne Yanovich
Wendy Welshinger '74

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



Amber
(Krystyniak)
Minino '96



John Janda '93



Eric Guhl '15



Chris (Flowers)
Collis '83



Stephen
Hannam '83



Marie Poly '03



Matthew
White '96



Candiss
(Dasovich)
Woolverton '74



Wendy
Welshinger '74

Authentically Faithful

This fall, Bill and Sandy Drexel generously donated *The Word on Fire Bible: The Gospels* for each student, faculty and staff member at Gross Catholic. Bill and Sandy are products of Catholic education in Omaha. Respectively, they attended grade school at St. Thomas More and Holy Ghost; high school at Creighton Prep and Archbishop Ryan; and college at Creighton University. Their children also attended Catholic schools across the country as they moved often for Bill's job.

During our annual Homecoming Mass last September, Father Jeff Mollner blessed the Bibles before they were distributed to the students. Throughout the school year, senior theology teachers have been using the Bibles daily in class. During the first semester they read the daily Mass Gospel readings. Second semester, they began reading the Gospel of Luke, since the Church is in Cycle C and Luke is proclaimed at Sunday Mass this year. They have also focused on the commentaries and art within *The Word on Fire Bible*, using the WRAP (Write, Reflect, Apply & Pray) method of reading, studying, and placing themselves within the accounts recorded in the Gospels.

The Gospels are presented in a very intentional way to introduce the reader to our Savior, Jesus Christ. By surrounding the biblical text with commentary and explanations from Bishop Robert Barron, the Church Fathers, and many

of the greatest saints, mystics, and scholars throughout Christian history, *The Word on Fire Bible* illuminates the biblical text in light of our faith tradition. The features included with the Gospels are designed for people reading the Bible seriously for the first time, who may be unsure of what to make of its many events and characters. Additionally, there is beautiful, full-color artwork throughout the text.



**Father Jeff Mollner
blessed all Bibles during
our Homecoming Mass.**



Academically Driven

Inspiring Students Through Robotics

By Salvador S. Robles '10

Andrew Jesus '21 is turning his passion for robotics into a mentoring program for Midwest students.

The soon-to-be sophomore at Iowa State University is forming The National Robotics Academy Incorporated (NRAI) as an up and coming non-profit. "Our mission is to inspire, create and innovate with students," Jesus says. Jesus, along with two other colleagues hope to facilitate access to Robotics competitions and STEM educational opportunities for K-12 students.

"I really wanted to provide a more hands-on experience for students who are interested in pursuing robotics," Jesus says. Besides offering tournaments for students to showcase projects, NRAI hopes to obtain a robotics trailer filled with supplies and electronics as a resource to students during competitions. "We are really planning on becoming a full-service experience for schools and students by arriving the night before the tournament date, setting up and preparing the fields and electronics," Jesus says. "We will then come in the next day and run everything for the school."

Through NRAI, Jesus hopes to also promote and provide robotics summer camps to students as well as supporting STEM educational classes. "STEM" education is the intentional integration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to create a student-centered learning environment in which students investigate and engineer solutions to everyday problems or extracurricular activities. Gross Catholic provides STEM courses through the STREAM Academy.

"When I was in high school it was my experience with STEM educational classes which allowed me to take what equations I was learning in physics class with Mr. Hamersky, and apply it to the robotics team," Jesus remembers.

"It's in part why I value my education from Gross Catholic so much; I truly see and believe in the value of STEM classes for students, I got to benefit from it through a firsthand experience."



Keegan Shanahan '22, Jeff Treu '22, Andrew Jesus '21 and Chris Treu '22 at the 2022 US Open Championship.

While at Gross Catholic, Jesus competed with the robotics team and had the opportunity to travel to the World Robotics Competition in China. There he networked with students from around the world and became friends with his future colleagues who are helping him form NRAI today. "It was an amazing experience

being able to showcase what we built through our robotics team that year but also connecting and networking with other students who were passionate about robotics,” Jesus says.

Through NRAI services and educational courses, Jesus and his colleagues hope in the future that midwest area students are fierce competitors on the world stage of robotics. “We are seeing a growing trend among Nebraska and Iowa students in robotics, they just need the tools and support,” Jesus states. “Gross Catholic provided me with such a solid foundation on an educational

basis, it’s now my turn to give back and mentor students; it just happens to be through robotics.”

Jesus was recently tapped for an internship this summer in Dallas where he will be working with Raytheon Technologies Corporation in their mission systems branch while working on military aircraft technology. Raytheon Technologies Corporation is an American multinational aerospace and defense conglomerate. The company is one of the largest aerospace intelligence services providers and defense manufacturers in the world.



Jillian Linder '19, Abbigail Clark '18, Will Ryder '19, Andrew Jesus '21, and Emma McCoy '21 traveled to Beijing, China to participate in the VEX Robotics tournament, part of the World Robotic Conference in 2017.



Mr. Steve Hamersky was awarded the National Catholic Education Association's (NCEA) prestigious Dr. Karen M. Ristau Innovations Award on April 18th. This award is presented annually to an individual, school, or program that has furthered the mission of Catholic education through an innovative program or approach.



Purposefully Compassionate

While most regarded COVID restrictions as a negative, one positive that emerged from the pandemic was a greater personal investment in our faith. At Gross Catholic that personal investment took the shape of bi-monthly opportunities for prayer, reflection, and spiritual education during homeroom time.

In September, Gross Catholic students, faculty and staff celebrated life while building awareness about suicide prevention. While on retreat in November, juniors learned about poverty and domestic violence as they made fleece blankets for children at Lydia House.



Students prayed at the abortion clinic in Bellevue, Nebraska



Skyler Walkingstick '23 makes blankets for children staying at the Lydia House



Archbishop George Lucas celebrated Mass with Omaha area Catholic high school students at the Newman Center

Last year our students focused on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. This year our theme was *We are Expecting*. As a school, we imagined what it would be like to be expecting a baby. At each homeroom meeting, House Captains, with support from Campus Ministry, educated their peers on fetal development, maternal changes, prenatal complications, and abortion triggers that could be expected within the gestational month. In addition, each month the students, faculty, and staff engaged in an activity to support the learning that took place in the classroom. For instance, in October (Foster Care Awareness Month), when our “baby” was two months old and the size of a penny, our school participated in a Penny War, raising more than \$1000 for Foster Love, a local organization which provides basic needs and opportunities for children in foster care. The House who won the Penny War had the privilege of naming our baby.

In November, at a gender reveal party, Willett House announced that our “baby” is a boy named Leo! As a pro-life people, homeroom activities went beyond anti-abortion education to education about mental health, elderly abuse, and poverty.

During Advent, McMenamy and Middleton Houses provided Christmas cards and care packages for the elderly at the Victory Veterans Home for Homeless Vets and the Marianist retirement community.

During our Spring Mission Day, students recognized the ways that their peers are fearfully and wonderfully made through affirmation activities and conversations about the ways that our weaknesses can be made strengths through God’s grace.

Finally, we ended the year with a Homeroom session devoted to how to help a friend who is contemplating an abortion. We also made a donation to Mater Filius, a nonprofit committed to helping women facing an unexpected pregnancy who find themselves without housing or emotional support.

Theology teachers Tracey Brousek and Dan Connolly also coordinated a pro-life experience for Gross Catholic students who had signed-up for the March for Life in Washington, D.C. When the trip was canceled due to travel restrictions, the group adapted. They spent two days visiting Mater Filius and Essential Pregnancy Services, praying at the Bellevue abortion clinic, visiting with representatives from Rachel’s Vineyard, learning about Abortion Dialogue Academy, viewing *Unplanned*, and attending daily Mass with Fr. Jindra or Archbishop Lucas.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

1972 2022

The Gross Catholic Charter Class of 1972 celebrates their 50th reunion. Several of these alumni and their grandchildren, graduating 50 years later in the class of 2022, share their favorite memories.



As part of Cougar Cup Day, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1972. The morning began with brunch, followed by a ceremony where alumni were sorted and welcomed by our students into one of four houses (Barrett, McMenamy, Middleton, and Willett). After the sorting ceremony, they celebrated Mass with the whole school.

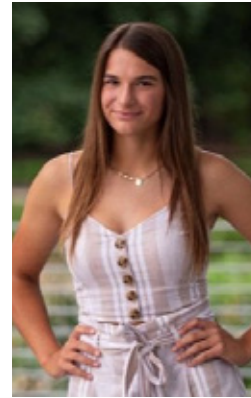




MARY BETH (VETOCK) SKRADSKI '72

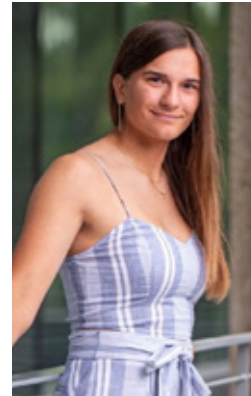
My favorite memory during my time at Gross Catholic is of founding principal, Marianist Brother Leo Willett. In particular his devotion to Mary and his vision and compassion to develop the Cougar family. Brother Leo was instrumental in helping the founding class create the mascot, school colors, Cougar

fight song, and our motto, Dux Esto. His words to our class were always "this is your school" and that sticks in my mind to this day and it remains true as alumni are always welcomed back home. He planted the seeds to bloom this new South Omaha High School to produce the faith and family based leaders of today.



JORDAN SKRADSKI '22

My favorite memory from Gross is going to State for softball my freshman and sophomore year. It was a great experience and the whole team was a second family to me.



JENNA SKRADSKI '22

My favorite memory from Gross is the girls basketball district final game last year to advance to state. There was just a lot of energy from the crowd and the student section that day.

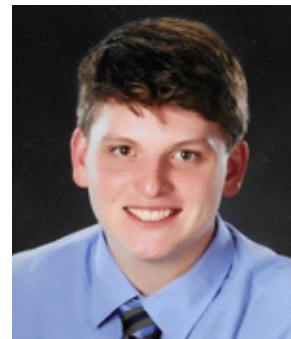


DEAN HASCALL '72

My favorite memory at Gross Catholic was related to sports. I love sports. Before Gross Catholic opened for classes that first year, back in '68, the football team started practicing. We came to be a band of brothers, a fraternity that continues today. I wasn't gifted to be a starter, but was able to help the

team become better all four years. There was a lot of blood, sweat, tears, and growing pains for us all.

My final football game at Gross Catholic we played Papillion. As always, I was on the sidelines next to Coach Macaitis, waiting to be called in to play. The game clock was winding down and out of the blue Coach called my name to get in there. During all those practices Coach would say to me, "Hascall, if you could catch the ball, you'd be dangerous!" I went in to play and Coach called a pass play to me. I ran the route, turned around to catch the ball, and all I saw were the blinding stadium lights. Quarterback Tom Riha threw the ball right into my hands for a 20 yard gain. I was tackled to the ground, but I held onto the ball. The very next play at wingback I was given the ball. My best friend Bill Ciaccio blocked for me and I cut up the middle and scored a touchdown. I ran to Coach and gave him a big hug and thanked him for giving me a chance.



OWEN HASCALL '22

My favorite memory during my four years at Gross Catholic was when my House, Barrett, won the Cougar Cup my freshman year. Everyone worked together to make it

happen. There was a lot of hype leading up to the competition and each House thought they were going to win the cup. We were the ones to do it that year and it was awesome! I really like the House System because it brings people together in a way that's unique to Gross Catholic.





JONI (CRNKOVICH) PLAMBECK '72

My fondest memory is spending time with Brother Leo Willett. Brother Leo loved talking to students and was especially fond of sharing stories about his mom. What I remember most is how close everyone was at Gross Catholic. The students and faculty all became one family; we were all part of the Cougar family.



MACKENZIE COOK '22

My favorite memory at Gross Catholic is getting to come together at the end of the year for Cougar Cup. I like how we are separated in houses and get to compete with each other throughout the whole year, leading up to field day.



CAROL (STOVIE) MONAGHAN '72

One of my favorite memories is going to sporting events on the bus and singing songs all the way there and back! Our class was really close!



REX FLOERCHINGER '22

My favorite memory is all the retreats we had because it opened up connections among our whole senior class.



RUBY FLOERCHINGER '22

My favorite memory is winning state cheer every year and then performing at nationals with some of my best friends!



PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE GIVING LEVELS

We invite you to join the President's Circle at the following giving levels:

PLATINUM

\$10,000 and above

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\$7,500-\$9,999

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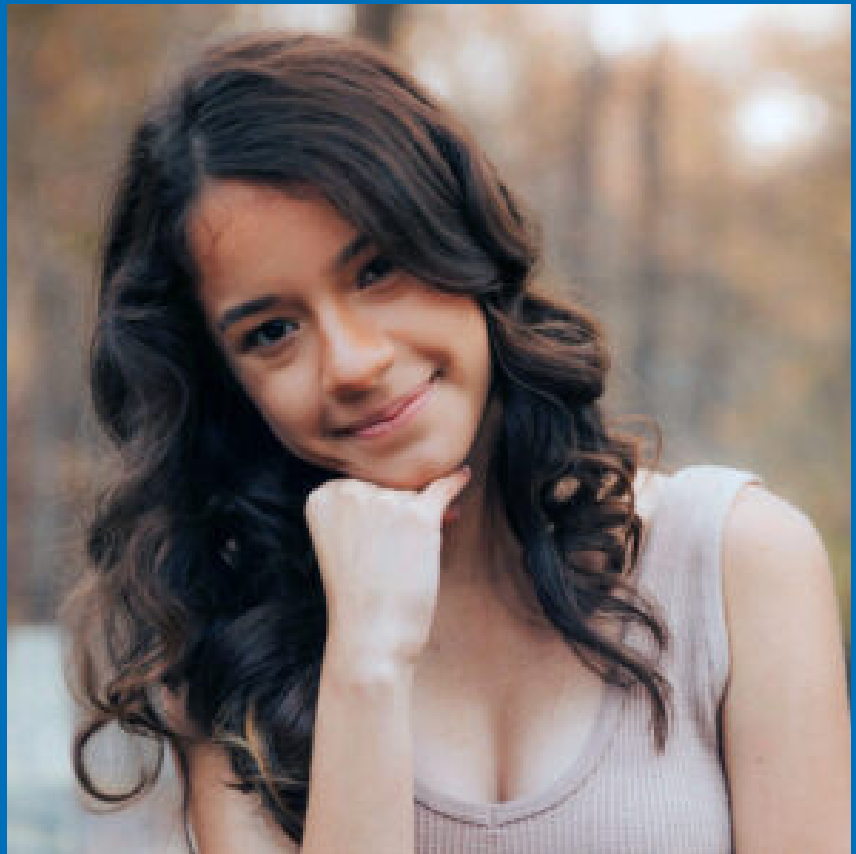
\$1,000-\$2,499

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

 Please contact the Development Office at **402.734.2000** or advancement@gcgmail.org for more information.



DUX ESTO ANNUAL FUND



Gaby Gandara '22

Meet Gaby Gandara. Early in high school, Gaby didn't think her family would ever be able to afford college. She also doubted herself academically. After her freshman year, Gaby transferred to Gross Catholic. She was familiar with the school and knew several students. Gaby knew that based on how kind the students were that she would find an accepting and welcoming environment.

Gaby's friends from Gross Catholic and their families helped her branch out and learn more about college and career opportunities. She was also encouraged by her teachers to take advanced placement and honors classes.

"I have been highly challenged at Gross, and therefore, I discovered that my academic capabilities have no limits. I can always be pushed further than I think or believe," Gaby said.

At the beginning of her junior year, Gaby started researching college scholarships. Mrs. Julie McNamara helped guide Gaby as she navigated application processes. Gaby eventually was named a QuestBridge National College Match Finalist and was awarded a full ride to Princeton University, including four years of tuition, room and board, transportation expenses, and more. Additionally, Gaby received The Gates Scholarship.

Gaby is extremely excited to be attending Princeton. "I am pursuing a major in Molecular Biology and Psychology with a minor in French on a Pre-Med track," she said. "I believe I am ready for that new chapter in my life and I strongly believe Gross Catholic has highly contributed to me feeling this way," Gaby said.

Your support and generosity creates life changing opportunities for students like Gaby. To learn more about Gaby's story, visit our YouTube channel [HERE](#).

As a Catholic school, we rely on generous support from donors like you to help 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 you to invest in our mission with a financial gift.

The cost to educate our students in 2020 - 2021 was \$12,700 per student, and tuition was set at \$11,140. Every student benefitted from a \$1,560 tuition grant and 80 percent of our students received additional assistance through our Individualized Tuition Plans, academic scholarships and tuition grants totaling \$1.8 million. The average award was \$4,923 per student.

Your support helps cover the tuition gap and gives us the opportunity to continue fostering growth in our students. Thank you for providing the gift of a quality education.

How can I support the Dux Esto Annual Fund?

- **Make a one-time gift or pledge a monthly, quarterly, or annual gift**
 - **Become a member of the President's Circle which recognizes leadership giving to the Dux Esto Annual Fund at the \$1,000 level or higher. Members of the President's Circle are among Gross Catholic's most faithful donors.**
 - **Consider a Planned Gift**
-

Go to grosscatholic.org, or scan the QR code, to make your contribution to the Dux Esto Annual Fund.



GROSS CATHOLIC ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

Steve Safranek '99 wrote “The Sh!t No One Wants to Hear”. This book will get you uncomfortable challenging your views, thoughts, and beliefs, diving into common misconceptions in society. With the intent of creating a new paradigm of thinking, Safranek attempts to hold the reader accountable, by forcing them to look in the mirror a different way.



Safranek's Inspiration: Through years of practicing yoga, and journaling, my thought process had simply started to shift. I started to try and understand why we in society think the way we think, believe in certain things, and many of us never evolve

past a certain point in our lives. I know one of the things that I love to do, and is a calling of mine, is to simply help, give back, and to teach. Though I was teaching yoga and meditation on a regular basis, and continuing to train new teachers, I felt something was missing. And I continued to have idea after idea, that I never saw anyone else of note discuss in the public setting. So I decided to put a manuscript together in an effort to engage and inspire, but to come at it from a different perspective. I wanted to help, but force the reader to look at themselves in the mirror, get uncomfortable, and understand that there is a different path.

ALL WEDDING AND NEW BABY
ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE SHARED IN OUR
FALL, PRINTED DUX ESTO MAGAZINE. IF YOU
HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO SHARE,
PLEASE EMAIL TO NOLTE@GCCMAIL.ORG.



Pamela (Zych) Goodwin '82 is a recent breast cancer survivor diagnosed in October 2019 after a routine annual 3D mammogram. The cancer was found early at Stage 1; however she had to endure four months of chemotherapy and 12 months of immunotherapy in 2020.

Pamela wanted to give back to breast cancer research. So she and friend Tara Joseph, co-founded the KISS Breast Cancer Goodbye Event. Held last October, it was an evening full of music, movement, and celebration. A sold out crowd at the Country Music Hall of Fame, in Nashville, listened to headliner Dolly Parton singing for the first time in five years. Other performers included LOCASH, Captain Sandy Yawn, Dennis Quaid, Collin Raye, Artimus Pyle, Linda Davis, and many others in honor and memory of all breast cancer survivors and thrivers.

The event raised \$167,000 for breast cancer research. The second annual event is planned on October 23, 2022 at the Country Music Hall of Fame.



Brandon Villanueva-Sanchez '20 was recently awarded a Barry Goldwater Scholarship Fund. The program honors the late Senator Barry Goldwater as a way to encourage outstanding students to pursue research careers in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Brandon is majoring in neuroscience at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Learn more [HERE](#).



Pictured from left to right: Stephen Driscoll '10, Lynn Lampman Driscoll '87, Sharon Robak Kingston '73, Chuck Monico Jr. '89

In November 2021, four Gross Catholic alumni, along with 35 others, went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The pilgrimage was led by Rev. Damian Zuerlein, Pastor of St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church. This photo was taken in Jerusalem on the last evening of their trip.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE COUGARS



Alumni and their families were invited to a special performance of "Elf The Musical Jr." Children left their shoes in the commons during the first half of the show and were surprised by a special treat left by St. Nicholas.

COUGAR BAR OLYMPICS



The "J" team was the top scoring team and awarded a \$100 prize!

Senior Cougars won best team theme.

On April 2nd, several alumni and friends gathered their teams together for the Cougar Bar Olympics. Teams traveled on school buses to five alumni owned bars across the Omaha area and competed in fun games at each location.

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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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Dr. Thomas Curry

Principal
Paulette Neuhalfen

**Assistant Principal/Athletics
and Activities Director**
Mike Dempsey '75

VP of Advancement
Stephen Driscoll '10

**Admissions/Recruitment
Director**
Kara Wesely '00

Alumni and Communications Director
Molly Nolte '99

Social Media Director
Jim Homan

Special Events Director
Dawn Sledge



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

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Grants & Scholarships

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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