

# THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND MARIST ACADEMY



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The Notre Dame Fund is creating an opportunity for donors to feel more empowered in their giving. The change, much like each student's experience on campus, is expected to give donors an experience that is uniquely Notre Dame.

*By Gregory Simon, director of The Notre Dame Fund*

Welcome to a new, donor-empowered version of The Notre Dame Fund! Over the last ten or so months, I have had an opportunity to meet with a good number of community members about ways to improve our approach to fundraising at Notre Dame. From alumni to alum parents, long-time community members to new parents, we saw a recurring theme in those conversations – the ability to choose—to decide—where their donations go. Nearly every conversation included a reference to our mission as well as a passion for a specific aspect of programming here at Notre Dame.

No matter the connection to the school, each person expressed a desire to impact a certain aspect of our mission through giving. Some expressed a commitment to helping kids afford our school, others reflected on their experience in sports, arts, or leadership; still others spoke about the skill and commitment of teachers to challenge every student academically.

The message was clear, while we all love the Notre Dame mission, every student and constituent's experience is different. So, we were asked to come up with a way for them to follow their passions and give to an area they believe impacted them (or their student) the most. The result – The Notre

Dame Fund!

The conversations resulted in a new commitment by us in the advancement office: Create an opportunity for donors to feel more empowered in their giving. We believe this change, much like each student's experience on campus, will give donors an experience that is uniquely Notre Dame!

So, as we relaunch The Notre Dame Fund (formerly annual fund), we invite you

## YOU decide!

to feel the power of giving by choosing from one of the fund's "ways."

In its previous form, the fund focused on unrestricted gifts to the school. You are still able to contribute in this manner. By giving "where Notre Dame needs it most," you give the school the flexibility to address needs as they arise from day-to-day and month-to-month. A donation of this nature is among our most powerful gifts and is essential to a vibrant, innovative and healthy Notre Dame.

By giving to Mary's Way, your gift helps

create access to Notre Dame for families struggling with tuition and or students earning merit-based scholarships to the school. With more than \$1 million devoted to scholarships and financial aid last year, Notre Dame is doing its part to make the school available to more and more mission-driven families. In short, Mary's Way helps continue our efforts to bring the best and brightest to Notre Dame.

The Scholars Way supports the programs that make it "cool to be smart" here at Notre Dame. In partnership with their teachers, students create an atmosphere that embraces knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual growth. We are always working to enhance that experience by providing classroom resources, added training for teachers and curriculum improvements. The Scholars Way helps us provide top-notch materials, instruction, and support to our students as they stretch, grow and succeed academically.

A gift to the Citizens Way provides support for students as they explore their creativity, leadership, and skills necessary to collaborate and contribute to the community. Working in concert with academics to form truly well-rounded students, the programs supported by Citizens Way include the fine and performing arts, student clubs, Student Council, robotics, and more than 75 arts, leadership, and service opportunities for kids!

*Please see EMPOWERED page 3*

**Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.**



HELPING TO EDUCATE YOUNG CHILDREN IN GUATEMALA (PAGE 5)

# Helping to educate in Guatemala

2003 grad says parents and NDP influenced decision to provide education to those with limited choices and resources in Guatemala.

Ask 2003 Notre Dame Prep graduate Annalisa Simmer what drove her to her career and she immediately scoffs at the notion that she actually “has” a career. “It’s more of a ‘life work’ than a career,” she says. “No one ever went into humanitarian aid or mission work to make money or become successful as those in the U.S. might define success.”

Life work or career, what Simmer is doing is simply both unselfish and commendable. After what she calls a “privileged” upbringing and a degree from Albion College, Simmer began a journey that took her not to grad school, but to Guatemala.

She says she’s been a full-time missionary in Guatemala since October of 2010 at which time she thought she was going to teach massage therapy to the Guatemalans. But there was a real need for someone to teach English, so she jumped in with both feet.

“I run an educational program,” Simmer says. “The people here call it a scholarship program, but I also call it an incentive program. I offer ‘points’ to the kids based on the grades they get in school. With those points they can buy ‘emergency supplies’ such as beans, rice, salt and sugar, among other things, or they can buy items to help improve their own family economy; things like a sewing machine, a wood stove or hair clippers.”

They also use those points to buy their school supplies and pay for their school fees, which Simmer is happy to see. “But they need so much more. In the villages where I work, schools only go to the 9th grade. Currently, two of my most advanced students are entering 9th grade and it’s my hope that within the next year I’ll be able to purchase a large enough house to provide housing for those two girls and any future students who may want to study at a high school or university level. But that’s still a lot of prayers and a lot of money away.”

## ‘PRIVILEGED’

Having witnessed such poverty and need, Simmer says it’s made her appreciate even more her upbringing in the U.S. and her education. “I recognize that I was born privileged,” Simmer says. “For starters, I was born in a country that allows me hassle-free access to just about anywhere in the world. No one looks over my documents and declares me unfit to be in their country. No one in America ever assumes that I don’t have the money to pay any loan, and they all believe me if I tell them I have a certain amount of money in my bank account.



Notre Dame Prep alum Annalisa Simmer with two 8th graders in her educational program. They had just taken two of three places in a competition at their school in Guatemala.

“And I was also born in a country which requires education up until the age of 16 and doesn’t allow children to work until a certain age. Like so many children in Guatemala, no one ever told me at the age of eight that I wouldn’t be going to school anymore and that I’d have to wash clothes for my neighbors all day or work in the field all day.”

She also says that beyond being born in such a privileged country, she also was born into a privileged family. “While I was probably one of the poorest in my class from NDP, I did have two parents present in the household, which many children even in America don’t have. That definitely is a privilege!”

## IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Simmer also is grateful for the education she received both at school and at home. “First of all, both of my parents are or were teachers,” she says. “My mother gave up teaching to raise my brother and me, but she still taught us. My father is now retired from teaching, but my mother has since gone back into it.”

She says her parents always instilled in her the importance of education, a concept that also was reinforced at Notre Dame Prep.

“I remember my senior year at NDP. I took three languages, various art classes, religion and English,” Simmer says. “I also ended up auditing Mr. McCaskey’s AP calculus class, and that I can tell you affected me at college. I refused to let a math class beat me. I took it at Albion and passed—with a C!”

She adds that her creativity and love for learning were omnipresent in college as well, which she attributes to her time at NDP. “Having the ability to identify my interests also led to a few additional college degrees at Oakland Community College after finishing my bachelor’s.

But, she says, that same self-awareness and the ability to see potential in everybody ultimately led her to Guatemala. Seeing such potential drives just about everything she does now. “I believe that so many people could do so much with their lives if they just had a simple hand up. I have one girl in my program who is brilliant; I think she could be an ambassador or president of Guatemala. But right now her family struggles to have food on the table even once a day.”

Compared to her upbringing in the U.S., Simmer’s own way of life in Guatemala also could be considered a real struggle.

“When I first started doing what I’m doing now in Guatemala, I was renting an unfurnished house,” she said. “The landlord left me a couch that he didn’t feel like moving. That’s where I slept for months until some friends with a hotel decided to get new beds and gave me two of their old ones. I didn’t have a stove or a fridge. Only a slow-

*Please see GUATEMALA, page 5*






A video was created recently to help introduce The Notre Dame Fund to the NDPMA community. Students, teachers and staff participated in the production of the video, which can be accessed from the home page of the school's website.

**EMPOWERED, from page 1**

You are also welcome, if desired, to support athletics through the Irish Way. A Notre Dame education includes a healthy mind and body. A gift to the Irish Way encourages students to maintain their physical health while learning the importance of teamwork. Your gift to the Irish Way helps support more than 40 sports and more than 70 teams at all levels of Notre Dame!

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Through this new approach, we hope to inspire you and other members of

the Notre Dame family to feel more a part of the life and work being done on campus for kids. While we know giving is a deeply personal choice, we hope you choose to give generously to this year's effort. If you have any questions about The Notre Dame Fund, or would like to chat about life here at Notre Dame, please do not hesitate to contact me in the advancement office: 248-373-2171, ext. 5, or [gsimon@ndpma.org](mailto:gsimon@ndpma.org). You also can give or read more about the fund online at [www.ndpma.org/ndfund](http://www.ndpma.org/ndfund). 


*Read what some members of the Notre Dame alumni community are saying about The Notre Dame Fund:*

**Nick Giacona (NDP graduate '03):** "I like to know where my dollars are going. The new options bucket gifts into categories of giving, which makes it easier to fund the programs that we think matter most."

**Victoria Sidor (NDP graduate '01, alumni board):** "It is great to be able to choose where my donation gets to help NDP! My donation directly supports the programs that I am most interested in!"

**Grant Golasa (NDP graduate '10):** "It assists in creating a more transparent fund where alumni can have increased control of their donation."

**Scott Lockhart (NDP graduate '98, alumni board):** "The ability to support a specific aspect of NDP that made a difference in my experience is a great addition to the fund."

**Kate Reimann (NDP graduate '01):** "It was a quick and painless process. I got to decide where to direct my donation, entered my amount, clicked 'pay,' and it was done. Knowing that I was directly supporting an aspect of the school that helped shape me as a person made the donation seem really personal." 

**New Marist provincial elected in the U.S.**



Rev. Paul F. Frechette, s.m., has been elected to become the next provincial for the Society of Mary (Marists) Province of the U.S. He was chosen by his fellow Marist priests and brothers to lead the province over the next three years.

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy is sponsored by the Marist Fathers and Brothers.

Rev. Timothy (Ted) Keating, s.m., who has led the province for two successive three-year terms, described Frechette as a Marist marked by the deep values of the Society, a marked love for the poor and marginalized, and an excellent vision for the Society in these times of change in the Society and Church.

Ordained on May 29, 1976, Frechette began his Marist ministry in a small parish in Maine and, in the years that followed, served in retreat houses, urban parish ministries and in missionary work in Peru. From 2001 to 2009, he served the Society of Mary at the global level as an elected member of the six-member General Administration in Rome, overseeing the Marists in the Americas, Europe, Africa, Oceania and Asia as well as the Congre-

gation's work in the Missions, in education, and in Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Rome.

He currently serves the Society as director of postulancy, director for initial and continuing formation, and is the director for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Fe y Vida, the national non-profit Catholic leadership institute working in the field of Hispanic youth and young adult ministry in the United States.

Frechette will assume duties as Provincial on July 1, 2015. 

**NDP's Riley named coach of the year**

Notre Dame upper-school social studies and poli-sci teacher and tennis coach Pete Riley was recently named the Division 3 Girls Coach of the Year by the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association.

According to the MHSTeCA, Riley earned the honor "for the many contributions he has made to the school's athletes and tennis program."

Riley, who coaches both boys and girls tennis for the Fighting Irish, came to Notre Dame in 1999. Over



*Please see NEWS, page 5*

# In the right place

Third-grade teacher is where he belongs: in the classroom

**N**otre Dame teacher Bob Patterson says one of his dream jobs might be coaching alongside Mike Krzyzewski at Duke University. But this now twelve-year member of the NDPMA faculty—and coach—thinks teaching third graders is a privilege and can't really picture himself doing anything else.

"My father started his career in the education field, my sister is an elementary school teacher, and my brother is a speech pathologist at a middle school," Patterson says. "It was a natural choice for me to be highly involved in education. But not only do I love teaching, I also love coaching and being around athletics, as my students are well aware."

Currently armed with a BS in education from Eastern Michigan University and an MAT from Marygrove College, Patterson started teaching in the public schools, first as a student teacher and then as a sub for about a year and a half in some bigger school districts. "But bigger isn't always better," he says. "I also tried a few business opportunities, but realized very quickly that teaching was where I needed to be."

Patterson started at Notre Dame teaching third grade twelve years ago and has never looked back. "I really enjoy working with third graders because they are in that in-between stage, where they are moving from lower elementary to the more mature upper levels," he notes. "I enjoy guiding them through this part of their elementary years. We have fun and we learn at the same time."

Patterson himself is a product of a Catholic-school education and knows that its inherent values and generally smaller class sizes were helpful to him. So coming to Notre Dame felt familiar and just right.

## FIRST IMPRESSION

"My first impression of Notre Dame was that it was a good Catholic-school community. Being a graduate of a relatively small Catholic high school, Cardinal Mooney Catholic, I felt right at home at Notre Dame because when one is in a smaller close-knit environment, it is easier to get to know families and it simply feels more welcoming."

He says he owes a lot to his experience

at Mooney because of the Catholic teaching and the opportunities he had there in athletics. "All of that helped me to become a more confident young adult and I bring that love of Catholic education to Notre Dame where we embody the very same values and educational foundation."

When Patterson first came to the Notre Dame community as a third-grade teacher, the lower division was located in Waterford on the campus of St. Benedict's parish. But since then he says his division and Notre Dame in general has seen big and positive changes.

"Because of Father Leon's vision to have all three divisions near each other, a new building was built across from the big campus and now here we are," Patterson says. "This new building is fantastic and I'm sure there will be much more growth in the future. Since teaching at Notre Dame, I've also seen the building of new athletic facilities, such as the Grimaldi Athletic Center, new weight rooms in the Wroubel Center as well as many academic and classroom updates."

## IB IMPORTANT DIFFERENTIATOR

Patterson also notes that the number of teachers has also grown since he started at the school to accommodate an influx of many new students. But he thinks the most important thing to happen to NDPMA in the last twelve years was the introduction of the International Baccalaureate to the school.

"IB has taken our curriculum to a new level and it has become a real differentiator when compared with other Catholic and independent private schools," he says. "And

I feel it has made our students better thinkers and investigators. It is a great feeling to know that we are the only Catholic school in the nation with IB from junior-kindergarten through twelfth grade. It's important and a big deal for us."

What's also important and a big deal for Patterson is how he relates to his students. "As a teacher, I think it's extremely important to form strong relationships with students and to be able to show that I care about them as people," he says. "Relationships are built through trust and open

*Please see RIGHT PLACE page 6*



Third-grade teacher Bob Patterson with wife, Kelly, also a teacher at Notre Dame (middle div.).



### **GUATEMALA, from page 2**

cooker. I had no chairs, but at least I had a table for that slow-cooker and could stop living out of suitcases.”

With time, however, she was able to get the money together to buy some stools for her little house, and with those “accrue-ments” she was able to start giving English lessons to earn a bit more income. From that point forward the program grew even beyond her own considerable imagination. But back then, all that existed was one young woman with enough tenacity to not give up.

“I still don’t have a fridge,” Simmer said. “And I still don’t miss it.”

Simmer is hoping to take her program to the next level. “After four years of doing this the money-free way, I’d like to form my own 501(c) organization,” she said. “The number of families I help is limited only by the meager amount of funding that I get currently. I’ve had a few people who have said that they would help set up a 501(c), but then they get busy or forget. So, if there’s anyone out there who knows how to do that or is interested in helping, let me know! I can be reached at [asimmer@gmail.com](mailto:asimmer@gmail.com).”

### **BUSY TEACHING, BUSY LEARNING**

Obviously dedicated to helping others learn, Simmers said she also looks for opportunities to learn something new herself. Even though she’s studied five different languages—French, Spanish, German,

Latin and American sign language—she’s not done. “Soon I hope to learn Kaqchikel, a Mayan language, so that I can communicate with another relatively large group of Guatemalans without the use of a translator.”

Also when she’s back in the U.S., Simmer looks forward to helping her mother in the classroom. And if all that isn’t enough, she’s planning a big event for this summer. “I’m engaged and planning a June wedding. We tried for a tourist visa last August to come home, but were denied. So you all will just have to come to Guatemala to meet him!” 🇳🇵



Annalisa Simmer is with her fiancé in Belize, which is in Central America. Simmer is planning a June wedding.

### **NEWS, from page 3**

the years, his teams have consistently won CHSL divisional and league championships

For the 2011-2012 season, Riley earned coach of the year honors for North Oakland County.

Riley picks up his latest award January 30 at the MHSTeCA’s annual banquet at the Troy Marriott. 🇳🇵

## **NDP senior adds Gatorade Player of the Year honors to Miss Volleyball award**

In its 30th year of honoring the nation’s best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, announced in December that Katherine Carlson of Notre Dame Preparatory School is its 2014-15 Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year. Carlson is the second Gatorade Michigan Volleyball Player of the Year to be chosen from Notre Dame Preparatory School. Molly Coldren, a 2008 NDP graduate, was the other.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Carlson as Michigan’s best high school volleyball player.

In November, Carlson was named the Michigan’s Miss Volleyball. 🇳🇵



## **Notre Dame’s lower and middle school students earn world rankings**



Students in Notre Dame’s lower and middle schools participated in a VEX IQ robotics tournament in Rochester Hills last month and took home six of seven possible awards.

According to Jerry Palardy, one of the “Bumble Bees” team mentors, there were a total of 16 teams participating in the competition and the Bees fared very well. In fact, he said, many of their scores ranked them high in the world.

“The Programming Skills award went to Bumble Bees team #3333P with Bees team #3333Q taking second,” Palardy said. “Their scores currently rank them fifth and sixth in the world out of over 1,700 teams.” 🇳🇵



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School website: [ndpma.org](http://ndpma.org)

*A world of education*



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### **RIGHT PLACE, from page 4**

communication, which happens throughout the day in little conversations, class lessons, and the unplanned "teachable" moments that third graders so often encounter." He also feels that strong relationships with parents and colleagues are important as well. "Parents and teachers working together to guide the students is critical to their success," he adds.


One of his fellow teachers at Notre Dame, however, became an especially important relationship to Patterson a few years ago. Kelly (Cole) Patterson and Bob met while Kelly was teaching in the lower division. [She has since moved to the middle division.] They married in June of 2009 and the happy couple is expecting their first child in February.

The Pattersons recently moved to Lake Orion where they both enjoy running, attending sporting events, summer concerts, and spending lots of time with their families. And they look forward to an annual trek to Florida during Easter break.

Bob also looks forward to March Madness when the NCAA basketball tournament occurs. In his spare time, he plays pick-up basketball on a mens league and the college tournament is always on his radar.

"Assisting Coach K at Duke in the NCAAs would be awesome," he says. "Hey, a guy can dream, can't he!"

But he is very happy where he is and

plans to stay put for a while. "Working in a school, I have the best of both worlds because I get the opportunity to both teach and coach!" 



Notre Dame third-grade teacher Bob Patterson is with Hunter Brzustewicz and Taylor Myers during ND Marist Field Day 2013.