

THE blarney stone

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Notre Dame alum Scott Lockhart discusses the burgeoning Notre Dame Alumni Career Speaker Series and its value to current students.

By Scott Lockhart '98 (NDP), Board Chair of the Notre Dame Alumni Association

The ability to know someone has stood in the same spot in which you stand—and then made the leap to where they want to go—provides comfort and confidence that cannot be measured. Watching a current student recently talking to 1999 NDP graduate Dr. Kyle Jackson about her passion for pediatric oncology and the research Kyle was performing at Johns Hopkins left me smiling last month.

This could not have happened 20 years ago.

Walking in the doors of the newly opened Notre Dame Prep in 1994, there was no one who had stood in my shoes. No one had graduated from the school. No one had gone to college from Notre Dame Prep, let alone an Ivy League school, a Stanford or Notre Dame. No one from the school had become a doctor, engineer, teacher, accountant, entrepreneur or fill-in-the-blank of your chosen profession. No one had made the leap.

Twenty years later, so many leaps have been made. Notre Dame Prep now boasts in its alumni ranks plenty of initials (MD, JD, DDS, CPA, etc.), colleges attended (just take a look at the pennants in the



Scott Lockhart (CPA/ABV), who is a Notre Dame Prep alum (1998) and chair of the Notre Dame Alumni Association, is the founder/owner of Oxdale Ventures.

school counseling office), and successes achieved. The backbone developed since I walked in the door to NDP on day one has allowed for the creation of what we are calling the “Alumni Career Speaker Series.”

GOING BACK

Going back again to when I was at NDP, as a junior, I applied to five Midwestern colleges—and four of them were for the college of engineering because I was good at math. I ended up at the small liberal arts school, Hillsdale College, with a business

major. I did not have much of an idea of my future career path or why I would end up where I have. Would I have predicted I would be an entrepreneur and CPA today? Not a chance.

Hillsdale College had three main business majors: accounting, finance and marketing. In my sophomore year, a former Hillsdale baseball player, “Bill,” visited the accounting classes. Bill described who would likely be allowed to apply for which jobs by drawing three concentric circles.

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



**FUTURE VETERINARY SURGEON
SAYS NDP HUGE IN PREPARING
FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER**

Of horses and of courses

Future veterinary surgeon says NDP huge in preparing for college and career

Sarah Morelli is charging forward into a career as a veterinary surgeon. This 2009 Notre Dame grad, who currently is halfway through Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, said she likely would not be anywhere near her dream of becoming a practicing vet if it wasn't for the education she received in high school.

"I am halfway done with veterinary school and I'm so grateful for the skills Notre Dame gave me," said Morelli. "I feel that I not

only got a great education at Notre Dame that prepared me for college, but I gained great study skills and habits that have made the rigorous veterinary curriculum and courses doable for me."

Morelli also is member of MSU's Polo Club team and, despite an extremely heavy load of courses, she said she's able to handle it all due in large part to NDP.

"Because of how prepared I was for college and veterinary school, I have been able to continue to competitively ride horses on the polo team," she said. "I feel that the teachers at NDP did a wonderful job preparing me for college and gave me a competitive edge over my peers throughout college."

Morelli did her undergrad at Saginaw Valley State University where she earned a degree in biology. She also completed a fellowship at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Kentucky and will be doing an externship this winter at the Four Sixes Ranch in Texas. Her success thus far, Morelli acknowledges, did not come without the help of many of her teachers at Notre Dame who played a huge role in her post-secondary career accomplishments, both at SVSU and MSU.

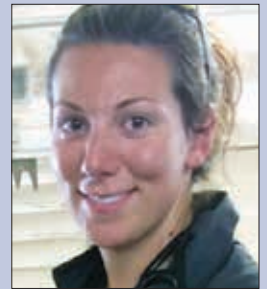
"I do miss all the teachers at ND and although all of them played a part in getting me to where I am today, I do have the most wonderful memories from my classes with Dr. Heinbuck, Mrs. (Kochenderfer) Preiss and Fr. Strasz." She also had high marks for the times she spent in the school office helping Mary Jane Pasko and Marie Place.

It's no accident that Morelli is in veterinary school or plays polo. Horses have always been her passion and being able to turn her passion into a career will be a dream come true for her. Of course, polo also plays a role in her dreams.

"I love what I am doing and cannot imagine doing anything else," she said. "Even when classes get difficult, just heading out to the barn for polo practice helps me remember my dream and makes all of the studying worth it. My parents have also been a huge inspiration for me and I would not be here without their love and support. I also believe the skills that will make me successful in veterinary medicine are the ability to think on my feet and problem-solve, as well as my social skills for interacting with clients and coworkers."

Skills that came in no small part from her Notre Dame tenure, which she said she'll forever be grateful.

"I think it is important to reflect upon where I came from because everyone in my life, including those at NDP, played a role in shaping me into the person I am today," Morelli said. "So I feel it is important to look back and remember those people, and include them in the celebrations of my success. Without them, I may not have made it to where I am today. I also think it is important to be an inspiration to those who follow behind me. You never know when you will have a positive impact on someone else's life." 🍀



Sarah Morelli, a 2009 Notre Dame grad who currently is at Michigan State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, said she likely would not be anywhere near her dream of becoming a practicing veterinary surgeon if it wasn't for the education she received in high school.

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Accounting, the biggest circle, surrounded finance, which surrounded marketing. Since I did not know what I wanted to be, I knew I wanted to keep my options open, so I chose to become an accounting major.

This decision paid off as Bill had predicted when I interviewed for any business job that came on campus. My final choice came down to either working at Pricewaterhouse-

Coopers in the audit practice group as an accountant or at General Mills on the sales team. I became an accountant at PwC—with the roots back in that accounting class and with the visit from Bill, who had shared his experience and knowledge with us. I do not remember many of the specific accounting lectures from Hillsdale, but I will never forget the day we took time out from class to listen to Bill share his experience and knowledge with us.

Those of us at Notre Dame Prep in the beginning never had exposure to career expertise. We never spoke to anyone about what grad school might look like, or when and why we should go, or to where we should go.

It took a few years and a number of interactions with friends to realize that going to grad school would be a good idea. I ended up going to the University of Oxford in the U.K. to get my MBA. This was the catalyst for me in taking an entrepreneurial mindset and eventually starting multiple businesses, which allowed me to utilize the skills I developed earlier in my career, and allow me to have a flexible enough work schedule to be able to travel the world.

LAUNCHING THE CAREER SPEAKER SERIES

With my flexible work schedule, I was able to take on a bigger role with Notre Dame's Alumni Association board and became the chair of the group this year. I had been a member in the past, but I never felt as though we were delivering what we as alumni could or should: our time and

experience.

It was my goal to provide a platform for alumni to share their experiences and expertise in their given fields with the current students. Working with the advancement and counseling offices, we laid out careers of interest. Next we needed to fill in the speaker slots—which has not really been an issue. Our alumni have been excited to get involved and we've worked from a list



NDAA chair Scott Lockhart, left, introduces Notre Dame alums Tom Durkin, Jeff Healy and Anthony Farchone, who were on hand Sept. 23 at NDPMA to discuss engineering careers with more than 60 upper-division students.

of those who have volunteered for future events.

In the first semester of this year, we have held two Career Speaker Series events—the first on engineering, the second on medicine. Graduates from both NDP and NDHS have participated and the student interest was exactly as expected—massive. When I mention the events to my friends and fellow alumni, they shake their head in appreciation: “I wish we had that when I was there.” “That’s great. Those students are so lucky.”

The Career Speaker Series allows current students to listen to alumni speak about their careers, and even more importantly, ask alumni questions about the paths they took to get there. We have created interactive sessions where the alumni panels can provide an overview that allows the students to dig in to the topic.

Through this speaker series, maybe a student confirms his or her desires about a career path they are considering, or maybe the 90-minute session helped them to check something off the list that they do not want to do anymore. Maybe students take the time to meet with alumni after the formal session to ask more specific questions, or send questions through the counseling

office to dig into something deeper. Maybe a connection for a future job-shadowing opportunity, internship or job is formed.

Another plus is that our alumni have been able to reconnect with Notre Dame. They are able to give back of themselves and not just with their checkbook.

Our goal as an alumni board is to have three to four Career Speaker Series panels each semester. Future potential topics include

business, entrepreneurship, education, service, law and others. We've had a tremendous amount of success with these first few panels, but we believe this just scratches the surface. We might even have “lunch and learns,” breakfasts with speakers, or job-shadowing events down the road.

It's an exciting time to be part of the Notre Dame family. I'm so glad we are able to connect our past with our present and future and allow our students to see the leaps that have been made. And that they can come back to share the leaps they make with the next generation of Irish who will be standing where they are today.

ABOUT SCOTT LOCKHART

Scott Lockhart (CPA/ABV) is the founder/owner of Oxdale Ventures, performing management-consulting roles for small and medium-sized businesses with a focus on finance and operations.

Lockhart earned an MBA from the University of Oxford where he was awarded the Dean's Commendation for Outstanding Contribution to the MBA Class and Wider School Community and was a winner of the Venture Capital Investment Competition. His undergraduate years were spent at Hillsdale College (2002) where he graduated with honors (BA accounting, BA health & physical education). He graduated from Notre Dame Preparatory School in 1998 as valedictorian and was the Student Council president, coeditor of the yearbook and a captain of the Fighting Irish baseball team. 🇺🇸

Digital citizenship

Notre Dame's resident "techie" focused on ensuring students are responsible and ethical digital citizens.

On Dec. 2, payroll processor ADP said that employers added 217,000 jobs in the U.S. for November 2015, the biggest gain in five months. Included in ADP's report was the fact that information technology jobs saw disproportionate increases, pointing out once again that technology is of critical importance to the economy here in the U.S.

According to ADP, IT jobs in the public sector also continued to show big gains with education occupying a large percentage of those jobs. From pre-school to colleges, technology is transforming how today's youth are being educated.

Virtually nowhere has access to technology played a larger role for students than it has at Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy. School head Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., and NDPMA's Board of Trustees have had technology access uppermost in strategic planning for years. In fact, at least five years ago, one of the mainstays of the school's official strategic planning process was the effort to maintain a "fresh technology plan designed to achieve a state-of-the-art technology program."

To ensure that the technology plan for the school continues to stay "fresh" and robust, last summer Olszamowski created a new position called "director of information and academic technology," which led to the hiring of Eden Konja in August.

As director of information and academic technology, Konja oversees all technical aspects of the school. According to Konja, his main responsibilities are the overall management, planning, organizing and execution of all IT functions at the school and includes Haiku Learning, NetClassroom and the school's critical online enrollment application.

Konja, who earned a Master of Science degree in information systems from Walsh College, said the most important aspect of all those responsibilities is that technology is "working and continuously improving our learning environment."

"I am committed to facilitating the integration of effective, existing and emerging technologies that will lead ultimately to higher level student learning,"

he said.

No stranger to the mashup of technology and academia, Konja, who reports directly to Olszamowski, came to Notre Dame after working 14 years in the IT department at Oakland Community College. "OCC also allowed me the opportunity to teach in the classroom as an adjunct professor," he said. "This has led me to teach at other colleges, including Mott Community College and Walsh College."

THE HOUR OF CODE

Konja spearheaded Notre Dame's third installment of the annual worldwide "Hour of Code" event, which this year took place at all three divisions of the school throughout the first week of December.

"The Hour of Code is a one-hour introduction to computer science, designed to demystify code and show that anybody can learn the basics," Konja said. "It provides a variety of fun, hour-long tutorials for students of all ages, created by a variety of partners. These self-guided Hour of Code tutorials allow you to work at your own pace and skill-level. This year they have new tutorials such as Star Wars and Minecraft."

Konja said that as computer science drives job growth and innovation throughout our economy and

society, every student should have the opportunity to learn computer science and coding.

"It helps nurture problem-solving skills, logic and creativity," he said. "And by starting early, students will have a foundation for success in just about any 21st-century career path."

MISSION-DRIVEN

Just as every other teacher and staff member will tell you how they are focused on the overall mission of Notre Dame, Konja and his staff, which includes Jason Borngesser, Eleanor McCaskey and Melissa York, also remain dedicated to the students education and well-being.

"By upholding ethical behavior and system integrity, we strive to ensure we are doing all the right things for the right reasons at NDPMA," he said. "Especially

when it comes to access to sensitive and personal identifiable information, it is fundamentally critical for us to protect that data and our students and families."

Konja also thinks he can be an advocate for the future "Eden Konjas" of the world.

"Reaching my own goals with respect

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Notre Dame NHS students put school mission to work

A number of students from Notre Dame's upper division who are National Honor Society members have been busying themselves during their after-school free time with tutoring at Will Rogers Elementary School in Auburn Hills. Part of the School District of the City of Pontiac, Rogers Elementary has about 350 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, some of whom have been getting extra help from NDP students on a regular basis.

According to Mel Archer, who moderates Notre Dame's NHS group along with fellow English teacher Kyle Lilek, many students from NDP have been making almost daily trips to Rogers to tutor the children. Pam St. Onge is a teacher at Rogers who organizes the after-school help at her school. Archer said St. Onge schedules the tutoring sessions, which occur five times a week—Monday through Thursday—with two sessions on Thursday.

"About five Notre Dame NHS students come to each session," Archer said. "Ms. St. Onge's program, which she has offered for some time already, runs from the fall through March, and our NHS kids have been involved from the start this year."

NDP senior and two-year NHS member Rosella LoChirco is overseeing the project at Notre Dame. Her role is to organize the NDP students who volunteer through signugnepius.com and handles scheduling for the NHS tutors.

On Dec. 18, many of the tutors got together again at Rogers to help with a party for the students, which included gifts from the Notre Dame group.



NDP senior Rosella LoChirco is organizing the NHS tutoring sessions at Rogers Elementary School.

Extra help for finals



In Notre Dame's media center, NDP science teacher Lawrence Kearney oversees a help session between upperclassmen and freshman.

In the second year of a program at Notre Dame's upper division designed to help get freshman through the stress and strain of semester finals, a number of NDP's upperclassmen and faculty members pitched in this week to offer assistance to those experiencing final exams in high school for the first time.

The goal, says program administrators, is the get underclassmen used to Notre Dame exams and to develop more effective and efficient study habits for the rest of their Notre Dame careers.

"Since this is our freshmen students' first go-around with these important tests, we wanted to give them the opportunity to meet with upperclassmen who have 'survived' NDP finals before," said Stacy Golliff, guidance counselor for the freshman class. "Our incredible upperclassmen tutors along with many NDP teachers generously gave up their study hall time and prep periods to meet in the media center with a group of freshmen divided up into

subject areas. The upperclassmen gave study tips specific for the class and how to approach the upcoming finals. Every freshmen was involved in this throughout the day, with most coming to the media center at least once during the day."

Notre Dame ninth grader Rachel Kloss was grateful for the one-on-one help she received from Kim Anderson, who is a Spanish teacher and IB DP coordinator in the upper division.

"Senora Anderson helped me with using the online book and showed me tools that I didn't know were there to help me study for the Spanish exam, which is my hardest class," Kloss said. "Now I feel so much more confident that I will do well on the exam."

Brothers named Academic All State

Notre Dame's Brendan (Jr.) and Nicholas Fraser (So.) have received recognition from M.I.T.C.A. (Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association) as individual Academic All-State award recipients for cross country. The recognition is based on a combination of performance at the state finals held on Nov. 1 at MIS (Michigan International Speedway) and cumulative grade point average. Specifically, runners need to place in the top half of the state finals and carry a cumulative GPA (based on a 4.0 scale) of 3.5 or higher. Brendan, who placed 3rd overall at the state finals, has a GPA of 3.781 and Niko, who placed 90th, has a GPA of 4.0.



Notre Dame's Nicholas, left, and Brendan Fraser were named Academic All-State by the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association.

"Everyone knows that Brendan and Niko are terrific runners," said Notre Dame cross country coach Andy Guest. "Now they will know what terrific students they are as well".

In addition, the entire Notre Dame boys team that competed at states (B. Fraser, N. Mylenek, D. Guest, N. Fraser, N. Kauffman, J. Pieper and A. Leonowicz) also earned Academic All State recognition with a cumulative GPA of 3.509.

"I am proud of each and every member of our team for not only excelling in the athletic arena, but for also making academics a priority," Guest said. "This was a very special team to be a part of this year."

State of the school featured at SPC dinner

Notre Dame held its annual St. Peter Chanel Dinner on Oct. 21, which, for the second year in a row, was hosted by Andiamo Italia and its owner, Notre Dame alumnus Joe Vicari '75). The food and ambience were exceptional as per usual and this year's program featured a few new twists for the more than 125 people in attendance.

Four student members of the cast from Notre Dame Prep's recent fall musical, "Into the Woods," performed three songs in full costumes: Jacob Mancinotti, Mira Housey, Joseph Isaac and

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A world of education



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to my degrees and current career were major accomplishments for me and I want to pay it forward,” he said. “One way to do this is by being a mentor to others and guiding them toward careers in information technology. Currently I am working with a Notre Dame faculty member to create an official computer club at the school, which will include a student-run help desk allowing students to help other students with technical questions.”


TECHIE THROUGH AND THROUGH

When he’s outside of the Notre Dame campus, Konja, who grew up in Oak Park and now lives in Commerce Township, spends time with his family—wife, Dahlia and children Ava (11), a 6th grader at Notre Dame, Isaac (9) and Iden (9)—and with “anything technology,” to no one’s big surprise.

“I am a techie and enjoy getting my hands on something new or even just learning about something new,” he said.

Konja also wants the Notre Dame community to know that he has a complete open-door policy to welcome communication, feedback, discussion and

increase accessibility as well as relationships.

“This includes forming a closer relationship with parents,” he said, “because technology is so pervasive in our lives today, I want to make sure it is as well integrated at NDPMA as it is within our society at large. And as we ‘work with God to form Christian persons, upright citizens, and academic scholars,’ and with tech extending everywhere into our students’ digital lives, I am totally focused on helping them understand their digital footprint and assisting in enlightening them as responsible and ethical digital citizens.” 



Eden Konja is with his wife, Dahlia, and their three children: Ava (11), Isaac (9) and Iden (9).

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Mina Kambakhsh. The school’s acclaimed jazz band provided musical accompaniment throughout the evening with vocal song stylings from students Colleen Fox and Joseph Isaac.



Members of the St. Peter Chanel Society mingle at the group’s Oct. 21 dinner held at Andiamo Italia.

In addition, Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., Notre Dame’s president, presented his annual State of the School address to attendees, the entire transcript of which is available on the school’s website.

St. Peter Chanel Society members are recognized every year for their generous support of NDPMA and for exceptional enthusiasm for the school’s role in private, Catholic education. 