

# The IRISH LENS

Spring 2023

## GIVING ROOTS TO **STEM** FLOURISHING CAREERS



This issue of The Irish Lens contains Peoria Notre Dame's 5-year Strategic Plan.



# Irish Love



***Our Dean of Students Tim Speck passed away April 8 from cancer. A 1997 graduate of PND, Tim was a highly respected educator and administrator at PND for more than 20 years. Here is a tribute from fellow faculty member and friend John Donnelly (PND '99):***

I remember the first time I really sat down with Tim and had the sense that we'd started to become friends. Tim, the sophomore coach at the time, and I grabbed lunch together one day at Donnelly's after practice. Tim started talking about teaching and how much he loved being around the students. He told me about the silly games and contests they'd do in class (and how, of course, those are the things the kids remember). I knew right then that I wanted to teach and feel the same way Tim felt about it.

The fun thing about working with Tim for some 15+ years (besides him being wildly funny) is that I was able to see him act on those principles he described to me all the time. Tim wanted the students to be happy, whether they were in psychology class or whether he was scaring them some as the dean those first couple years of high school (as they got older, they were able to see other sides of him, like the funny, caring ones). Tim cared about them.

Tim just never stopped caring about others. The more you knew him, the more people you'd meet that he cared about, from friends, to especially his family. He loved his wife Becca and his kids beyond measure - it was always a delight to hear him talk about them (especially if they were sleeping well, which wasn't always the case - he loved them all the same though).

Tim was a great dean and a great administrator. I know that sometimes he missed being in the classroom more - as dean, you're often dealing with the students after they've not been at their best. But his work allowed many other teachers to do their jobs and do them well. He was just always calm and logical. I'd always go to him if I had a question about something important because I respected and trusted him. I know I wasn't the only one.

I'm going to miss him a lot. I know a lot of people will. PND certainly will as well. He loved the place, as much as you can love a place I suppose, but he really loved the people there, the students, the staff, the parents - that's what we mean I think when we say we love a place. And he did so much for PND as a result of that love. He cared and always let that care guide his actions. So as a tribute to him, I'd encourage others to have their actions match their beliefs. Care for others, and in particular, Becca, Isabelle, Anna, Jude, John Paul, and Thomas. One of the things he said to me the first night that he told me about having cancer is that he was worried that his children would grow up without knowing him. And it's terribly sad that they won't grow up knowing their dad the way he would have wanted, which is why it's up to those who loved him to make sure they know how great their dad was and how much he loved them. And if you didn't have the fortune of knowing Tim, just care for others anyways and serve them and love them. Because that's what he did.



# Leading the way in STEM Studies

Peoria Notre Dame is proud to provide students with the opportunity to participate in a nationally recognized STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) program called Project Lead the Way. The program allows the students to solve 21st century problems through exciting projects, labs, and hands-on learning opportunities. Students may obtain Project Lead the Way (PLTW) recognition in one of three pathways: Biomedical, Engineering, or Computer Science. The Biomedical pathway is open to all students but is highly recommended for students interested in pre-medical, pre-dental, pre-nursing, physical therapy, veterinary, and other health-related service careers. It is an in-depth study of human physiology, clinical medicine, forensic science, public health, and diseases through the scientific research method. In addition, students also have the opportunity to work on an independent project.

The engineering pathway provides students the opportunity to engage in a design development process, which is not limited to: portfolio development, sketching and visualization using geometric relationships, creating models, analyzing and verifying model components, presenting product models, and developing marketing plans. The students work in teams to design and develop



an original solution to a valid open-ended technical problem by applying the engineering design process. They then present and defend their original solution to an outside panel. The courses provide students the opportunity to understand the field of engineering and engineering technology. Instruction is designed to assist students in learning how engineers and technicians use math, science, and technology in problem-solving processes to benefit people. Students are also expected to address concerns regarding the social and political consequences of technological change.

Through the Computer Science pathway, students use visual, block-based programming and seamlessly transition to text-based programming with languages such as Python to create apps, develop websites, and learn how to make computers work together to put their design into practice. They apply computational thinking practices, build vocabulary, and collaborate on products that address topics important to them. They also encounter cybersecurity threats and learn how to protect against them and learn how organizations protect themselves in today's world.

The Project Lead the Way program allows students to begin exploring STEM career paths and gaining knowledge in their intended field of study before setting foot on a college campus.



Main feature about STEM begins on page 13.

# Sports Highlights

We are wrapping up the 2022/2023 school year with a great spring sports season. While the track team is off and running, the boys baseball team and girls softball team are hitting it out of the park, and the girls soccer team is kicking goals, we are excited to announce several of our seniors have been offered scholarships to continue their athletic careers.

Dillon Stickelmaier and Nevan Libert will both continue playing soccer at St. Ambrose University next year. Becca Dawson will be playing volleyball at Eureka College, and Lauren DellaValle signed a commitment to play soccer for Monmouth College.



PND took three wrestlers to state this year. Chase Daugherty and Michael McLaughlin performed very well, and Ian Akers finished 4th atop the podium! Sophomore Autumnne Williams made history as PND's first female wrestler.

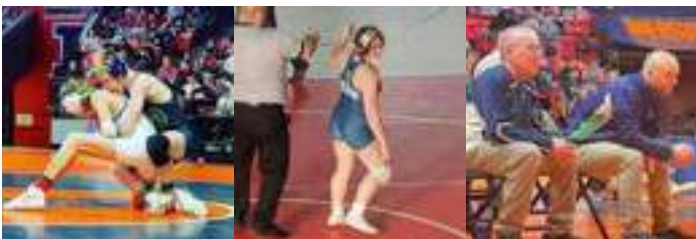
Of course they couldn't have done it without the leadership of Coach Kevin Burk. But after 44 years of teaching and coaching, Coach Burk is passing on the torch. As head wrestling coach, Mr. Burk led his wrestlers to 705 Dual Meet wins (which is 2nd of all time according to IHSA)! He

has trained 35 State qualifiers, 13 IHSA State Place-winners, and 1 IHSA State Champion. He has also coached football and track & field! But there will still be a Coach Burk as Kevin's son Danny is taking over as head wrestling coach next year. PND is incredibly blessed to have Coach Kevin Burk's leadership, expertise, and passion for wrestling all of these years.

We are also blessed to have IHSA's Coach of the Year among our athletic staff! Boys soccer Head Coach Mike Bare was recently named Coach of the Year for leading his team to their 5th state championship title in the fall. Coach Bare is the second all-time high school soccer coach for the most state tournament appearances, state titles, and matches won at state according to IHSA's website. Throughout his career, Coach Bare has coached 13 Peoria Journal Star Players of the Year, 24 IHSSCA Illinois All-State Players, 1 IHSSCA Illinois Player of the Year, 1 Gatorade Illinois Player of the Year, 6 All-Americans, 25 NCAA Division I Commits, 1 NJCAA Division I National Runner-Up, 1 NCAA Division I National Champion, 1 MLS SuperDraft Selection, and 2 Professional Soccer Players. We are so proud of Coach Bare and are fortunate to have him leading our soccer program.



Finally, excitement surrounded the school this winter as alum Will Church (PND '22) and his sister Margaret (PND freshman) competed at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships in the junior pairs division. The competition was televised, and the duo made the PND family proud!





# The ShamROCK

## INTRODUCING PEORIA NOTRE DAME'S FALL SPORTS TEAMS

### Location

PND Athletic Fields,  
upper parking lot

### Entertainment

Live band: Dexter O'Neal  
and the Funkyard

### Kids Activities

Balloon animals, face painting,  
glitter tattoos, and much more

### Food

Alwan and Sons Meat Company  
Grilled sandwiches, chips, and sodas

### Beverages

Brewers Distributing Co. &  
Catering Peoria  
Beer tent and special mocktail menu

**Friday  
Aug. 18  
2023**

**5:00 - 10:00 p.m.**



## Bring the whole family!

Family of Four: \$60 • Couple: \$40 • Individual: \$20

YOU can

# Empower the Future



Thirty-three donors took advantage of the great program which is available to anyone who pays state income tax in Illinois. Donations are used to provide financial assistance to our students, and the donor receives a 75% tax credit on their state income tax. Yes, not just a deduction, but a tax credit. Example: A household pays \$4,000 per year in state income tax to IL. The donor could give \$4,000 to Empower IL and designate it to be earmarked for Peoria Notre Dame students. The donor will then receive \$3,000 back when completing their taxes so their net gift is only \$1,000 and yet, PND receives \$4,000!

Matching gift companies such as Caterpillar will also match these donations so in the above example, you could generate \$8,000 for PND scholarships and your net gift would only be \$1,000.

If you are not happy with ways in which your state income taxes dollars are used, this is a great way to re-direct your tax dollars into scholarships for students at Peoria Notre Dame. If your interest is peaked, please contact Cindy Dermody at [c.dermody@pndhs.org](mailto:c.dermody@pndhs.org) or 309-691-8741 x 4248 for more information.



*Thank you to the listed donors who provided scholarship funds to our students through the Empower IL program in 2022. Donors are identified here as they were listed on the Empower IL reports.*

# VOCATIONS SPOTLIGHT

As we see some priests enter retirement, we congratulate new priests on their ordination. We are thrilled to announce PND alum Patrick Wille (PND '13) will be ordained as a Peoria Diocesan priest on May 27, 2023. The entire PND family is lifting him up in prayer for a wonderful ordination day and a blessed life as a priest.



## *Congratulations!*



Msgr. Jerry Ward is a 1971 graduate of Bergan High School. He was recently named Pastor of the Year for the Diocese of Peoria. In his 44 years as a priest, Msgr. Ward has served parishes all over the diocese, notably at St. Patrick Church of Merna in Bloomington where he oversaw the construction of the new church. Most recently, he has served as pastor at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Morton since 2014. Thank you, Msgr. Ward, for your pastoral leadership and care throughout these last 44 years.

### **Reflection by Monsignor Jerry Ward (BHS '71)**

Over the last nine years as the pastor of Blessed Sacrament in Morton, I have been asked to come to Peoria Notre Dame to help administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Often, I have been in one of the classrooms or labs and looking around, I have many fond memories of my years at Bergan High School. I was fortunate to be the editor of the school newspaper, The Formee. It was invigorating to report on the news around the school, and I often offered my opinions in the editorials. I was most grateful for the faculty, both religious and lay, who were dedicated to making Bergan High School a foundation for what Peoria Notre Dame is today.

Having reached the age of 70, Bishop Tylka has granted me senior status in June. The 44 years that I have served as a priest of this Diocese has given me the opportunity to meet many people when they are experiencing some of the most joyful times in their lives. Also, I have been with many who had to face some difficult challenges. Being a priest is filled with many ups and downs. I mostly cherish being able to preside at Mass when we are so close to the Lord in the Eucharist. My Catholic education was the catalyst for a lifetime of happiness in the vocation the Lord called me to.



The 40th anniversary Blue and Green Gala sped by like an express train. This year's theme was "Ticket to Ride" because a ticket affords individuals the opportunity to take part in something which would otherwise not be possible. This is exactly how we feel about the kindness and generosity of our donors, which affords students the opportunity to receive a Catholic education at Peoria Notre Dame.

We are so grateful for the generosity and kindness of those who contributed to this annual event. Whether it was volunteering time, donating an item, or attending and bidding at the auction, all of your contributions led to the success of this year's event.

# Gala 2023

This was a record-shattering year regarding the funds raised for Peoria Notre Dame. We raised a net total of \$127,503. This is the most that any Blue and Green Gala has raised in a decade!

**"Save the Date" for next year's Gala:  
Saturday, March 23, 2024**



Proudly we raised more than \$88,000 for this year's Fund-A-Need: kitchen repairs and replacements. During the evening, PND presented Beth Alwan and her family with a plaque honoring her mother, Patricia Matarelli who served as PND's kitchen manager for 29 years.

We are so grateful to the individuals who donated to this \$200,000 endeavor. Some of our appliances are nearly 80 years old, and our newest are more than 25 years old. Amazingly, our kitchen staff has managed to feed our entire student body and staff with only one working oven, six burners, and inefficient fryers. If you would like to contribute to this project in memory of Mrs. Matarelli, please send a check to the school and place "Fund-A-Need" in the memo line.

Reunite with



## AOL and SI Class of 1961

To make up for missing their 60th class reunion during the pandemic, the AOL/SI Class of 1961 will hold a gathering on September 23 at Avanti's North on Knoxville at 6:00. RSVP to Bob Knott at [bobknott@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bobknott@sbcglobal.net).

## AOL and SI Class of 1963

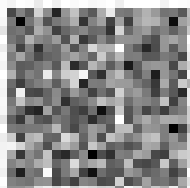
AOL/SI Class of 1963 will hold their 60th class reunion on September 30 starting with a tour of PND at 4:00 followed by Mass in the chapel at 5:00. Dinner will be at Barrack's Cater Inn following Mass. For more information please contact Ray LaHood at [lahood.ray@gmail.com](mailto:lahood.ray@gmail.com).

## PND Class of 1993

Graduates of Peoria Notre Dame Class of 1993 will enjoy a reunion on August 11 and August 12. Friday evening, the class will meet at Oliver's in the Heights. Saturday, Mass will be held in the PND chapel at 4:00 and dinner will begin at 6:30 at Childers Banquet Center. For more information, contact Paige Staes at [paigestaes@gmail.com](mailto:paigestaes@gmail.com).

## PND Class of 2013

PND Class of 2013 will hold a 10-year class reunion on August 19. The evening will begin at 5:30 with a Mass in the PND chapel followed by dinner in the Commons at 6:30. For more information, scan the QR code or contact Pat Wille at [pjwille2@gmail.com](mailto:pjwille2@gmail.com).



## Bergan High School

**BHS Class of 1968** will hold a class reunion Sep 29-30. Friday evening will begin at 6:00 at Kouri's Pub on Sterling Avenue and Saturday's event will be held at the Lariat Steakhouse starting at 6:00. Contact Dr. Joe Couri at 309-253-1060 or [jocouri@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jocouri@sbcglobal.net).

**BHS Class of 1973** will have a 50th year reunion at 6:00 on October 7 at Mt. Hawley Country Club. Msgr. Jerry Ward will offer Mass at PND at 4:30. Please contact Gail Brophy Hobin at [gegann@comcast.net](mailto:gegann@comcast.net). Classmates, please forward your email address to Joe Wright at [gjwright1@hotmail.com](mailto:gjwright1@hotmail.com).

**BHS Class of 1977** is set to host a reunion on September 22 and 23. The weekend will begin at Oliver's in the Heights on Friday at 6:00. On Saturday, a tour of PND will begin at 3:30 followed by Mass in the chapel at 4:30 and dinner at the Lariat at 6:00. For more information, contact Tom Gibson at [tggbmg@aol.com](mailto:tggbmg@aol.com).

# WINGS, RINGS, Little Things...

**Chiara Marie Conley**  
born January 10, 2023  
to Jack & Sydney  
(Zarvell) Conley (both  
PND '16).



**Margo Marie Swenson**  
born March 4, 2023  
to Jed & Kelly  
(Diekemper) Swenson  
(PND '10).



**Lucy Elward** born  
January 13, 2023  
to Cary (PND '12) &  
Kiley Elward.

**Douglas Cicciarelli**  
(PND '11) & Paige Webster  
married February 18, 2023  
at St. Thomas the Apostle  
Church in Peoria Heights.



**Congratulations to Maya Bragg**  
(PND '15). Maya will be graduating  
in May with a medical degree  
from Meharry Medical College  
in Nashville and has accepted a  
residency program in OB/GYN at  
University Hospital New Orleans.



**Toby Marshall married Shea Olehy (PND '09) on October 22, 2022 in Peoria.**



**Anastasia Elizabeth Brautigam born November 26, 2022 to Chris & Katie Eckert (PND '05) Brautigam.**



**Thomas Speck born January 16, 2023 to Tim (PND '97) & Rebecca Speck.**

## & Additional Tidings!

**Mary Kay Morrison (AOL '64) recently published her third book called "Legacy of Laughter: A Grandparent Guide and Playbook." The book, inspired by an AOL classmate, is based on her 40 years of research in the field of neuroscience of humor/play and laughter.**



**On March 27, 2023, Dr. Matthew Vander Vennet (PND '04) completed and successfully defended his doctoral dissertation titled "An Early Defender of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Fr. Luke Wadding, O.F.M.".**



Judith Ann Cirbo (AOL '54) died 2/13/22  
 Sr. Marya Dugard (AOL '48) died 10/2/22  
 Russell Myers (SI '64) died 10/6/22  
 Steven Malpede (BHS '75) died 10/15/22  
 Robert Hahn (SI '54) died 10/19/22  
 Sara Weber (PND '93) died 11/3/22  
 Steven Anderson (SI '65) died 11/10/22  
 Patricia Heffren (AOL '61) died 11/19/22  
 Bjorn Thorell (SI '68) died 11/23/22  
 Christopher Simkins (PND '89) died 11/27/22  
 Elizabeth Pegg (AOL '47) died 11/28/22  
 Daniel J. Smith, Sr. (SI '59) died 11/29/22  
 Matthew Leali (PND '04) died 12/1/22  
 Julia McGrath (AOL '73) died 12/4/22  
 Stephanie Spears (BHS '83) died 12/5/22  
 Peter Schaub (SI '57) died 12/7/22  
 Ameline LaHood (AOL '53) died 12/15/22  
 Deborah Johnson (AOL/SI '75) died 12/19/22  
 Lt. Col. Stephen McCormick (SI '67) died 12/19/22  
 Rita Conroy (AOL '43) died 12/25/22  
 Michael Fehernbacher (PND '02) died 12/20/22  
 Amy Fields (PND '89) died 12/25/22  
 Gayle Rogy (AOL '52) died 12/29/22  
 Richard A. Malone (SI '52) died 12/29/22  
 Richard Powers Jr. (SI '58) died 12/29/22  
 Leo Cushing (SI '51) died 1/1/23  
 Barbara Callahan (AOL '54) died 1/4/23  
 Barbara Ann Roth (AOL '57) died 1/14/23  
 Susan Brayshaw (AOL '61) died 1/14/23  
 William Schaub (SI '56) died 1/19/23  
 Mary Campbell (AOL/SI '63) died 1/20/23  
 James H. Becker (SI '63) died 1/21/23  
 Maurice B. Joseph (SI '54) died 1/23/23  
 Colleen Cole (AOL '69) died 1/28/23  
 James St. Germain (SI '53) died 1/28/23  
 Roy Paluska (SI '62) died 2/2/23  
 Stephen Heinz (SI '66) died 2/13/23  
 David Heinz (SI '53) died 2/14/23  
 David Gusler (SI '68) died 2/15/23  
 Gloria Jean Berg (AOL '58 ) died 2/16/23  
 Sandra Post (AOL '66) died 2/16/23  
 Maureen Hennig (AOL '51) died 2/17/23  
 Michael J. Sullivan (SI '53) died 2/18/23  
 Edith Whitfield (AOL '53) died 2/19/23  
 Charles Lavin (SI '72) died 2/22/23  
 Daniel Mungoven (SI '54) died 2/25/23

Please consider remembering  
 Peoria Notre Dame in your estate plans  
 and memorial donations. Contact Cindy  
 Dermody at [c.dermody@pndhs.org](mailto:c.dermody@pndhs.org).

## Gloria Berg

By Cathy Curtis

Everyone knows that the person who holds a school together is the school secretary. This is certainly the case with Gloria Berg who was our secretary during the years when Bergen changed from the Christian Brothers administering the school to the direct diocesan leadership of Fr. Marchelones and Greg Dansberger. Gloria was very intelligent and energetic, thorough, friendly and kind. She is the reason that the transition was smooth and successful. Sadly, Gloria passed away in February.

## Charlie Lavin

By Jim Carlson (BHS '73)

We lost a great fan of PND. Charlie Lavin loved PND and volunteered in so many ways to make it a special place for students. Charlie made life-long friendships with his SI '72 classmates. Charlie's wife Camille is an AOL graduate, and his children attended PND. Charlie was a charter member of the PND Golf Classic committee and remained on the committee for the entire 26 years. For his efforts, Charlie was awarded the 2015 Fulton J. Sheen Distinguished Alumni Award. He was the one who comforted his family and friends with loving words at the funeral Mass for his brother-in-law Randy Simmons. Charlie was a hero to his family and our school.

# EXCELLING BEYOND IMAGINATION

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During the 1980s and 90s, as computers were beginning to take hold, Spalding '77 alum, Ed Ringness forged a career as a Lead Software Developer at Microsoft.

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At this point in history, it's hard to imagine our lives without computers. We use them for everything! In fact, they have become such an integral part of our lives that 85% of Americans carry a mini-computer in their pocket or purse everywhere they go. For our current students, they can't remember a time when computers were not utilized daily. But many parents and alums can at least think back to a time when computers were just beginning to phase into our lives.

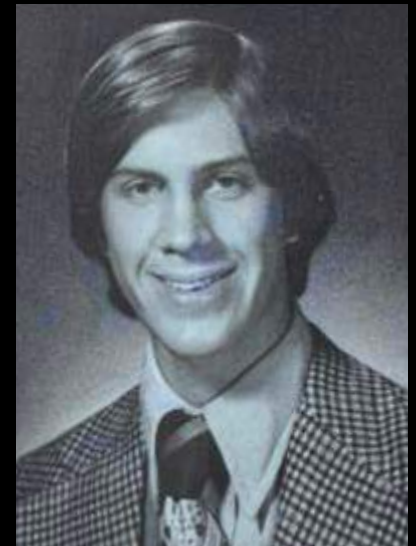
We take for granted the programs we now use every day for ease, convenience, and computing power. One such program that defines these aspects we have come to depend upon is Microsoft Excel. From simply alphabetizing lists to creating pivot tables, Excel has forever changed both mundane and complex tasks. And we have a Spalding Institute alum to thank for this and a few other life-altering computer programs.

**Edward Ringness** grew up attending grade school at Sacred Heart where he says he began his love of math and science. He was given the opportunity to take algebra in 8th grade which put him a year ahead of his peers in math. He attended Spalding Institute where he continued to excel among his classmates.

"By senior year, there weren't any more math classes for me to take at Spalding, so I went to ICC and took math there in the evening. That's where I ran into computers," Ringness said. "They had a teletype computer system in a room, and I became interested and watched how that worked."

Ringness graduated as valedictorian from Spalding in 1977, just as computers were beginning to make major strides towards mass production and personal use. Beginning his first year at Harvard, Ed thought he would major in chemistry or another science, but his focus quickly changed.

"When I went to college, I took some computer classes, and that's when I really decided that's what I wanted to do," said Ringness. "At the time, the field was changing, and universities had a lot more computers than high schools or any other place really. Even my father who was an engineer at Caterpillar didn't have access to computers back then."



Ringness noted that while there was a sequence of classes for Harvard students to take with computer science professors to earn a degree in the new and emerging field, there was not an organized computer science department back then.

When Ed graduated from Harvard in 1981, most computer customers were businesses, accounting firms, and schools. Desktop microcomputers were being developed. But they were used mostly by hobbyists, and the average individual wouldn't think about having one for personal use. But by the time he started working for Microsoft in 1982, there were a lot of small software companies, and they were all very interested in the new microcomputers that would inevitably become personal computers.

"I started at Microsoft as a Junior Developer working on a piece of coding for one program. The company could see there was a big potential group of customers. So, we were writing specialized software for the burgeoning market of microcomputers," said Ringness.

Eventually Ringness became a Lead Software Developer at Microsoft, heading teams of developers to create new products for a rapidly growing and changing technology world. But the rate of product development often proved to be too fast for users. That's when Ringness began working on a program called Microsoft Publisher.



"Publisher is a program designed to create flyers, newsletters, greeting cards, and other printed materials. Many people don't have skills for any kind of graphic design. So, our new idea was to make it easier by creating 'wizards' which would ask the user a series of questions. Then the computer would be able to create a document based on the answers. While other computer products

have since implemented 'wizards,' that was first done in Publisher by our development group."

Ringness recognizes the math and science courses he took in high school were essential to preparing him for a career in STEM. "My math teacher, Fr. Teed, was a good influence on me. He had this saying about math, 'You always have to push the pencil. Eventually you will just figure it out.' I've found that to be true. If you just keep going, eventually you will come up with a solution."

While Microsoft Publisher is still available, it's not as popular as one of the other programs Ed helped develop ... Microsoft Excel. "Today's version of Excel looks quite different, and it has so many more features compared to when we started. I still recognize many capabilities and functions, but it's so much more powerful than we imagined back then."



Recalling his Spalding days, Ed said, "I feel like I got a good education. Even though Spalding was a Catholic school, it drew kids from all over town and surrounding areas. I felt like I got to know people from a variety of backgrounds which helped me later in life."

He added, "Going to a Catholic school, we were encouraged to volunteer which had a big impact on me, and I have continued my volunteerism throughout life. At Spalding, I received a good training in the Gospels and values of the Church. Even

though professionally religion didn't come up explicitly, it helped me in understanding how to approach people and what is important."

Ed has some valuable advice for students looking to make a career in technology and computer science. "Bear in mind all the knowledge humans have was discovered throughout history, and yet there are new discoveries and technologies still to be made. So, pay attention and learn the fundamentals in class. But remain curious too because things may change in the future, and you may be involved in that change."

Ed retired from Microsoft in 1999. He lives in Seattle with his wife Marjorie. They have two adult sons – Will, who lives in Seattle with his wife and daughter, and James, who lives in Chicago.

There are still some big technological problems to be solved. It's a great opportunity for this generation of students to make those discoveries. -Ed



Peoria Notre Dame is proud to have many alums flourishing in STEM careers. In all sectors of science, technology, engineering, and math, our graduates are not only forging careers in these important fields, but they are making a difference in the lives of others.

One such alum is **Dr. Sara Barnato Giordano** (PND '98). She is an Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and a Senior Physician at the world-renowned Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Dr. Giordano specializes in breast oncology, and her research is focused on novel therapies in the treatment of breast cancer.

Inspired by her father's passion for caring for patients in his pharmacy and by her aunt's own breast cancer journey, Dr. Giordano was called to her chosen career path in high school.

"When I started at Peoria Notre Dame, I knew I was interested in pursuing a career in medicine," she said. "My coursework in mathematics and science was stimulating, rooted

in problem-based learning, and prepared me for success at college."

Dr. Giordano noted her Catholic academic foundation provided her with the ability to be a confident thinker, and it rooted compassion and benevolence in her. "It was instilled in me that my responsibility is to leave the planet better than when I entered."

"The teachers were not only passionate about education, but they were also focused on faith and helping me learn who I am as a Christian," she added. "These are both strong pillars which are the roots of my present day drive and success."

"I am blessed and humbled each day to be involved in a patient's cancer care," said Giordano. "It is a life-altering experience to be diagnosed with cancer. I am honored to have patients trust me and allow me to be a part of their life and this difficult and sometimes tumultuous journey."

Also leading the way in academia is **Dr. Patrick Archer**,

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at St. Ambrose University and a professor of sociology. Dr. Archer is a 1996 graduate of PND, and he earned his PhD from Iowa State University in Sociology.

"I would say my sophomore Honors Geometry class with Ms. Clark was the first time that math seemed fun for me," said Archer.

With years of studying quantitative sociology, Archer has had to flex his math and science skills in both scientific data collection and statistical analysis.



His advice for current high school students is to keep an open mind about future plans and consider a STEM career.



1954 Spalding Institute graduate **Dr. Robert Myers** would agree. He spent more than 50 years teaching math to students, mostly at the collegiate level.

While at Spalding, Myers followed the academic math track, which was similar to honors courses back then.

Myers admits education was not his main focus in high school, but rather playing sports. "My friends and I used to joke around about which career would make more money, a pro-athlete or a teacher," he laughed. "While pro-athletes make more these days, there is no denying our teachers are making a bigger difference in the world."

After serving four years in the Army, he attended Illinois State to receive a teaching degree and then a masters at Harvard. Myers moved on to Northern

Michigan University to obtain his PhD while teaching math in 1971. Dr. Myers retired in 2013.

Another alum who is making a difference in her STEM career is **Dr. Suzanne Gilles**. She is a 1996 graduate of PND and a veterinarian in the Peoria area. Dr. Gilles said she knew from a very young age that she wanted to be a veterinarian.



"My grandpa had a great influence on me," said Gilles. "Growing up, we were always out in nature searching for little animals and bugs. Since then, I knew I wanted a career dealing with animals in some degree."

Gilles recalls PND teacher and track coach Mr. Cummings really encouraged her in her career path. "He taught me that with perseverance and hard work, you will reach your goals, either in track or in your everyday life."

Academy/Spalding 1989 grad **Cindy Loos** is a mechanical engineer. After graduating from Eastern Illinois University with a math education degree, teaching jobs were unavailable.

She was then encouraged to pursue a career in engineering.

"I always liked math, so I thought it would be a good fit," said Loos. And it turns out engineering was her calling.

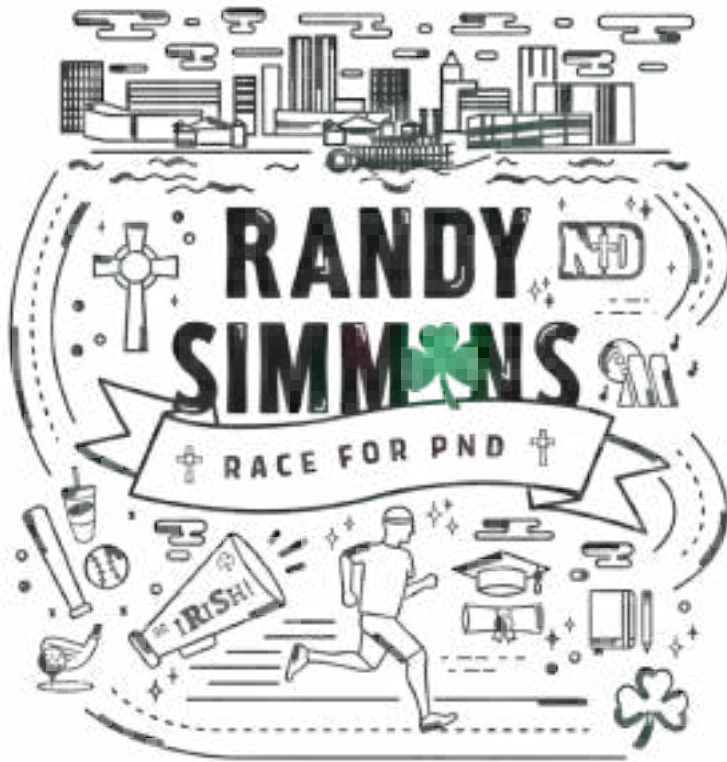
For her efforts and leadership within her career and community, Loos has been named on both the 40 Under 40 and 25 Women in Leadership lists.

Now, Loos is Vice President and Senior Project manager at her engineering firm. She looks forward to taking on more responsibilities and additional client management.

Loos wants current students to know, "It's okay to change what you want to do with your career. You never know where it may lead you."



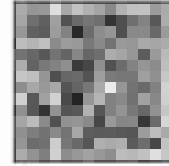
***If you or a graduate you know is working or retired from a career in the arts, we would like to feature you in our next issue of The Irish Lens. Please contact Tara Shane at [t.shane@pndhs.org](mailto:t.shane@pndhs.org).***



# SAVE THE DATE!!

August 19, 2023 • 6pm start

Scan the QR Code to Register



<https://t.ly/cm9c>

IRISH

ON A MISSION TO  
HELP FUND TUITION

As part of our strategic plan, beginning in the 2023/2024 school year, we will be centralizing all PND athletics fundraising. The primary benefits of making this change are as follows:

- Improves donor experience by ensuring all contributors receive thank yous/tax letters in addition to providing an accurate account of a donor's giving during any given period of time.
- Centralizes fundraising, which allows coaches time to focus on our mission, developing the whole person: body, mind, and soul.
- Affords us the ability to meet with those individuals or businesses who prefer to contribute once a year. Each donor may decide where to allocate their funds among PND initiatives, and they will be placed on our "do not contact list" for the rest of the year.
- Lends itself to a more equitable allocation of funds across all PND athletic teams.



A new Funding Athletic Needs (FAN) Club brochure will be distributed during the ShamROCK event on Friday, August 18, 2023. This brochure contains all of the sponsorship opportunities available to contribute across all of our PND athletic teams. We ask that your present and future contributions be channeled through one of the options offered in this brochure. Your donations support important needs including coaches' pay, athletic equipment, field maintenance and care, upkeep of our athletic facilities, officials' pay, team travel expenses and lodging, and more! We wholeheartedly thank you for your continued loyalty, dedication, and generosity to PND!

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL



# STRATEGIC PLAN

# LETTERS from the *Co-Chairs*



*Growing up in St. Bernard's Parish, I understood firsthand the power of strong Catholic role models and the sacrifices that were made to provide us with years of faith-building Catholic education. As a proud third generation graduate of the Academy of Our Lady and parent of three Peoria Notre Dame alumni, I have been honored to co-chair the Strategic Plan with Mitch Gilfillan and work with such inspirational leaders.*

*The enthusiasm and passion surrounding this vision for Peoria Notre Dame continues to grow exponentially. The devotion of countless parents, students, and alumni to our dedicated faculty and staff will enable us to build a road map to clearly define who we are and where we plan to propel Peoria Notre Dame in the future. The Strategic Plan has helped us engage a significant resource of untapped talented visionaries within our Catholic community whose skills are deeply influencing the implementation of our Strategic Plan goals and objectives.*

*With our 160-year tradition of Catholic education beginning with the Academy of Our Lady, Spalding Institute and Bergan High School, we are grateful to all who have contributed to our Peoria Notre Dame Strategic Plan. Now, we invite our entire community to join us in promoting our Catholic Identity as we strive to live our mission of educating the whole person — body, mind and soul.*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Crowley Metzinger".

Karen Crowley Metzinger (AOL '73)

*As a Peoria Notre Dame alum and father to two children at St. Philomena School, it is such a privilege to serve in a role aimed to help advance PND into the future through our Strategic Plan. So many hardworking volunteers – including priests, parents, alums, current staff and students – have shown remarkable support and continue to demonstrate the importance of Catholic education in Peoria.*

*On behalf of my co-chair, Karen Crowley Metzinger (AOL '73), we are grateful and appreciative for so many people and the countless hours dedicated to help stabilize, secure, and facilitate a plan that will grow PND for another generation to come. From our Strategic Plan, we are seeing positive results already, but our long-term outlook is even more exciting.*

*What that means for the Strategic Plan and you: the time is now. We are at a pivotal point in Catholic education in Peoria and the momentum is building. We know the future of PND is strong based on the incredible support and vision in place. We hope you can sense the pride we have for PND as we invite you to step forward and help our mission continue to thrive. Go Irish!*



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mitch Gilfillan".

Mitch Gilfillan (PND '02)

# A MESSAGE from the *Interim Principal*

*It is a joy to come to school every day to focus on our students and how well Peoria Notre Dame's teachers guide the development of each student's body, mind, and soul. Our teachers are skilled, devoted, knowledgeable, caring, and inspiring. Most importantly, our teachers are faith-filled. Whether it is a science class, a Spanish class, or a music class, our teachers are guided by God and His love for each student.*

*My husband, Greg, and I are Bergan graduates, and our five children graduated from PND. As students, we cared about our classes, friends, and extracurriculars. The value we have for our education grew significantly over time. Now that I am in administration in the same building, I have a new and deeper appreciation for all involved in operating a Catholic school today and ensuring it will be strong into the future.*

*The excitement and optimism exhibited since we launched the Strategic Plan are energizing. Implementing the various stages of the plan brought – and will continue to bring – many people together to benefit our current and future students.*

*We thank Bishop Lou Tylka for his leadership and encouragement to undertake this important process. We know that God is the master planner, and we are thrilled to have this road map to guide us. I hope you, too, value our strategic goals, will pray for this excellent work, and will continue to support the mission of Peoria Notre Dame.*

*Susie Ciciarelli*

Susie Ciciarelli (BHS '83)  
Interim Principal





# LIVING OUR MISSION

Peoria Notre Dame's mission is to develop the whole person - body, mind, and soul. The newly created Strategic Plan addresses three domains which guide us in our mission of forming well-rounded students: Catholic Identity, Academics, and Student Life.

## DEVELOPING the *Soul*

### Catholic Identity

#### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame will promote an authentic, joyful witness of the Gospel and love of God and neighbor by nurturing personal relationships with Jesus Christ and extending the mission of PND into the school and community.

#### **We will:**

- Grow a more cohesive Catholic and virtue-driven culture school-wide within various academic disciplines, extracurriculars, and athletics.
- Cultivate partnerships with our families by providing faith enrichment opportunities that firmly anchor them in their Catholic faith.
- Increase and improve opportunities for the faith formation of the faculty and staff to enable them to more fully live out the mission of Peoria Notre Dame and provide an authentic witness of their faith within the PND community.
- Within all courses and programming, foster authentic spirituality that leads students to encounter Christ in a meaningful way and inspires them to seek holiness in their daily lives.

# DEVELOPING the *Mind*

## Academics

### Our Goal:

Peoria Notre Dame High School will enhance its academically challenging, differentiated, and comprehensive curriculum to support and develop all students, enabling them to reach their full potential.

### We will:

- Use data-collection and analysis to inform and improve instruction, facilitate collaboration between teachers, and align core subjects.
- Enhance and expand the Student Services program to better support the needs of all students.
- Research benefits and drawbacks of semester vs. trimester schedule, and implement or refine the model that best supports student learning.
- Improve communication between Peoria Notre Dame, central diocesan administration, and partner schools about academic opportunities, expectations, and course specific feedback.

# DEVELOPING the *Body*

## Student Life

### Our Goal:

Peoria Notre Dame will inspire a well-rounded student life within a positive school climate that enhances the development of every student's body, mind, and soul.

### We will:

- Promote a balanced involvement for all students in the various areas of student life: extracurriculars, athletics, and the arts.
- Establish a robust and explorative college/career-planning program starting freshman year.
- Develop structured avenues for communication between the student body and faculty/administration.
- Effectively develop Christ-like student leaders in and outside the classroom.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive formation program for students' social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Create student experiences that foster relationships between PND students and K-8 students from our partner schools.





# SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

The domains of Enrollment, Facilities and Technology, Advancement and Communications, Governance, and Finance support the mission of “developing the whole person - body, mind, and soul.” The Strategic Plan seeks to guide every aspect of our school in the future to ensure Peoria Notre Dame continues to provide quality Catholic education for years to come.

## Enrollment

### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame will achieve and maintain optimal enrollment through recruiting efforts and relationship building with parishes, parents, alumni, and the community at large.

### **We will:**

- Enhance the recruitment process to better compete with both public and private schools in the community.
- Improve communication about financial aid opportunities and grow awareness that Catholic education is an option for all students, regardless of financial need.
- Further develop relationships between Peoria Notre Dame and pastors, parents, and parishes to increase visibility and engagement within the community.
- Collect, analyze, and use data to attract, recruit, enroll, and retain students.
- Create and implement a comprehensive and robust recruitment strategy.

## Facilities & Technology

### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame will have the highest quality facilities—technology infrastructure, academic areas, and athletic facilities— to allow students to develop themselves fully.

### **We will:**

- Conduct a campus audit and create a facilities master plan for ongoing facility maintenance, cosmetic upgrades, and capital improvements.
- Research and update technology to allow for continuous innovation and differentiation.
- Study the feasibility of expansion projects, including but not limited to the school's athletic facilities and the Allen Road property.

# STRATEGIC *Plan*

Many of the action steps laid out in this strategic plan are completed or implemented.



## Advancement & Communications

### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame will create and implement balanced and sustainable funding initiatives to support strategic growth and ensure the long-term viability of the school's mission.

### **We will:**

- Centralize fundraising efforts through the Advancement Department.
- Develop a comprehensive and consistent branding and marketing communications plan to increase school pride, promote the value, and place PND at the top of mind for enrollment, donations, and employment.
- Develop a plan and process for consistent and transparent communication about past efforts and future plans to all stakeholders.
- Engage alumni of all ages in social and stewardship opportunities to foster school pride, strengthen community, and further alumni ownership in the legacy of Catholic education in Peoria.

## Governance

### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame High School's leadership team will operate under governance structures and processes to best enable strategic decision-making aligned to its mission in cooperation with the Catholic Diocese of Peoria (CDOP).

### **We will:**

- Establish and implement advisory board(s) reflective of the school community and local pastors to assist the school leadership in fulfilling the school's mission.
- Evaluate and adopt an administrative model and/or organizational structure to balance the school's needs and effectively implement the school's mission.
- Enhance the collaboration and communication with the CDOP and the Office of Catholic Schools to support PND's implementation of the strategic vision for the school.
- Develop and implement a data-driven process for evaluating, selecting, and reviewing key initiatives supporting strategic priorities.



## Finance

### **Our Goal:**

Peoria Notre Dame High School will effectively manage revenue through diverse and balanced funding sources to provide a more sustainable financial base to meet the current and future needs of the school community.

### **We will:**

- Develop a tuition and financial aid model to ensure the school remains available for all families at all income levels.
- Provide more competitive compensation and benefits to attract and retain outstanding faculty, staff, and coaches.
- Anticipate and plan for changes in demographics and enrollment with our partner schools.
- Determine, maintain, and grow the unrestricted endowment balance required for educational and operational funding.
- Establish a financial plan for long-term capital expenditures.
- Invest strategically in additional personnel and resources to generate additional revenue.

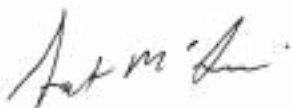
# A MESSAGE from the *Chief Operating Officer*

*Peoria Notre Dame High School has a history of excellence for nearly 160 years in the greater Peoria area. Few schools have a heritage as unique as that of Peoria Notre Dame which is a result of the amazing work of Academy of Our Lady, Spalding Institute, and Bergan High School. It is our duty, with the help of God, to continue progressing our mission to develop the whole person: body, mind, and soul.*

*It has been an incredible blessing to have more than 50 highly skilled, faithful stakeholders come together and provide a deep dive in all areas of our school through the Strategic Planning process. This allowed stakeholders to offer feedback which formed objectives in each domain that will ensure the continued excellence of serving our students and community for many years to come. We plan to use this document as a resource to keep our school on track, and to build a foundation that will stand up to any challenges that might come ahead.*

*I personally cannot thank the community enough for dedicating hundreds of hours of their time to this initiative. It is very comforting to know that there are so many experts in the community that are all focused on Peoria Notre Dame continuing to be the best high school in the Peoria area. I am honored and excited to see the results of our Strategic Plan initiative and how this will positively affect our current and future Peoria Notre Dame families. Of course, it also helps to know that we have God on our side!*

*God bless,*



Grant McInnis  
Chief Operating Officer





# NOMINATE



Peoria Notre Dame is seeking nominations for our Distinguished Alumni Award. Nominees should demonstrate the following traits: 1. Loyalty to Catholic education. 2. Activity in the Catholic community. 3. Personal and professional achievements.

Please provide the full name of the nominee, his/her school and year of graduation, and supporting credentials. The winner will be asked to attend the all-school Mass during Homecoming Week to receive the award.

Nominations are due by June 30, 2023. Send your nominations to the selection committee at Peoria Notre Dame, 5105 N. Sheridan Rd., Peoria, IL 61614 or email Alumni Director, Tara Shane at [t.shane@pndhs.org](mailto:t.shane@pndhs.org).

Please include a summary that describes the nominee's accomplishments and service to our school and other worthy organizations. Posthumous nominations will be considered if the nominee has passed within the last year. All nominations will be considered for two years.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ My Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ My Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_

School and year of graduation \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

My relationship to nominee \_\_\_\_\_



**Peoria Notre Dame High School**  
www.PeoriaNotreDame.com

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Peoria, IL 61614

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# Update Your Information!

**MAIL TO:** Peoria Notre Dame Alumni Office  
5105 N. Sheridan Rd. Peoria, IL 61614  
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 [pndhs.org](http://pndhs.org)!**  
**Hover over "Alumni," and click on "Update Your Info."**