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THE blarney stone

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

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Plans underway for lower division move

School president: Will help unify Notre Dame community

The Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy board of trustees has given its stamp of approval to a proposal to move the school's lower division to property adjacent to the Pontiac campus. On December 12, after weeks of study, meetings with the NDPMA community and surveys from parents, the school trustees voted to set in motion a plan that ultimately will lead to a new permanent structure for junior-kindergarten-through-fifth-grade students. The exact timing of the endeavor has not been finalized, but it could be as soon as the fall of 2012 that lower-division students will be housed in temporary facilities in Pontiac.

School officials have said that it might be three to five years before a permanent school structure is built and a lot depends on how well they do with an expected capital campaign to raise the necessary funds.

After three years of discussion, preliminary plans for the possible move of the lower division from its current location in Waterford to the Pontiac campus were presented initially October 12 to parents with students in the lower division. Father Leon Olszamowski, s.m., head of school, and Diana Atkins, principal of the lower division, discussed the possible move and its implications for students, parents, teachers and staff.

A survey designed to gauge opinions on the move also was sent to lower-division parents in late October and separately to middle- and upper-division parents in November. Additionally, the trustees had assembled an ad hoc committee made up of representation from its building committee, the finance committee, the education committee and the advancement committee to study the proposed move. The ad hoc committee eventually recommended to the full board that plans should go forward.

At a town-hall meeting in October, NDPMA President Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., presents preliminary sketches showing possible locations of the lower division near the Pontiac campus.

As a by-product of the move, the school expects to see enrollment gains at the lower division by making this move to the Pontiac campus. The hope is to build the lower-division enrollment in the permanent facility to around 200 students in Jr.K—grade 5. Notre Dame expects to save about $175,000 per year when all students are in Pontiac, and the savings will be applied to the planning and building of a separate lower-division building.

Olszamowski told those in attendance at the Oct. 12 parents meeting that the administration was considering a number of possibilities for the location of the permanent building, including the south end of the campus property adjacent to Perry Street. Part of the land currently owned by the Pontiac Missionary Baptist Church across Giddings Road is but one of a number of possibilities discussed for a temporary structure, which could have up to 12 classrooms with additional rooms for a cafeteria, computer lab, media center and offices.

Olszamowski and Atkins noted that there are serious maintenance and repair issues with the current lower-division building—now 64 years old—and the expected capital expenditures necessary to fix the school would add to an already expensive operation in Waterford.

Another big issue with the current location, Olszamowski says, was that the distance between the two campuses had created too much of a separation, which impacted the overall unity of the entire Notre Dame family.

"Our school was meant to be one school with three divisions, but that has hardly been the case because of the distance," he said.

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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.

NOTRE DAME PREP GRADUATE HOPES RESEARCH WILL HELP ELIMINATE ORGAN AND TISSUE REJECTION
(See page 2)

NDP alum travels to China to research bone transplant technology

2008 Notre Dame Prep graduate hopes research will help eliminate organ and tissue rejection

Notre Dame Prep alum Patty McCormick '08 stands on the Mutianyu section of the Great Wall of China. The Mutianyu section has the largest construction scale and best quality among all sections of the Great Wall.

Patty McCormick '08 (NDP) is a senior at the University of Michigan studying engineering. She recently spent three months of research in China and also studied in Spain. But she is now back in Ann Arbor and looking forward to post-graduate life. She was kind enough to spend a few minutes answering some questions from her high school alma mater for Blarney Stone.

Why did you select Michigan after graduating from Notre Dame Prep?
I chose to attend the UM because almost all of its departments are nationally ranked and I was looking for a college that had programs in both engineering and modern languages—which is harder to find than you might think!

What is your major?
I am majoring in Materials Science and Engineering with two minors, one in International Engineering and one in Spanish Language and Literature.

Are you involved in any clubs or organizations? Do you hold a leadership position in any of them?
Of course! Sometimes I wonder if I'm involved in too many clubs! I am a member of Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, and this is my second semester as external vice-president. Also, this is my third year involved with the 1931E Honors Society and I am currently serving as president. And I serve as the undergraduate committee representative for the Michigan Materials Society, which involves working with the faculty and staff of the department to improve the undergraduate program. I am also involved with the parish here in Ann Arbor, St. Mary Student Parish, as a lector, Eucharistic minister, and as a member of the Catholic Students Association (formerly the Newman Society).

Did you complete any internships or special assignments?
After my freshman year, I interned with the U.S. Army at the TARDEC base in Warren, Michigan, researching lithium-ion batteries. The summer after my sophomore year, I studied abroad in Pontlevoy, France, and in Salamanca, Spain, both of which were amazing places!

What are your post-graduate plans?
I am currently applying to MBA programs throughout the U.S. I am hoping to get deferred admission so I can obtain an MBA after two years of work experience.

Tell us about the recent research opportunity you had in China. Where did you go, and for how long did you stay?
I was working in Beijing, China, specifically at Peking University for almost three months. I lived in an apartment complex near the university that was specifically built for international students. I went with a chemistry professor from UM and three other undergraduate students from around the U.S. One from UM and the other two came from Iowa State University and Frostburg State University in Maryland.

What specifically was the reason for your travel to China?
I traveled to Beijing to participate in the REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) China Program sponsored by the chemistry department at UM. I spent the summer working for Haifeng Chen, a biomedical engineering professor at Peking University. I worked with one other student from the REU program researching 3D porous and electrospun scaffolds that could be seeded with cells and proteins to produce artificial bone implants for transplant in patients. The basic idea would be to shape these "scaffolds" into the size and shape of the bone needed and then use the patient's own cells to grow a new bone to be transplanted. This would completely eliminate the risk of organ rejection. We created a new composite scaffold that can be used for bone transplants and we have submitted our paper for publication in "Nature Materials."

Did the language barrier influence your ability to research and work in China? If so, how did you overcome this?
I didn't speak any Chinese when I got there, but I did have the opportunity to learn some Mandarin at the beginning of the program for two weeks, so I learned some basic phrases. Also numbers, how to tell time, and how to ask for directions. However, everyone in my lab spoke English (some better than others), which was very helpful. Outside of the lab, it was more difficult to communicate. At the end of the three months in Beijing, our "favorite" restaurants were the ones that had pictures on the menus so we could point at what we wanted! Every Chinese person we met, though, was very helpful and patient when we were trying to communicate.

Please see McCormick, page 5

Among the possible locations for the temporary modular classrooms is across Giddings Road from the main campus on the grounds of what is now the Pontiac Missionary Baptist Church.

Move, from page 1

"Though this school (Waterford) has done well on its own, it is seen as part of a larger family. But it is tough when family members, parents, teachers and students only see each other once in awhile. We believe strongly that one close location could fill this gap so that lower-division students can see the great role-model students we have more often, where all teachers can work together more regularly, and parents can get to know each other better, ultimately learning what it's like to be in the middle and upper divisions."

Notre Dame has received proposals from a number of modular-building manufacturers, one of which was unveiled to parents at the October meeting. It is a premium variety, according to Olszamowski, and very functional with modern bathrooms, heating and air-conditioning. The cost for the temporary facility has been estimated to be around $300,000 with a permanent-structure construction cost estimated at between $3.5 million to $5 million, depending on capacity.

Olszamowski also expects better collaboration with the three International Baccalaureate programs if all students are in one location. He said the lower division would be much more exposed to the IB-MYP and IB-DP curricula. "Planning and assessment for teachers would be much easier and lower-division parents would see how the IB continuum works with their own eyes."

Atkins noted that the main campus offers many more academic resources, course materials, a large, modern media center, and lower-division students would have better access to tutoring by the National Junior Honor Society and by upper-division National Honor society students.

Overall, school administrators (including the admissions department) and the board expect a much greater enrollment growth for the lower division after a move to Pontiac. "We have seen little growth potential at the Waterford location. But a temporary structure in Pontiac would give us the opportunity to see what enrollment might look like for the lower division before we finalize the building plan for a permanent structure," Olszamowski said. "We want neither to underbuild or overbuild. In addition to the fact that we'll need the full financial support of our school community to build a new structure [via a capital campaign], we must also have a good idea of what size the permanent structure should be."

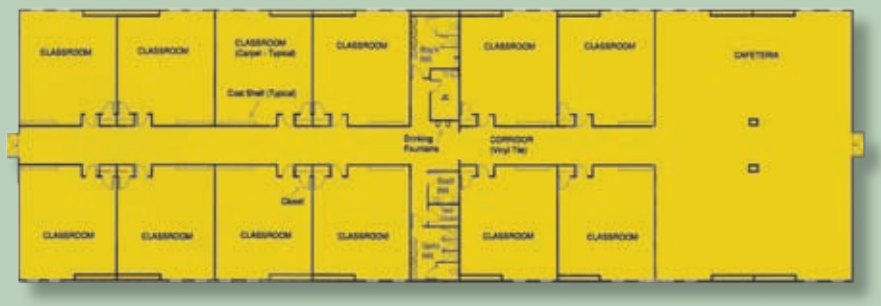
While feedback from those in attendance at the October meeting generally was positive on a move to Pontiac, there was some reservation expressed, including concerns with the younger students potentially having to walk outside during cold or inclement weather to get to the main campus facilities. The 85 lower division parents who responded to a formal survey also expressed similar concerns, but were for the most part in favor of a move. In the meantime most of the concerns have been addressed by the modification of the proposed modular structure.

Above: Exterior and interior views of one of the proposals submitted for a temporary lower division building.

School board of trustees chair Daron Gifford reiterated that fact that no details are set in stone, but that parents can be assured that whatever the school decides to do, it will be done with much thought and prudence and with the well-being of the students uppermost in mind.

Olszamowski concluded the lower division meeting in October by saying, "We realize this may be easiest for the fourth- and fifth-grade families but more difficult for the families with younger children. However we firmly believe that this move—done sooner rather than later—will benefit your children as well as those who have yet to arrive.

"I want you to know that we appreciate your loyalty, and we want you to understand that ultimately what we eventually undertake will be for the sole benefit of your children and for the overall health of the entire school community," he told parents.



A 12-classroom modular structure with a cafeteria (similar to the floorplan shown above) is being considered for the temporary lower division building. Other designs also are being studied.

Former engineer, now math teacher, says working with students is best

Mark McCaskey worked 12 years for EDS, but is glad he returned to education

Notre Dame Prep mathematics chair Mark McCaskey says learning math builds academic scholars, but he also says it's becoming even more vital as society becomes more technological. He should know. Growing up in Pennsylvania, McCaskey, 53, came to NDPMA (and returned to teaching) in 1997 from a systems engineering job during the same year the school brought in six other "impressive" new teachers. He said he was a little concerned that he wouldn't measure up to that group.

Nearly fifteen years later, he not only has measured up, but has thrived at NDP. McCaskey took a couple of minutes recently to answer a few questions from The Blarney Stone.

Notre Dame's math department chair Mark McCaskey (in red vest) is most at home teaching in the classroom.

Why did you become a teacher?
I think teaching is what I was called to do, but NDPMA was not my first teaching job. Early in my career, I had five years of teaching experience in Pennsylvania public schools.

What was your first impression of NDPMA upon arriving on campus to work here?
On day one, I was in an orientation meeting with all of the new teachers that year. I believe the group included David Osiecki, Shari Phillips, Russ Cannon and Mel Archer, along with Roy Johnson and Kim Rose Anderson who came over from Notre Dame in Harper Woods. I had been working as a systems engineer at EDS for 12 years before I decided to return to teaching. The other new teachers were so impressive that day, I was worried that I didn't belong. Most from that group will have served 15 years at Notre Dame Prep at the end of this school year and I am proud to be associated with them.

What are the most significant changes to the school since you first started?
The building has changed significantly with the addition of the B-wing, changes to the cafeteria, the new football field, the new gym, etc. But the changes in personnel have been more significant. The faculty, administration and staff have grown over the years and I think have improved as a whole.

What do you think is the most important part of your teaching job and when did you become chair of the mathematics department?
I think helping students with math is most important. As far as being chair, I think it's been about five years now. I am honored to hold that position.

We all know that math is important in educating young people, perhaps even more so today. Can you provide some insight into why you think it's important?
Math, science and technology all work together. As our society grows more technological, math and science also grows in importance.

What role do you think the classes you teach play in fulfilling the school's mission?
Although mathematics falls under the arm of building "academic scholars," I hope the students also see that I really enjoy what I do and enjoy helping people. I hope that helps them become good people.

Where did you grow up?
Some say I never grew up. Until I was 16, I lived in Levittown, Pennsylvania (a large suburb of Philadelphia). I had three brothers and three sisters. During my junior year in high school, I moved to a very small rural town in north-central Pennsylvania.

Where did you attend school?
Grade school was Immaculate Conception School in Levittown and high school was Bishop Egan High School (9-11) and Wellsboro Area Senior High School (11-12). As far as college, I graduated from Mansfield State College (now Mansfield University) in Mansfield, Pa. Also received numerous certificates and certifications from Penn State, Oakland, Central Michigan and Wayne State universities.

What about your immediate family?
My wife and I have been married since we were both 19 years old. We have four grown children—all graduates of MSU—and one special granddaughter. Both of my sons have PhDs in physics. My oldest daughter manages a Red Lobster and my youngest daughter has her master's in human nutrition. My granddaughter was born 100 days early at 1 lb.-6 oz. When she was four days old, she was only 15 oz. She is seven now and is a rambunctious second grader. She has been a real blessing to my entire family.

What would you choose for a job if you weren't a teacher?
I did choose another job! For 12 years, I worked as a computer engineer. In my early teaching years, I was often frustrated with (what I then saw as) a lack of return on my efforts. As a computer engineer, I found myself looking at computers as the ultimate students. The work you put into them was reflected back and could be easily identified. But I found that I missed the human element. Working with kids is the best. I would never leave it again.

McCormick, from page 3

What did you notice as the biggest difference between daily life in China and that in the United States?
There are two things that I will always associate with life in China and it is impossible to pinpoint one thing that made my experience vastly different from my life in the U.S. Everything from the traffic (insanity!) and the crowds in Beijing to the food (which was amazing and nothing like American Chinese food) and the way people ate (ordering a bunch of dishes to share and then just taking a little bit of everything that you want) made my experience unforgettable. Of course, the cost of living didn't hurt either! I could easily go out to eat for less than $2 total and bus rides were a mere 2 cents.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Where do you want to be living?
I hope to be living in either New York or somewhere in Western Europe (Madrid, Paris or London).

What type of career do you hope to have?
I hope that after completing my MBA, I'll be working for an international consumer goods company, for example L'Oreal of Unilever. In the meantime, I have landed a job working as a technology analyst for Accenture, a global consulting company.

What advice would you offer to a current Notre Dame student who is thinking of pursuing studies in materials engineering?
Materials engineering is a very small field, no matter where you choose to go to school. The majority of students majoring in materials science and engineering transferred from another department. I actually started off in chemical engineering and realized it wasn't for me, since I was more interested in the actual chemistry and molecules as opposed to the chemical processes in factories. The most important thing to realize is that even though you have to choose a major, you can always branch out and learn more about other fields and many different fields are overlapping and interdisciplinary, as my summer experience shows! I went with a group of chemistry students and worked in a biomedical engineering lab in China even though I'm studying materials science and engineering, and Spanish!

Do you feel that Notre Dame Prep prepared you for life after high school?
Academically, Notre Dame Prep prepared me for the rigors of college work more than I can describe! The wide range of AP classes offered helped me to not only earn over a year's worth of college credit before I even started at UM, but they also helped me to understand how to study for college-level courses.

What was the most valuable part of your education at Notre Dame Prep?
The most valuable part was the wide range of classes I was able to take. I was very grateful that even though I took a lot of math and science classes my senior year, I still had time in my schedule to take AP Spanish, AP Literature, religion, and art classes.

Patty McCormick, top left, and the group she traveled and studied with visit the Summer Palace in Beijing, China.

What is a favorite memory from Notre Dame?
There are way too many to list here, though most of them involve the shenanigans that Mr. McCaskey and Mr. Osiecki got into! However, my favorite memory from Notre Dame was attending Kairos twice, once as a participant and the second time as a leader. I still pull out my binder from the retreat when I am in need of some spiritual guidance and, whenever I do so, I am always flooded with wonderful memories of my experience on Kairos.

As an alumna, why do you feel it's important for alumni to remain connected to their alma mater?
It is very important for alumni to maintain communications with their alma mater because high school has an impact on everyone. My teachers not only taught me their lessons every day, they also helped me discover what I wanted to do with my life and they helped me plan a lot of my goals. In addition, at Notre Dame, I met some of the most important people in my life. Even though almost all of us are attending different colleges, we never miss an opportunity to get together, no matter how busy we all are!

Is there a teacher at Notre Dame who particularly made an impact on you?
She already knows this, but Señora Tessada made a huge impact on me during high school and we still keep in touch when I'm back in the Pontiac area. For some reason, she convinced me it would be a good idea for me to skip a year of Spanish (Spanish 6 and Spanish 7) so I could take AP Spanish my senior year. To this day I do not regret the amount of work I did in AP because it opened so many opportunities for me. I know for a fact that I would not have a Spanish minor or have studied abroad after my sophomore year if I had not taken AP Spanish. On a more personal level, Señora was always amazing at talking and giving advice whenever I approached her.

More information about the REU China program in which McCormick participated can be found at http://www.umich.edu/~reuchem/index.html.

Over 900 gifts for needy

More than 900 Christmas presents were collected from students and staff of NDPMA for their needy neighbors. A Christmas tree in the school's main lobby was the scene of this overflow of Christmas charity and spirit.

On December 13, students loaded the gifts and delivered them to the Whitmer Human Resource Center and Baldwin Center in Pontiac.

Notre Dame alum/comedian/actor to perform comedy show for scholarship fund

Comedian and actor Dave Coulier, who graduated from Notre Dame High School in 1977, will take the stage Saturday, May 12, at NDPMA in a special fundraiser to benefit the Fr. John Bryson, s.m., Memorial Scholarship Fund. Bryson was a Marist priest who taught and served at Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods for nearly 45 years. He died in May of last year at the age of 87.

Presented by the Notre Dame Alumni Association, the comedy show is for all ages and will start at 8:00 p.m. Coulier has been a regular face on television, first starring as Joey Gladstone in the ABC-TV sitcom "Full House" from 1987 through 1995. He also had a stint hosting "America's Funniest People." In between, he's acted in movies and continues a successful standup comedy routine at colleges and clubs around the country. Tickets and more details will be available soon.

A world of education.

The Blarney Stone is published five times per year by the Advancement Office of NDPMA. Contact The Blarney Stone at 248-373-2171 or mkelly@ndpma.org.

School web site: ndpma.org

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