

The IRISH LENS

Fall 2023

THE ARTS BRING
Beauty
TO OUR LIVES
& OUR FAITH



LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL



“I’m inspired daily by the ways God works through our students, faculty, and staff to make His goodness known, by the ways He shapes us into representatives of His love.”

Each fall, PND students, faculty, and staff enter our building as blank canvases, eager to learn, grow, and develop our academic, extracurricular, and spiritual lives. Throughout the school year, God uses us—our skills, our talents, our time—to create masterpieces that reflect His glory. Isaiah 64:7 echoes this idea: “...we are the clay and You our potter: we are all the work of Your hand.” I’m inspired daily by the ways God works through our students, faculty, and staff to make His goodness known, by the ways He shapes us into representatives of His love. Each project our students complete, each game in which they compete, each Mass they attend is a brushstroke in their life’s masterpiece.

Just as God shapes us, so too do our students shape their experiences at PND. As part of Irish Nation, as members of sports teams, as students in classrooms, as performers on stage, as artists in front of easels, our students create a high school experience that allows them to pursue their passions, explore new ideas, undertake creative endeavors, and serve our community.

The journey may require some struggles and challenges, it may require some adjustments and alterations, but, at PND, we provide the environment necessary to appreciate and overcome the struggles that ultimately form us into the people we are called to be—into the people we want to be.

Over the last decade, God has used PND and its community to help me make my life into a work of art. He has used the students, faculty, staff, and families to challenge me, push me outside my comfort zone, and pursue growth in order to attempt to do His will on a daily basis. I feel so fortunate to continue to learn and grow in the PND environment, and I thank all of you for your support as we allow God to do His work to make us all His masterpieces.

Jacqueline Kelly,
Principal

LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Behind my desk in my office can be found a sign gifted to me by my wife that is inscribed with a quote often attributed to Pope Benedict XVI: “The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.” This sign is placed above my head so that students can read these words while we’re in the midst of what might be an uncomfortable conversation. Its purpose is to remind them that much good can come from being outside of their comfort zone, and to make them aware of my goal as the Dean of Students: to guide them on their journey of becoming the great son or daughter that God is calling them to be.

This quote came to mind when I was encouraged to apply for the Dean position. As an alum, PND provided me with so many inspiring mentors, rooted friendships, and Christ-centered relationships, and after a period of deep formation as a student, athlete, and RA at Benedictine College, all I wanted was to pay forward the many gifts that were given to me by this great community of faith as a teacher and coach. I was just starting to get comfortable, but God had other plans.

I am blessed to have the opportunity to serve this school of Our Lady in this new position and to work with a leadership team that is united in our mission to form disciples of Jesus Christ. Although it’s going to be challenging and uncomfortable at times, I’m reminded that we are not made for comfort, but for greatness. Please pray for me and for our school as we enter into this new stage of our journey, that God might yield fruit from our labors, and that through His grace, we might grow His kingdom of Heaven.

- Isaac Rudolph, Dean



LETTER FROM THE CHAPLAIN



I grew up in Indiana, am the youngest of three boys, and have been ordained a priest for four years. Peoria Notre Dame is a wonderful faith-filled community that is heading in a great direction under the leadership of our new principal, Mrs. Kelly, and I am blessed to be a part of the journey here.

Pope Benedict XVI said that the Church’s greatest witnesses to the truth of God are her saints and her art. What he meant by that, I believe, is that the power of beauty – in our lives and in our work – naturally attracts us to something beyond this world, to the transcendent. Beautiful lives and beautiful art inspire us to pursue something more than what this world can offer. The saints throughout history have witnessed by their lives, and sometimes by their deaths, the splendor of God’s power and goodness. One only needs to look at the life of someone like St. John Paul II, St.

Teresa of Calcutta, or St. Therese of Lisieux, and the throngs of people who flock to them for guidance and inspiration, to know the evangelizing power of a holy life.

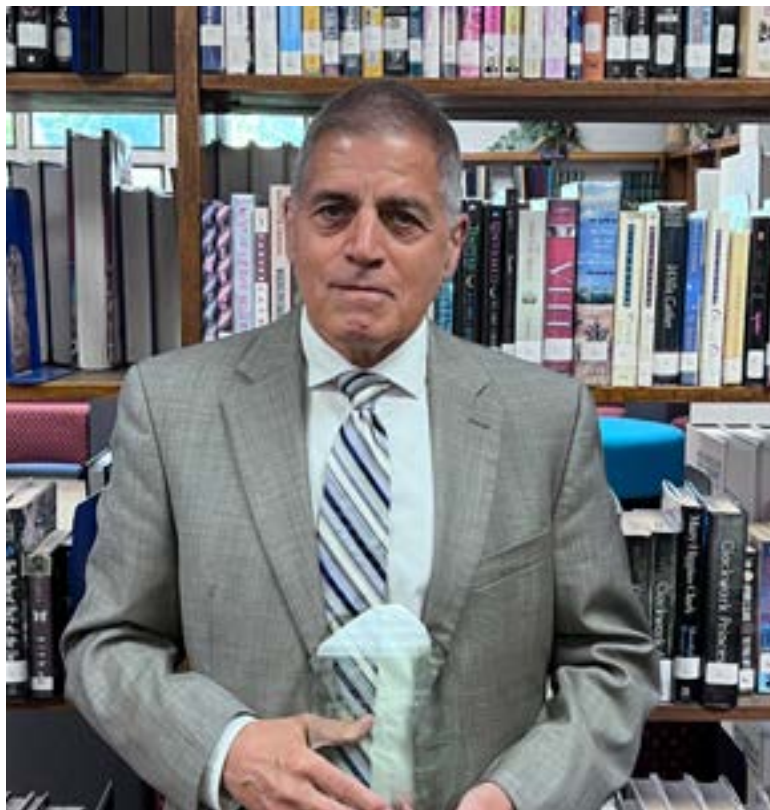
Throughout history, the Church has been the greatest promoter of the arts. God Himself, as Creator, is the great artist who invites His people to share in the work of His hands – to be craftsmen who imitate the Creator. In a world that is searching for meaning, the arts have the power to give an answer to man’s deepest questions, and ultimately point others to Christ, who is the beautiful God in our flesh, “the answer to the question that is every human heart.”

- Fr. Daniel McShane, Chaplain



The Honorable Judge Stephen Kouri has been a leader in the Catholic community and Peoria area for three decades. Judge Kouri attended Spalding Institute and graduated in 1975. He went on to receive his J.D. from the University of Illinois School of Law, practiced for 20 years in a private law firm, and now sits as a judge for the Tenth Judicial Circuit Court where he was elected in 2002.

Judge Kouri has a strong commitment to Catholic education, serving on the former Peoria Notre Dame Foundation Board of Directors and the Peoria Notre Dame School Board. In addition, he has been on the Catholic Cemetery Association Board of Directors, the OSF St. Francis Foundation Board of Directors and Advisory Committee, and served as the Vice President of the Holy Family Parish Council.



Giving back to the Peoria community, Judge Kouri has served on the Peoria City Council, the Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Peoria Riverfront Development Commission, and many other civic and volunteer organizations.

One very notable accomplishment spearheaded by Judge Kouri includes bringing the IHSA boys basketball finals to Peoria after a 77-year stint in Champaign. He co-chaired the IHSA Boys Basketball Steering Committee from 1995-2004 and remained on the committee until the tournament returned to Champaign in 2019. He also formed the “Access the Experience” event which allows children, teens, and young adults with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the interactive part of state finals week called the “March Madness Experience.”

Judge Kouri married his high school classmate Angie Venegoni (AOL/SI '75) and they have a daughter, Ann (PND '03), and a son, Steve.



Major Richard Meyer has developed an impressive career in military law. After graduating from Bergan High School in 1984, he received a B.A. in Russian Area Studies from Illinois State University. During that time, he also joined the Army, focusing on Russian language for military intelligence. He went on to receive his J.D. at Northern Illinois University, followed by an LL.M (Masters in Law) from both the U.S. Army's Judge Advocate General's School and Columbia Law School where he was a Kent Scholar.



Rich has served as trial counsel for the U.S. military all over the world including the U.S., Germany, Macedonia, Bavaria, and South Korea. He has been a legal advisor for the United Nations, the U.S. Contingent of NATO, and the JAG Corps at the Pentagon. While his expertise remains in military law, he also has been a Fire Direction Officer and a Commander of up to 125 personnel.

Rich, his wife, Melissa, and their five children retired from the Army life in 2011 and moved to Mississippi where Rich assumed the role of Director of International and LL.M. Programs at the Mississippi College School of Law. In 2020, he became the Executive Director of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law for the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.

As a legal scholar, Rich achieved a level of international renown in the fields of law and jurisprudence. He has been a featured speaker on more than 60 occasions in 15 countries. In addition, Rich has authored a large number of publications regarding military law, laws of war, and how law and Catholicism interact.

After retiring from academia, Rich returned to the Department of Defense where he currently directs a program on ethics.



The Pillar Award honors a supporter of Peoria Notre Dame who displays consistent dedication to the mission of the school, and Kate Socha has continued to offer her time, talent and treasure for the betterment of the institution.

Kate served almost 25 years in the United States Air Force, during which time she received the 40 Leaders Under Forty award. Retiring in 2011 allowed her time to get involved at St. Thomas Catholic School, where her three children attended. She served on the PTO, helped with classroom activities, volunteered in the cafeteria, led fine arts/sports days, and coached cross country. In addition, she still helps bake bread for the First Communion retreat.

Kate and her husband, Kevin, served on the PND Parent Board for four years, with three years as Presidents. Their daughter Abbi graduated from PND in 2021 and twin boys Brady and Trey in 2022. She had the opportunity to be a part of the 2021-22 PND Strategic Planning Committee, chairing the student life domain. This led to her current position on the PND Consultative Board. Kate also serves on the PND Athletic Advisory Committee. In addition, she is in her second year as a PND cross country assistant coach, and she is a regular volunteer at Sophia's Kitchen and the tomb of Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

Kate attributes her spirit of service to her parents who were great examples of community involvement and giving back by volunteering.



BUILDING UPDATES



Lights. Sound. Action! PND recently received a \$15,000 grant for improvements to the Livingston Auditorium! The improvements included two new follow-spots, a new sound board, 11 new lavalier microphone kits, and 5 additional body packs to work with existing microphones.

These updates will enhance the overall experience of the entire PND community as the auditorium is used for theater performances, class presentations, professional development sessions, club meetings, and offered programs.

Peoria Notre Dame football was generously gifted a new scoreboard, which was placed at the north field on Allen Road. As a result, JV football games were played at the additional site this fall. Families and students enjoyed having a home field to score touchdowns and defeat rivals.



How can we ever convey the level of appreciation we have for everyone who contributed to the PND kitchen renovation? Through your contributions, you have made this project possible, and our kitchen staff is thrilled to be working in a new, functional kitchen where every oven, range, and fryer is in working condition! Thank you for your generosity and kindness!

Work began on May 30th with the removal of the major appliances followed by the demolition of the hood. A new hood and airflow system was installed as well as a fire suppression system and new alarm panel integration. The kitchen lighting was redesigned which includes eco-friendly LEDs, and a half wall was built to house electrical and plumbing hook-ups.



OTHER TECHNOLOGY AND BUILDING UPGRADES

- Replaced all classroom phones
- New staff computers
- All-new WIFI network in the building
- Completed Section 2 of the roof replacement
- Began offering the Hallow app to students and faculty for increased faith formation

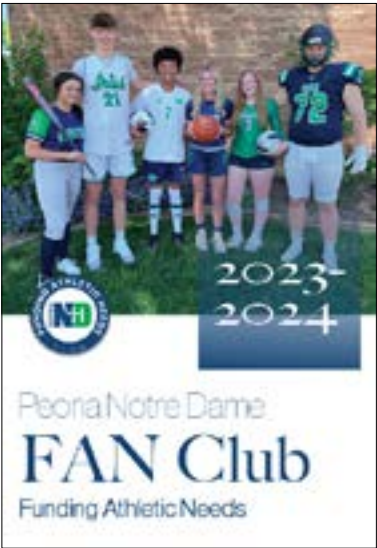
Join our new FAN Club!

A lot of people like to say that they are a fan of the Cubs, Cardinals or Packers. But do you know about the Peoria Notre Dame FAN Club? As an outcome of the strategic plan, Peoria Notre Dame launched the FAN Club in August. FAN is an acronym for Funding Athletic Needs. This new club supports athletics and extra-curriculars including Scholastic Bowl, Music, and Debate. It was created to centralize fundraising. Instead of each coach and moderator being responsible for fundraising, this initiative has now shifted fundraising to the Advancement department staff. This makes it so much more convenient for donors and for the school, which in turn makes it best for our students. No longer will students and coaches be trying to think of the best fundraiser. The days of wondering if it is best to sell wrapping paper, detergent or candy are gone. Instead, individuals and businesses are invited to become a member of the FAN Club. There are a variety of levels of support and a variety of ways PND can thank you (signage, tickets to our athletic games and our arts performances).

We did not make this change without ample of thought and discussion. Advice was sought from Partners In Mission, the organization which guided us in the creation of our strategic plan, as well as other Catholic high schools.

Whether you are an alum who benefited from being involved in athletics or extra-curriculars, or whether you are a current parent or guardian, thank you for your consideration to join the FAN Club. You won't be receiving household items such as detergent or candy by joining our club. Instead, you will know that your entire donation will go directly to supporting our students.

Any questions, feel free to contact Cindy Dermody, Advancement Director, at c.dermody@pndhs.org or 309-691-8741 x 4248. You can read the FAN Club brochure, watch a video, and make a donation online at www.pndhs.org/fan-club.



FALL SPORTS UPDATE

The Girls Golf Team placed third at the state tournament in Decatur under the coaching direction of Ed Olehy, Matt Coulter, and Mickey Schallau. This was the first time in PND history the girls golf team has placed among the top three teams. Other sports highlights so far this fall season include:



- Boys soccer continues to play well this season with a statistically better season than 2022's state championship season. They are looking for back-to-back state titles.
- PND football made it to the playoffs.
- Girls varsity volleyball placed 3rd in the Big 12 Conference.
- Girls swimming and diving has had a lot of personal records. They hope to attend state Nov. 10 and 11.
- Our Irish cross country team has been ranked among the top 10 teams in Class 1A all season and hosted a successful Richard Spring Memorial Race with 2,700 runners.

SHAMROCK 2023!

Our hearts were truly filled with joy in seeing more than 1,000 attendees at the PND ShamROCK! This was a milestone year for attendance: 1,026 (of which more than 200 families joined us)!

As many of you already know, Peoria Notre Dame is looking at our school as a whole to see how we can collaborate even further with our partner schools and parishes and strategically align all of our actions and decisions back to our mission to form disciples of Jesus Christ in a community of Catholic faith, knowledge, and service.

A special thank you to all of the PND athletic coaches, assistant coaches, and athletes for an AMAZING opening to our fall sports seasons. We were also blessed with the presence of our partner schools and parishes, including the following priests and sisters:

- Fr. Daniel McShane (PND Chaplain)

Msgr. Jason Gray (St. Thomas)

Fr. David Richardson (St. Philomena)

Fr. Daniel Dionesotes (St. Philomena)
- Fr. Stephen Willard (AOL/SI '85, St. Vincent de Paul)

Sr. Catherine Thomas (PND faculty)

Sr. Agnes Paulina (PND faculty)

Thank you also to every group and individual that made planning and excecuting a fun and successful event including our 2023 ShamROCK committee:

- Jenna North Alwood

Craig Dahlquist
- Kim Gray

Kelly Joseph
- Theresa Mickels

Kate Socha



12 Days of Christmas

CASH & CAR

RAFFLE

Peoria Notre Dame High School is teaming up with Scherer Mazda of Peoria for the 6th annual 12 Days of Christmas Cash and Car Raffle! An Early Bird drawing of \$500 will be held November 16. Cash prizes will be drawn daily, beginning Monday, December 4 through Thursday, December 14. The Grand Prize of a 2024 Mazda CX-5 (MSRP \$31,100) will be drawn at 12:10 pm on Friday, December 15, 2023. Tickets may be purchased online at pndhs.org/12days, or from a staff member or student of PND.

1 Ticket: \$85 | 3 Tickets: \$240 | 5 Tickets: \$375 | 10 Tickets: \$700 | 12 Tickets \$720

____ Yes, please send _____ (# of tickets) to:

My Name: _____ Ticket Seller: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Credit Card Number: _____ - _____ - _____ CVC# _____ Exp. _____ / _____

Signature _____

OR check payable to **Peoria Notre Dame, 5105 N. Sheridan Rd. Peoria, IL 61614**

MISSING *Composites*

One of the many treasures of our school is Alumni Hall, which holds composite photos of graduating classes all the way back to 1895. Sadly, for various reasons, several classes are missing including:

SI '60	BHS '75	BHS '85
SI '66	AOL/SI 77	BHS '86
AOL/SI '68	AOL/SI '84	AOL/SI '87

It is the mission of the Alumni Department to restore each missing composite to Alumni Hall in the coming years. As each composite costs the school between \$800 to \$1,000, the project cannot be completed all at once. Therefore, the school has budgeted for one composite to be replaced each year. Thankfully, a few generous donors have helped pay for their class composite to be recreated and framed for the wall.

If you would like to contribute to replacing one of these missing composites in Alumni Hall, please contact Tara Shane at t.shane@pndhs.org.

GRANDPARENTS' DAY



September 10 is nationally known as Grandparents' Day and for the first time, we celebrated it by hosting a morning for our students to spend quality time with their grandparents.

Pope Francis wrote, "How important grandparents are for family life, for passing on the human and religious heritage which is so essential for each and every society." The Livingston Auditorium was filled with nearly 400 people for the Mass, which was also livestreamed for those who could not attend in person. Msgr. Gerald Ward (BHS '71) was the celebrant.

After Mass, there were many exchanges of warm smiles when the students gave their grandparents a tour of the school. A beautiful, sunny day allowed guests to spend time in our grotto and newly updated patio area. In Alumni Hall, people viewed our composite photos of each graduating class, all the way back to 1895.

In The Commons, there was an area for taking photos and spiritwear was available. It was wonderful to see the gentle conversation shared between grandchildren and grandparents while visiting and enjoying doughnuts.

We look forward to hosting Grandparents' Day annually.



GIVE *the gift of a Catholic Education*



Each year, about 40% of our students have demonstrated financial need. It is our goal to work with each of these families so every student has the opportunity to attend Peoria Notre Dame. There are several ways in which you can help pass on the Catholic faith to high school students.

- **Contribute to an existing scholarship fund.** Currently, you have the opportunity to **DOUBLE YOUR GIFT to the Nault Scholarship Fund!** (Please read the accompanying article.)
- **Create your own named scholarship fund.** Gifts of \$5,000 or greater can be given in honor of someone or in memory of a loved one. A short description about the person named in the scholarship will be given to the recipient.
- **Start a named endowed scholarship.** With this option, the principal will remain in the account and 95% of the earnings will be used to provide financial assistance. A short description about the named person will be given to the recipient each year. The minimum gift is \$50,000.
- **Remember Peoria Notre Dame with a planned gift.** These gifts are usually deferred and can be transformative for a school. If you would like to make an impact in the life of a high school student by providing them a Catholic education, consider adding Peoria Notre Dame to your estate plan. Any questions, please contact your financial advisor and/or attorney.

Here are some words of thanks from current students who are receiving financial assistance due to the generosity of donors:

"I am so thankful that I get to attend PND because I get to grow in my faith in numerous ways."

"I am excited to meet new people who share my interests and beliefs."

"I am grateful to attend a Catholic school because it gives me a way to learn more about God every single day."

"I like PND because it allows me to grow as an athlete and as a person."

TWO WAYS TO GIVE

Give online! Donations can be made at:
www.pndhs.org/giving-opportunities/

Type the amount in the "Scholarship Fund" field. You can also ask about more ways to give back to the school.

Mail a check to:
Peoria Notre Dame High School
5105 N Sheridan Rd
Peoria, IL 61614

Please write "Scholarship" on the memo line.

NAULT SCHOLARSHIP

Middle school years can present challenges for any student. Moving to a new town and enrolling in high school can present challenges also. But, add a diagnosis of medulloblastoma, and you can imagine the challenges freshman Geoffrey Nault and his family faced.

Geoff was a patient of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital from 1993-2001, and a PND student in the graduating class of 2002. He loved his Catholic faith and school, attending classes in-person when he was able. Geoff's parents, Bob and Carolyn, fondly speak of the support they received from the PND community, including the formation and education for their daughter Abbey (PND class of '03). Geoff died his senior year, on November 24, 2001, and became an honorary graduate of the PND class of '02.

A few memories will always remain in the hearts of Geoff's family. Geoff's counselors at PND were extremely helpful in organizing Geoff's academic learning, which included three great tutors throughout Geoff's illness. Campus Ministry participated at a high level with spiritual bouquets and even the cafeteria staff sent their famous chocolate chip cookies home with Abbey. In turn, Geoff added links daily to his paper chain full of intercessory prayer intentions/requests that he offered up for others including the PND family.

Others shared a few memories at Geoff's services. Abbey said of her brother, "Geoff brought a smile to everyone's face and I know that's how he would want everyone to remember him: happy, smiling, joking." Marsha Krone, former PND teacher and one of Geoff's tutors, told of his "love of playing (and winning!) at games and his wonderful sense of humor." Geoff's godmother and aunt, Jan (Bragg) Juricic (AOL/SI '72), shared, "Geoff would want us to 'look up' and 'look around.' 'Look up'-pray about and understand God's plan for our lives. 'Look around'-cherish our family and friends. Take time to share your special gifts with others." And Geoff's godfather and uncle, David Nault, recalled, "His positive attitude was simply amazing. Where many might have turned their back on the Lord, Geoff fully and unconditionally embraced Him."



In memory of Geoff and in appreciation for Catholic education, a named endowed scholarship was developed in 2002. The Nault family and PND have the desire to see the Geoffrey Nault Memorial Scholarship grow to support a practicing Catholic student with tuition and an opportunity to deepen their faith. For the next three years (the 25th anniversary of Geoff's passing), donations made to the Geoffrey Nault Memorial Scholarship will be matched. If you would like to contribute to this fund, add "Geoff Nault Scholarship" on the check memo line or go online to the PND website, under the scholarship section, and use the drop-down option to select the Geoffrey Nault Scholarship.

On behalf of the students who will benefit from any of our scholarships offered, thank you for enriching the lives of students at Peoria Notre Dame!



THREE NEWLY ORDAINED

Though each took a different path, the Peoria Notre Dame community and the Catholic faithful will benefit from three alums having been ordained this spring. Fr. Patrick Wille (PND '13) was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Peoria. Thomas Dwyer (AOL/SI '86) became a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Peoria, and Tony Peters (BHS '85) became a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau.

When Fr. Patrick Wille attended his ten-year reunion this summer he was able to be the main celebrant at Mass with his classmates. He is currently assigned to serve as the parochial vicar at St. Mary's in Moline and as the chaplain at Alleman High School in Rock Island.

Fr. Wille said, "The priesthood is an incredible gift. Jesus Christ continues to heal hearts through his Church, and it has been a blessing to be an instrument of his mercy as a priest."

New Deacon Tom Dwyer said the education he received at AOL/SI is invaluable and "provided something intangible which kept me tethered to my faith no matter how far I strayed...Not intangible at all when you consider we receive Him in the Eucharist at every Mass."



In 2012, a friend, Deacon John Skender gave Tom a card containing a clipping from The Catholic Post newspaper, announcing an informational meeting for the next class of deacons. Tom knew he was called to having a deeper encounter with Christ. But after attending the meeting, he knew that it was not a good time for his family, and he didn't feel as though he was "deacon material." Five years later, Deacon Skender's wife, Jackie, whispered in Tom's ear after the Easter Vigil, "The Lord put something on my heart and I want you and Peggy to pray about it. I believe the Lord is calling you to be a deacon." Tom looks forward to serving the Peoria diocese in any way the bishop asks. He currently serves at St. Mark parish. This past summer, he chaperoned a group of teens during a Catholic youth conference and served on a boys' TEC weekend at PND.

The three main pillars which new deacon Tony Peters used to describe his personal and professional development are discipline, values and faith. Discipline was integrated into athletics and academics at Bergan. He feels as though discipline was the foundation of his success in many aspects of his life.

Tony always felt the calling to serve the Lord and the Church. Decades ago, he attended the seminary in Winona, MN and discerned that he was called to serve but not as a priest. With time, the Holy Spirit showed him a different path to serving the Lord - as a permanent deacon. "I can minister where I am, and the Lord will guide me where he wants me to be a witness to others."

Recently, Tony and his family returned to Peoria for a visit. He was able to assist former seminarian classmate Fr. Stephen Willard at a Sunday Mass at St. Vincent de Paul in Peoria where Tony grew up.

Congratulations to Fr. Wille, Deacon Dwyer, and Deacon Peters. Thank you for answering the call to serve.



Peoria Notre Dame boasts one of the best art programs in the area with 15 course offerings that span from basic studio art techniques to graphic design. In addition, eight music classes are currently offered.

PND is blessed to have alum Maggie Off (PND '94) teaching studio arts while alum Laurel Cramer (PND '16) teaches digital arts.

Some of the studio art classes offered include drawing, painting, printmaking, and ceramics. In addition, AP classes are offered in drawing, 2D design, and 3D design. In the spring of 2023, 100% of students taking the AP exams for all three classes scored a 3 or higher which indicates they performed at college level.

Senior and junior portfolio classes are also provided to assist upperclassmen in preparing for entrance into a collegiate art program.

Maggie gives the students many opportunities to showcase their work in shows and competitions.

"Art has multiple functions. It gives the artist a chance to express their creativity and work out problems in a healthy way. Many of our students need those outlets," said Off. "But art is also to be admired by others, and that is why I try to find as many opportunities for students to show off their work to the community."



In addition, Peoria Notre Dame offers Digital Design, Graphic Design 1 and 2, Photography, and Yearbook.



"Many students come to PND thinking they need to have an innate skill or talent for art," said Cramer. "But we show them that art is very learnable. You don't have to feel intimidated. And we love to see students develop a passion for something they never thought they would be able to do."

One of the greatest parts of being involved in art at PND is the ability to participate in the Senior Art Show. For

one evening in May, The Commons is filled with the masterpieces our seniors have created throughout their four years of high school.

"The Senior Art Show is always a big deal, and it's a highlight of the school year," said Off. "Any student who has participated in an art class can participate, and

it is always free. It is an opportunity for them to highlight and sell their work. They get to keep the money while guests leave with amazing pieces to enjoy daily."





PERFORMING ARTS

Featuring Alums in Music, Dance, & Theatre

Throughout our 160 year history, Peoria Notre Dame and our predecessor schools have cultivated alums who have gone on to inspire, unify, and entertain with their performances.

Meghan Laughlin Wahlstrom (PND '98)

Like many students in grade school, Meghan Laughlin Wahlstrom fell in love with theatre and performing at a young age. Once Meghan was a student at Peoria Notre Dame, her desire to work in the arts was solidified. She fondly remembers Mrs. Kathleen Svoboda who led the Drama Club, directed the school plays and chaperoned the drama students when they attended the Illinois State Theatre Festival conferences. In addition to teaching English and literature, Mrs. Svoboda created and taught a class titled "Intro to Drama" which escalated Meghan's desire to work in theatre.

Upon high school graduation, she went to the Univ. of Michigan and received a B.A. in Theatre followed by a position at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA. This provided Meghan with a deeper insight into administrative positions within the theatre realm. Meghan then advanced her

career by working at the University of Southern California, and currently holds the position of Director of Internships & Special Programs in its School of Dramatic Arts.

Recently, Meghan completed her Master's degree in Project Management from USC. She finds working with young artists in training to be very rewarding. Meghan keenly knows what impact her theatre educators had on her and is hoping to do the same for her students. And working in southern CA also has its perks as she gets to interact with professionals in Hollywood.



Robin Gathers (AOL/SI '88)

From the young age of seven, Robin Gathers has played and written music. In high school, Robin participated in Drama and Chorus and appreciated encouragement from choir teacher Wendy Strauss and drama instructor Kathleen Svoboda. Robin was the only student who took Music Theory, but it helped launch her career in music.



Robin went on to Illinois Central College where she received an Associate's degree in Sociology, followed by a B.A. in Urban Ministries and a M.A. in Organizational Leadership, both from

Lincoln Christian University. Currently, she is the lead musician at Heaven's View Christian Fellowship. In addition, she is a piano and vocal instructor and a member of the local gospel singing group, Women of Vision. Robin feels a sense of accomplishment for the group's 2000 release of a self-titled CD. As a teacher who really cares about her students, Robin is proud to have witnessed the growth in her many students who have continued in various aspects of the arts.

Reflecting on the role her Catholic high school education played, Robin says that her Catholic education kept her grounded spiritually and morally. To this day, she is glad that she grew up in an educational environment that put Christ first. Robin said, "The Catholic education available is outstanding and has produced many decades of success stories. Give PND a try!"

John Huerta (PND '94)

Like other alums in the arts, John participated in plays and choir during his school years. He could be considered a "triple threat" as he can sing, act, and dance. Though he was very talented as a dancer, he no longer works in theatre. But the arts still remain in his heart.

A fond memory John has of being involved in the arts while living in Central IL is that he was among a select

group to perform in two operatic productions hosted by the Peoria Symphony Orchestra. A guest performer was Ashley Brown, who played the role of the original Mary Poppins on Broadway. Since John now lives on the west coast, he hopes to stay active in the arts by participating in live theatre, TV, film and voice-over work.



You most likely heard the expression to "think outside the box" but John goes one step further and says, "Why limit yourself-there's absolutely no box whatsoever...Make a plan, stay disciplined, see the plan through, and pivot when necessary."

Joe Shadid (PND '05)

When people are asked which high school teacher influenced them, they normally answer very quickly with the name of a math or English teacher. For Joe Shadid, who now professionally goes by Joe George, he mentions former PND chaplain Fr. Charles Klamut. Both were guitar players, and Fr. Klamut even leant Joe a digital recorder, which he used for some of his

first home recordings. Joe's recordings have certainly expanded from the early use of a 12-track machine in his home.

In fact, Joe's music has been recognized at a high level as he received an EMMY nomination for the music he composed in a documentary. Though he knows that accolades can fade, it is a rewarding feeling to know that his music is admired. Joe continues to put time and energy into his craft of songwriting and performing. Based in Chicago, he performs throughout the U.S. In 2019, he had a wonderful experience of partnering with the Karam Foundation when he traveled to Turkey to teach music to Syrian refugees.

In addition to music, Joe participated in wrestling while at Peoria Notre Dame and said Kevin Burk provided him with a wonderful sense of discipline. These traits of awareness, respect for self and others, and a strong work ethic have continued to have positive effects on Joe today.





a Beautiful gift

PND '04 alum John Folley is using his talents as a professional painter to bring beauty to our faith.

In his famous talk “Seven Reasons to be Catholic,” philosopher Peter Kreeft argues one reason to be Catholic is because it’s beautiful. While this may seem like an obscure opinion and an untenable point, Dr. Kreeft makes a profound case that so much of our sacred architecture, music, and art bring the human soul closer to heaven and can only be inspired by God.

Catholic artist and PND '04 graduate John Folley allows the Lord to paint with his brush every day to bring more souls to Christ. Whether alone in his art studio or interacting with guests at a live painting event, John is inspiring people all over the country with his paintings and his witness to the faith.

John comes from a family of gifted and accomplished artists, musicians, and writers. As a little boy, John’s mother would insist on

letting her children be bored. And out of this need to find amusement, John became interested in artistic endeavors such as painting, drawing, and building structures.

As a student at Peoria Notre Dame, John excelled in his studies. Taking many honors and AP courses, John said, “I loved the challenge of contemplating more complex theories and higher level thinking. I owe so much to my high school teachers.”

John particularly remembers Mrs. Svoboda providing instruction on poetry and literature on a deeper level. And Fr. Klamut had a profound influence on his faith through the youth group and the Young Theologians Society.

Taking full advantage of his high school experience, John was involved in both sports and extracurricular activities. He was on the football and wrestling teams while participating in scholastic bowl and theater. And of course, he showed great promise in his art classes, and even took an occasional art class at ICC to keep his interests alive.

Following high school, John chose to attend the University of Notre Dame to study art and philosophy. He admits that while he received a sound education from one of the best universities in the country, he wasn’t prepared for a career as a full-time artist. After six years of teaching math and art in the Washington D.C. area, John knew there was more he wanted to do with painting. But he also knew all of his education hadn’t provided him with the technical knowledge he needed to pursue a viable and sustainable career in art.

John ultimately decided to focus on American Impressionism through the Boston School of Painting with master painter Paul Ingbretson.

“Through my art, I stand on the backs of giants such as Monet, John Singer Sargent, and Edmund Tarbell. The Boston School of painting provides a specific, unified vision of what makes a great painting and how to teach this method to others,” said John.

His 3.5 year immersion in what is known as American Impressionism through the Boston School prepared him to take the plunge into a dedicated career as a painter.

Following his apprenticeship, John found a perfectly appointed art studio in Lancaster, MA, and began his professional career as a painter.

“It quickly became apparent I couldn’t always make a living simply painting,” said John. “I had to find a niche. My wife began reading art business books, and that is when I discovered live painting for events.”

During a live painting, John will paint the action of the event such as a wedding, gala, or special gathering.



“I have great conversations while I’m painting live,” said John. “And when I return to the canvas after a conversation, it always brings a fresh perspective, new ideas, and a different way to look at the painting.”

John has also become known for his still life art, portraits, and commissions. In addition, he paints from live sittings such as the the Lone Star Madonna pictured on the front cover of this issue which was commissioned by a patron in Texas.



“My work as an artist isn’t finished until it is integrated into someone’s life,” John said.

Despite his success as a live artist and commissioned painter, John keeps going back to his faith for artistic inspiration. “We have to actively be apostles,” said John, and he has done so through his religious art.

One of his first paintings out of college was of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross which came from a pencil drawing a

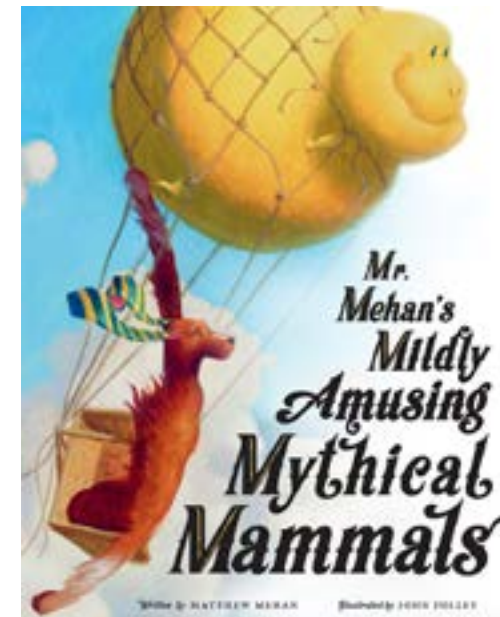
friend asked him to create. Now the large painting hangs in a parish named for the martyr in Bright, IN.

“My work as an artist isn’t finished until it is integrated into someone’s life.”

While oil paintings are what John is known for, he has explored other mediums including pen and watercolor. This past summer, John completed an art deco style piece inspired by a statue at Notre-Dame-des-Victoires in Paris which was purchased by an art admirer on Instagram.



John has also illustrated several children’s books including “Mr. Mehan’s Mildly Amusing Mythical Mammals” by Matthew Mehan and “A Child’s Christmas ABC Book” by Paul Thigpen, Ph.D.



Another passion John holds is advocating for beauty in art. John’s website blog states, “I believe that beauty is real and that art has standards, and I’m here to push back against the pretensions of the modern art world.”



John lives in Gardner, MA, with his very supportive wife, Deirdre, and their six children. More information about his art can be found at johnfolley.com.



FORMER LATIN TEACHER PASSED AWAY

By Ann (Pfeiffer) Kube (PND '94)



“Ad maiorem dei gloriam” this Latin motto of the Jesuit Order is one of the few bits of Latin language I can still accurately translate almost 30 years after my last Latin class at Peoria Notre Dame High School in 1994. Upon being asked to reflect on the life of my Latin teacher, Mr. Donald Oberle, I cannot think of a better motto to sum up how this humble man taught us, both in word and deed, to live “For the greater glory of God.”

The initials “AMDG” from the Latin motto adorned the top corner of every handout, worksheet, quiz, and test he ever gave. It was a habit Mr. Oberle continued from his own student days which served as a quiet reminder that everything we do should be our best effort to give glory to God. As headstrong high school kids, we often fell short of living up to this standard, but even then, Mr. Oberle found opportunity to witness God’s love. His gentle admonishment and quick forgiveness when we were most undeserving of it humbled us all and made us want to be better in his eyes.

Mr. Oberle’s life exemplified a commitment to high standards of Catholic education. On our own, none of us would have dared enter a National Latin Contest, but when Mr. Oberle believed we could succeed and pushed us to try, it was almost impossible not to live up to his high expectations. He also pushed us to excel in the Christian service program. As part of his personal prayer and service, Mr. Oberle made rosaries and inspired several of his students over the years to make them for service hours and discover a deeper devotion to the Blessed Mother. Though vision and physical mobility issues sometimes made navigating the world of high school a challenge, Mr. Oberle was joyful and always seemed happy to be at school with us. His joy was never more obvious than on yearly field trips to the Art Institute in Chicago, when Mr. Oberle celebrated by treating us to dozens of donuts for the bus ride. He usually set an example of “carpe diem” by polishing off at least a dozen himself!

After his retirement from teaching at PND, I continued to witness Mr. Oberle’s commitment to Catholic education as he participated in the lives of his granddaughters who attended St. Thomas grade school at the same time my own children did. I found myself once again humbled watching Mr. Oberle roll up his sleeves to serve lunch trays in the cafeteria and shuttle the girls to and from all the activities of busy grade school kids. He sat beaming through all-school Masses as he listened to their voices in the choir give glory to God in song.

On July 5, 2023, I cleared my schedule and made time to attend the funeral of Mr. Oberle. It was important to represent the prayers and respect of countless grateful students whose lives have been touched by the quiet witness of this humble man and to celebrate a life so well lived. The Mass was celebrated by both Msgr. Jason Gray and Fr. Stephen Willard and assisted by Deacon Nelson and Deacon Mallow. Each paid tribute to the strength and zeal of Mr. Oberle’s faith as they ministered to him in the last years of his life. For those of us who knew him throughout his life, that is no surprise. Mr. Donald Oberle lived for the greater glory of God.



Peoria Notre Dame is proud to be celebrating 160 years of Catholic education in Peoria beginning with the institution of the Academy of Our Lady in 1863. And we are also proud to hold a database of nearly 25,000 alumni, donors, and friends who have made an impact on our students. With this many records, we hope you will help us keep them up-to-date. Please contact Tara Shane at t.shane@pndhs.org if you become aware of an alumni or supporter who has passed away.

Wings...

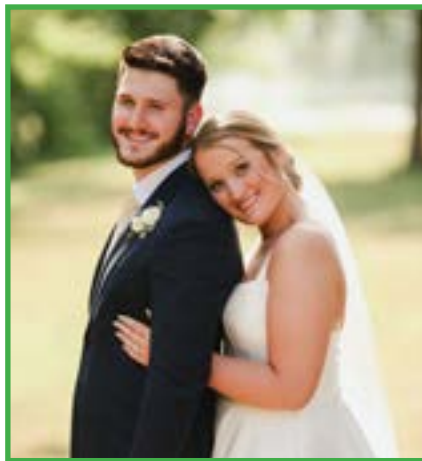
Donald Lowry (SI '47) died 1/19/23
James Kamm (BHS '77) died 3/1/23
Richard Alig (SI '61) died 3/9/23
Richard Caldwell (SI '50) died 3/15/23
Norberta Jean Faulkner (AOL '69) died 3/22/23
Marilyn Moehn (AOL '52) died 3/22/23
Barbara Smith (AOL '56) died 3/27/23
Raymond Bill (SI '65) died 3/27/23
James Krause (SI '61) died 3/28/23
David Val Schlink (BHS '66) died 3/31/23
Forrest Johnson (SI '56) died 4/1/23
Eric Lang (SI '71) died 4/7/23
Tim Speck (PND '97) died 4/8/23
Peggy A Kirchgessner (AOL '55) died 4/15/23
Patricia O'Brien (AOL '47) died 4/18/23
Margaret Sanzotta (AOL '56) died 4/27/23
Karen Pierce (AOL/SI '71) died 4/28/23
Joseph Lampe (AOL/SI '75) died 4/29/23
Michael Sullivan (SI '66) died 4/29/23
Mark Ruhaak (BHS '75) died 5/4/23
Eric Staats (AOL/SI '85) died 5/12/23
Dennis Rohman (SI '63) died 5/13/23
Kathleen Landon (AOL '48) died 5/14/23
Richard Cain (SI '52) died 5/15/23
Charles Biggins (SI '53) died 5/16/23
Steven Rackis (AOL/SI '75) died 5/23/23
John Rupert (SI '73) died 5/24/23
Nancy Jane Verkler (AOL '54) died 5/25/23
Linda Craig (AOL '67) died 5/30/23
Regina Hines Hutt (BHS '73) died 6/5/23
Judith Jewett (AOL '58) died 6/7/23
James Buecker (BHS '70) died 6/7/23
Nathan Park (PND '10) died 6/7/23
Sr. Mary Patricia Klosinski (AOL '43) died 6/8/23

Barbara Crank (AOL '58) died 6/10/23
Phyllis Heinz (AOL '56) died 6/14/23
Joseph Mirande (SI '53) died 6/21/23
John Pendergrass (AOL/SI '84) died 6/22/23
Patrick Kircher (BHS '74) died 6/26/23
Marilyn Diviney (AOL '62) died 6/29/23
Michael White (SI '69) died 7/3/23
Robert Hellrigel (SI '50) died 7/4/23
Ann Levine (AOL '47) died 7/5/23
Robert Adkison (SI '61) died 7/5/23
Robert Myers (SI '54) died 9/21/23
Bonita Tiezzi (BHS '67) died 7/8/23
David Scherer (SI '68) died 7/15/23
Gerilyn Kegley (AOL '73) died 7/19/23
Mary McGann (AOL '49) died 7/23/23
Teresa Kough (BHS '75) died 7/23/23
Madeline Sherer (AOL '51) died 7/24/23
Nicholas Terry (PND '08) died 7/24/23
Kimberly Rupert (AOL/SI '78) died 7/27/23
Roberta Goodwin (AOL '50) died 7/28/23
Diane Kruzick (BHS '84) died 7/28/23
Kathleen Drohan (AOL '67) died 8/1/23
Dennis Ryan (BHS '68) died 8/2/23
Ellen Zang-Dillon (AOL '57) died 8/3/23
Susan DeVries (BHS '69) died 8/6/23
Mary Catherine Haddigan (AOL '60) died 8/12/23
Margaret Giltner (AOL '59) died 8/13/23
William Cook (SI '54) died 8/14/23
Allen Broughton (BHS '79) died 8/17/23
Fredrick George (SI '59) died 8/30/23
Mary Catherine Bailey (AOL '60) died 9/1/23
Robert Lonteen (SI '58) died 9/4/23
Leiane Gailliaert (AOL '68) died 9/10/23
Cynthia Neidig-Northland (AOL '63) died 9/11/23
Christina Girardini (AOL '68) died 9/16/23
Robert Flanagan (SI '58) died 9/24/23
Helen Highfill (AOL '46) died 9/24/23

Rings...



Mariana Kortz (PND '16) married Parker Nenonen 4/15/23 at St. Mark's in Peoria.



Abigail Skibba (PND '19) married Olson Drake on 6/10/23 in Eureka.

Benjamin Bloomfield (PND '19) married Aubrie Kuhrt on 6/5/23 in Colorado Springs, CO.



Ann Pearl (PND '07) married James Karabas on 6/22/23 at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria.

Alex Bousky (PND '15) married faculty member Leah Daugherty on 9/16/23 at St. Mary of the Woods in Princeville.



James Wetzel & Alex Slane (both PND '16) wed on 6/3/23 at St. Mark's Church in Peoria.



Nathanael Bloomfield (PND '21) married Bella Illiano on 6/10/23 in Porto Ceresio, Italy.



Bridget Lawless (PND '08) married David Walz on 10/1/21 at Sacred Heart in Peoria. The couple is now happily expecting their second child.



Reed Russell & Sydney Peters (both PND '17) wed on 7/8/23 at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Peoria.



Michael Meyer & Madelyn Brush (both PND '19) wed on 8/6/22 at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria.



Marielle Rebello (PND '16) married Daniel Visser on 10/22/22 at Sts. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church in Lemont, IL.

& Little Things!

Blake Joseph Holzgrafe
born 9/29/22 to Blake
(PND '11) & Carla
Holzgrafe.



**Braxton Edward
Marshall** born 9/16/23
to Toby & Shea
(Olehy - PND '09)
Marshall.



Denny Brignadello Genzel
born 12/16/22 to Carl Genzel
(PND '03) & Meg Brignadello
Genzel (PND '08).

Juniper Brianne Schneider
born 9/21/2023 to Noah &
Victoria (Kortz - PND '19)
Schneider.



DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

Reflecting on
Reunions!

Bergan Class of 1977



Bergan Class of 1968



PND CLASS OF 1993



Academy Class of 1963



AOL/SI CLASS OF 1961



BERGAN CLASS OF 1983



PND Class of 2013



Bergan Class of 1973



Spalding Class of 1963



AOL/SI Class of 1968



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Phone: 309.691.8741
www.pndhs.org
Email Tara Shane at t.shane@pndhs.org

Stay in touch with your classmates and friends! Update your information with the alumni office.

Name: _____

Maiden Name: _____

School Graduated: _____ **Graduation Year:** _____

Email Address: _____ **Cell Phone Number:** _____

Life events (check all that apply):

- ☐ I recently married
☐ I recently changed jobs
☐ I recently changed my address

Spouse's name: _____

New Job: _____

New Address: _____

Today's date: _____

Wedding date: _____

OR update your information at www.pndhs.org!
Hover over "Alumni," and click on "Update Your Info."