

An Unprecedented Time

Our schools continue to tackle the greatest challenge and keep education at the forefront



When we excitedly kicked off the 2019-2020 school year last fall, we had no inclination of what circumstances God would present to us within the final quarter of the year. As our community shut down, the dedicated and talented Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools staff acted swiftly to

ensure that all of our students not only had basic needs met at home but that they were able to continue their education through daily virtual instruction.

Without missing a step and with only a few hours' notice, BCACS staff implemented a virtual learning plan for students to work remotely until it was deemed safe to return to school. Staff led Zoom meetings, phone calls, and organized supply pick up and drop off to ensure that every student had the appropriate supports in place.

Along with the focus of continuity of education, supporting students' social and emotional well-being in a time of fear and uncertainty was also a priority. Middle School and High School staff and administrators personally delivered comfort packages to every student's home. Along with the treats, the familiar and friendly faces were a welcomed sight.

The 2019-2020 school year ended with our talented teachers continuing to instruct virtually.

As the summer months carried on, the plans for reopening the school took shape. The school administrators worked around the clock, coordinating with our clergy, the Diocese of Kalamazoo, and local and national health officials to create a comprehensive plan to ensure the safe return to our schools.

Confident in the rigorous protocols and processes that have been established, our BCACS students happily returned to our hallways mid-August of 2020. Currently, we are the only PreK-12th grade school system in our community with students attending in-person classes five days per week. The vigilance of the staff, along with our supportive community, have allowed for a safe and productive school year.



AN UNPRECEDENTED TIME

With many thanks to our thoughtful community, donors provided generous gifts to support these plans. The BCACS Foundation also actively pursued additional support, securing funds from the Battle Creek Community Foundation for the necessary supplies and equipment to safely reopen the schools.

These combined efforts and gifts have allowed us to:

- ✚ Provide each student with an electronic device, which will enable them to stay connected both inside and outside of the classroom
- ✚ Purchase in-classroom live streaming cameras and software that enables students that are unable to attend in-person learning to stay connected to daily instruction virtually while at home
- ✚ Purchase the essential protective gear and personal hygiene items for both staff and students to keep our environments safe for learning
- ✚ Provide new work stations for students to keep a safe distance while working in classrooms

Along with providing our standard top-notch academics, our teachers have also been tasked with maintaining their classrooms and ensure that students are mindful of the new safety procedures. These necessary efforts have doubled their responsibilities, but in their own words, the staff “Wouldn’t have it any other way”. We believe that our schools offers the most talented, dedicated staff but

through their efforts over this past year, we know that being part of our schools is not just a job to our educators, it is truly their calling.

Our parents have proven to be true partners with our schools as well, even when following protocols may be challenging and not aligning with their work duties and schedules. The combination of our school family’s efforts and love for our schools is evident every single day.

While it has not been without challenges, the challenges were met with positivity. Our principals, used to wearing multiple hats throughout the building in normal circumstances, stretched their roles to become classroom instructors, janitors, and lunchroom assistants when the needs arose. Embracing the extra time to be with students, St. Joseph Elementary Principal Sara Myers shared “It is always a great opportunity to get back into the classroom doing what I love the most.”

If there is one thing we are most certain of, it is that God has put the right people in place to successfully navigate one of our schools’ most difficult periods, which has truly challenged our traditional mode of education. This combined effort with the staff, parents, alumni, and supportive donors is what has allowed us to continue providing academic and spiritual excellence at Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools

Please keep our schools and families in your prayers as we continue to work together through this unprecedented time.



RAISE THE ROOF

A Community Effort

In our nearly 4 decades of operation, the BCACS Foundation has been assured that when there is a call for help from our schools, our community will respond. As our schools grappled with the challenges and many changes to the traditional mode of education due to Covid19, our community responded with the necessary funds to ensure that our students continued receiving the best education from our talented staff. As we focused on the materials necessary to make this happen, the need for the replacement of the St. Joseph Schools roof remains a priority. As you may already be aware, last year we successfully raised enough funds to complete the first phase of this two-phased project. Due to delays and challenges with the pandemic in 2020, the construction for the replacement of this first portion of the roof is slated to begin in the summer of 2021.

In our commitment to being faithful stewards of the support we receive, we are always seeking every opportunity that allows us to practice this. We take seriously our responsibility to maximize your generosity and welcome opportunities of grants, matching campaigns, and in-kind support. For the second phase St. Joseph roof project, we are blessed to have secured a matching gift opportunity through Catholic Extension, an organization that offers support to Catholic parishes across the country.

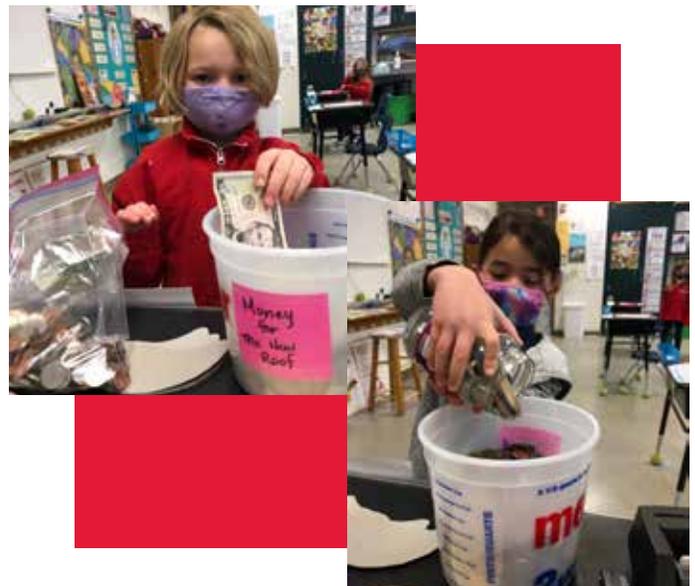
With this gift through Catholic Extension, any new pledge or contribution to the St. Joseph Roof Campaign will be matched, up to \$40,000 from now through May



31, 2021. Unlike other matching opportunities we've received, if we are unable to raise the full \$40,000, we will not receive any of the matching funds. Currently, we have already secured just over half of the amount needed to receive these funds. We're so grateful for the strength of our community and pray for your valued support to help us succeed in this campaign.

If you are able to contribute, please return the included pledge envelope and indicate on it that you would like to contribute to the Roof Campaign.

You can also make your gift online at www.bcacs.org (click "donate"), over the phone by calling 269-963-4771, or by visiting our offices at 63 North 24th Street, Battle Creek, MI 49015.



CLASS OF 2020



Colleges/Universities

Attending:

Kellogg Community College
Western Michigan University
Aquinas College
Concordia University
Lake Superior State
University of Michigan
Douglas J. Institute
Michigan State University

An End to a Senior Year Unlike Any Other

The Class of 2020 kicked off their senior year in the fall of 2019 like any other before. They celebrated Homecoming, decked the halls for the holidays, excelled in their athletics and club activities, and started the year 2020 with their eyes on the future. Not long after, the trajectory of their senior year was rattled by the global pandemic. Plans for events and activities that they had anticipated for years were cancelled or rescheduled, including prom, spring sports, awards ceremonies, and a traditional graduation.

We welcome our newest alumni and applaud them for their perseverance and the courage they held to successfully complete their senior year in the most challenging of situations.

Noteworthy Accomplishments:

- \$242,800 received in scholarships
- Average SAT score of 1099
- 23 AP examinations passed with a 3 or better*

*AP examinations are rated on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest ranking possible



My Senior Year

The following essay was written by Class of 2020 graduate Ben Rutherford during his final semester at St. Philip High School, in the spring of 2020.

As I write this, I should be in my 4th hour stats class but I'm not. I'm in my room on a rainy day, watching another hour of Michigan's "Stay Home" orders pass by. Sadly, this is still just the beginning and for the graduating class of 2020, there could be nothing worse right now. I can't help but think of all the amazing opportunities that were waiting for me this time of year. I should be planning my prom-posal. I should be anticipating my classes Senior Skip Day (although I had a few already. Oops, sorry). I should be working my butt off at track practice in hopes of feeling the nerves and excitement of a state meet. I should be soaking up every last moment with my friends before we head our separate ways. The feeling is crushing, knowing there is not one thing we can do to change any of this, except to stay home. Stay home and dwell on it while I lie in bed and do my school work.

I almost feel silly ever complaining about school. I would do anything for another day in that place. Just to have the knowledge that it's my last day. I still need to be woken up by my teacher a few more times. Maybe even get caught on my phone one last time in English. Or to walk into my first hour 5 minutes late. Just once. I would do anything for all these things one more time. While everybody has different experiences in high school, I know that every last one of my friends and classmates feel the same, across the country.

Life is a long, long path of stepping stones. We seniors were just getting ready to step on that next rock and open a whole new chapter of our lives. But that rock was taken from us, and we're now stuck at the edge not knowing what to do. That single step was filled with so much for us. So many memories, so many laughs, so many lessons, and so much more. What do we do now? I feel helpless. I feel sad. I feel angry.



I feel helpless knowing that this isn't going to change because this is a bigger issue and far out of my control. I feel sad knowing what I'm missing out on, seeing class after class have these unforgettable experiences and life long memories, while my class's memories for life will be "the COVID-19 shut in". I feel angry because it feels like we were robbed of such defining moments in our life. Things that matter to us. I feel terrible for the kids who can't tour their college choices to truly know what's best. I feel terrible for my friends hoping to step on the baseball diamond one last time before they put that bat down. I feel terrible for my friends hoping to make an unforgettable time on their senior prom night. But this isn't just me and my friends, this is everywhere.

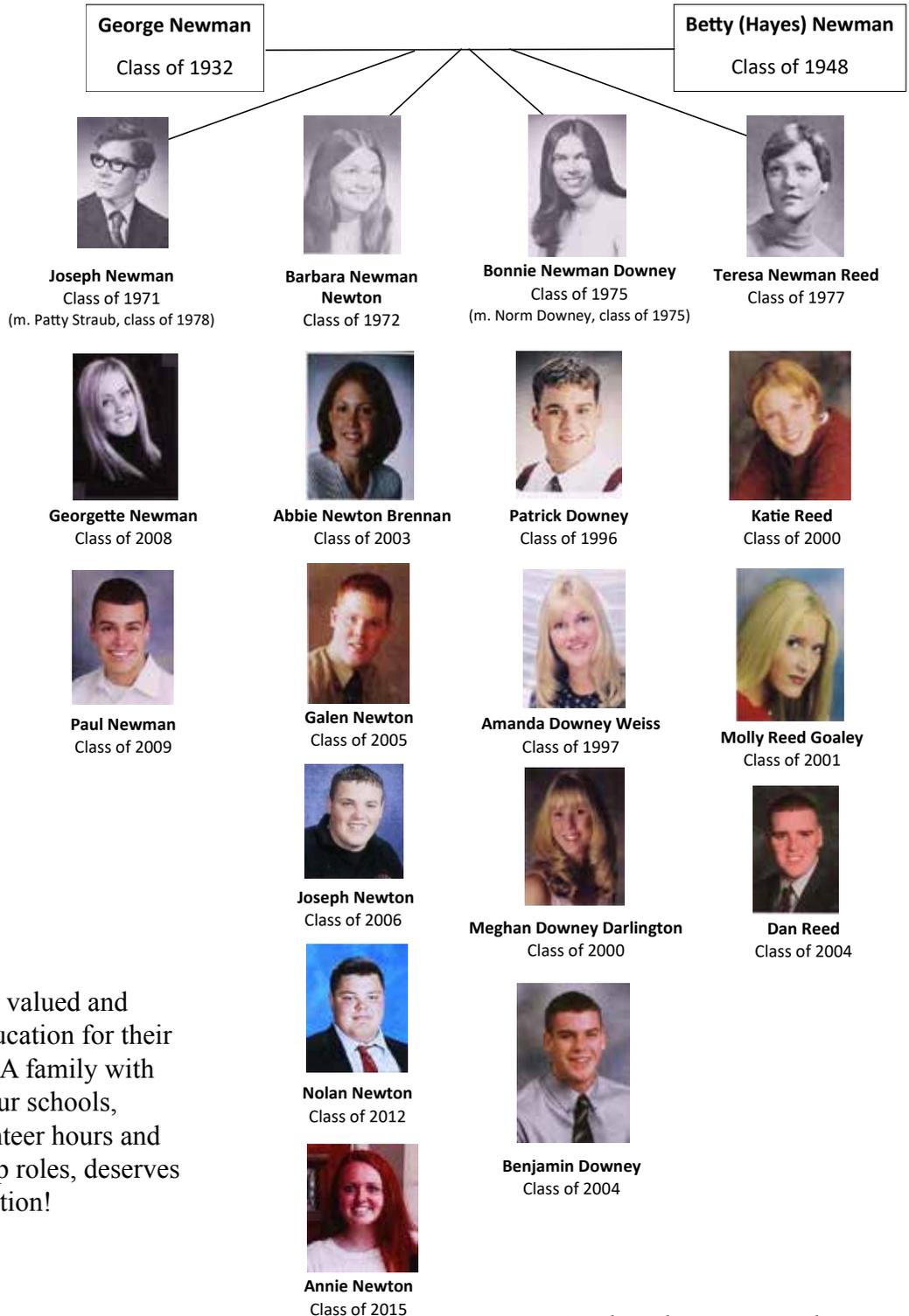
Everyone reading this knows somebody experiencing this, I'm sure. Reach out and show your sympathy. This sucks. We know it's not just us though. I've watched my dad's work days become 12 hours long. I've watched teachers attempt to teach us online (for the record, they aren't doing too bad at it). This pandemic has affected everyone in some way. For seniors about to open the door to something completely new, we missed out on a lot of the last comforting things that still feel right to us.

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The Newman Family

The Newman family is just one of many families at BCACS with a legacy of support for our schools. '03 graduate Abbie (Newman) Brennan shared, "You know how when something is really great, people keep going back? That's BCACS. Families continue to send their children to our schools generation after generation. Alumni return to become staff, teachers, coaches and volunteers. This confirms that you have something special when everyone wants to keep returning to their roots. It speaks highly to the value of our education and the community that surrounds it.

The Newman Family Tree



The Newman family has valued and prioritized Catholic education for their family for several decades. A family with extensive commitment to our schools, tackling thousands of volunteer hours and taking on various leadership roles, deserves our celebration and recognition!

Newman Family traditions continued on page 9

REMEMBRANCE AND GRATITUDE

The following members of the BCACS family have passed from this life to the next within the year 2020. Please remember them in your thoughts and prayers.

Mrs. Linda Blackmore – Class of 1956
November 2020

Mr. John Rae – Class of 1953
April 2020

Mrs. Marjorie Brandenburg – Class of 1942
November 2020

Mrs. Mary Shupert – Class of 1951
November 2020

Mrs. Mary Brandt – Class of 1967
August 2020

Mrs. Mary Helen Spitz – Class of 1952
December 2020

Mr. Stephen Galloup – Class of 1967
February 2020

Mr. Max Stark
July 2020

Mrs. Joan “Emily” Lawrence – Class of 1952
January 2020

Mr. Richard Thurtle – Class of 1958
August 2020

Mr. Frank Petrosus – Class of 1962
April 2020

Mr. Daniel Vogt – Class of 1966
November 2020

We extend our sincerest condolences to their loved ones and to those who passed on but may not be listed here.

My Senior Year - continued from page 5

I hope this gives a little bit of insight on how we feel. We aren't trying to be negative on purpose. We aren't sleeping all day on purpose. What was comfortable and fun for us was taken from us, and we never got a chance to say goodbye. I've always been told your last semester of high school is the best. The class of 2020 will never know. We can only imagine what we're missing. We now have to get ready to move on without the full closure we wanted to this story book. But hey, maybe that's just how this story is supposed to go. If anyone could write that book, it'd be the 2020 classes across the country. The best class ever, of course. So now it's time to get ready for what's next, and to not take any of it for granted. We control this next part of our story, so let's make it a damn good one.



Welcoming New Tigers



Jeff Ramer, Class of 1997 & Alison (Trewhella) Ramer, Class of 2000 welcomed Patrick Nathaniel Ramer on August 5, 2020.



Kellin (McGinn) Whelan, Class of 2001 and Glen Whelan welcomed Brighton Katherine Whelan on April 15, 2020



Katie (Nelson) Jones, Class of 1999 and Paul Jones welcomed Piper Kathryn Jones on May 13, 2020



I DO
Elizabeth (Buckley) Precopio, Class of 2001 and Brandon Precopio were joined in marriage on August 3, 2019

A LEGACY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Newman Family traditions continued from page 6

Newman Family Members Currently on Staff at Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools:

- Amiee (Greene) Downey – Class of 1999
- Katie Reed – Class of 2000
- Meghan (Downey) Darlington – Class of 2000

Newman Family Members Currently Enrolled at Battle Creek Area Catholic Schools:

Abbie (Newton) Brennan – Class of 2003

- Sadie Brennan, Class of 2033
- Shane Brennan, Class of 2035

Pat Downey – Class of 1996

& Amiee (Greene) Downey – Class of 1999

- Ellery Downey, Class of 2027
- Leah Downey, Class of 2028
- Spencer Downey, Class of 2034
- Carter Downey, Class of 2035

Mandi (Downey) Weiss – Class of 1997

- Sawyer Weiss, Class of 2025
- Rhena Weiss, Class of 2029
- Ryder Weiss, Class of 2029

Meghan (Downey) Darlington – Class of 2000

- Alivia Darlington, Class of 2030
- Tucker Darlington, Class of 2033

Benjamin Downey – Class of 2004

- Bennett Downey, Class of 2033
- Brynn Downey, Class of 2035

Daniel Reed – Class of 2004

- Peyton Reed, Class of 2031
- Harper Reed, Class of 2033



Do You Know of a former coach or athlete
worthy of a nomination in the Athletic Hall of Fame?
or

Do You Know of an alumni that deserves to be recognized
for the Distinguished Alumni Award?

Visit www.bcacs.org and click "Alumni" or call 269-963-4771.

Winning A State Title Is No Easy Feat Just Ask The 2020 St. Philip Varsity Volleyball Team



A long-fought season which was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic ended at Kellogg Arena in January, where the Fighting Tigers persevered for the program's 21st state championship.

The extended season tipped off by training outdoors on a beach volleyball court, and even after moving back into the gym, was marred with pandemic-related training restrictions and the added challenge of performing with a face covering.

Still, one of the most successful volleyball programs in the nation continued its winning ways, thanks in large part to a succession of student-athletes who long ago aspired to carry the torch and join an elite group of state champion volleyball players from the little Catholic school at 20 Cherry Street.

Year over year, after celebrating successful wins, it's common to hear St. Philip volleyball players to be quoted as saying that they remember being in the stands as elementary and middle school students as the volleyball teams marched on to the finals. That's no accident, as our victories are celebrated throughout our entire community. For all 20 state finals matches

before, you could easily find a contingent of starry-eyed girls in the stands, eager for their chance to play.

That was another challenge of the 2020 season. With the Covid-19 concerns, access to the Final Four and State Finals was restricted to 50 tickets per team. The usual "sea of red" represented by the St. Philip fan section at Kellogg Arena was limited to mostly players' family members, while the typically loud and costume-clad student section was empty. Despite this limitation, the semifinal victory was live-streamed in every classroom and many families were able to watch the final match online as well.

However, the personal touch that undoubtedly left the biggest impression with our future players was the classroom visits from the team showing off their newest trophy and individual medals. From the looks on the young students' faces, we have no doubt that the St. Philip volleyball dynasty is not going anywhere.



CONTINUED SUPPORT



From A Familiar Face



When Mary Rabbitt retired as secretary of St. Philip High School after over 30 years on the job in 2019, she promised to continue helping the schools however she could. It didn't take long for her to identify a need and take action.

For any longtime STP sports fan, seeing Mary at the admissions table, working the concessions stand, or monitoring the rowdy student section was a familiar sight. What not many people witnessed was the countless hours of work poured into helping prepare the gym before and after each athletic event over the years.

In Mary's final years as administrative assistant at St. Philip, she was able to witness the transformation and modernization of the Sheila Guerra Gymnasium, which has housed decades of memories and milestones. The one standing upgrade that has yet to happen is installing the mechanism to automatically raise and lower the 6

basketball hoops throughout the gym. Currently, this has to be done by hand for fans to enjoy an un-obstructed view of each match. Within a normal basketball season, this could be done over 100 times per basket. With an automated system, future staff would save more than half the time that Mary has helped put in to adjusting the hoops.

While Mary played a pivotal role in the operations of the school, her soft spot has been with athletics. Mary shared, "When visitors come to St. Philip for athletic events, I am so proud of what has been accomplished over the years. Not only with the improvements to the gym, but around the gym there are two new locker rooms, the permanent concession stand and new bathrooms. This part of the school is where visitors from around the area come for athletic contests and for me, it's a source of pride that they could see what we have accomplished."

If you are able to, you can contribute to Mary Rabbitt's Honorary Fund with the BCACS Foundation. All funds will support the cost of the hoops project and/or future upgrades to the Sheila Guerra gymnasium. You can donate via our website, www.bcacs.org/donate, or by calling 269-963-4771.

A Blast from the Past - The Historic Tiger Painting in the Sheila Guerra Gymnasium

Paint, Posters, Talent Make Gym Scene of 'Ferocious' Rivalry

Somewhere under all those tigers, "number one" signs, and a medieval castle, lurked an ordinary gym. But a week of student competition had transformed it into an impressive proof of school spirit and Tiger loyalty. Topping all opponents, the Juniors captured the trophy with their winning decorations.

The growing spirit spilled into the halls and shook the cafeteria as life-sized paper tigers appeared in the corridor and rousing cheers rattled windows at lunch. "Tigers are great" was the pass-word and "Beat Bronson" became the battle cry as the week built up to Saturday's climax.



ABOVE LEFT: Juniors Marilyn Harst, Sue Leibel, and Juli Dzedzowski climb the walls to hold the winning circle.
ABOVE: Putting a tiger in the winner's circle are five spirited Freshmen.
RIGHT: A tiger comes alive through the creator skills of Senator Charles Ross.

