

# THE blarney stone

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



Notre Dame Preparatory School: 248-373-5300  
 Notre Dame Marist Academy-Middle: 248-373-5371  
 Notre Dame Marist Academy-Lower: 248-682-5580

## AD focuses on the complete student

### Athletic director of the year shuns spotlight; prefers it to be on kids

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy’s athletic director, Betty Wroubel, recently earned regional “Athletic Director of the Year” honors from the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA). But if the press release hadn’t been issued by the MIAAA, scarcely anyone on campus would have known. That is because the honoree is about as reluctant to tout her own achievements as anyone on the face of the Earth.

Wroubel wants no part of the spotlight and says it should be on the kids, her staff and the school administration who help make the gears turn on one of the state’s largest high school athletic programs. Notre Dame Prep offers a varsity team in nearly every Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) sport, fielding 49 high-school teams and three clubs. The athletic department also oversees 26 separate teams at Notre Dame Marist Academy.

In 2010, when the MIAAA named ND Prep’s athletic department the state’s only “exemplary athletic program,” the group cited Wroubel and the department’s commitment to the mission of the school and to reinforcing “the aims and goals of the school’s academic program so that it is an integral part of the educational system designed to promote the physical, moral, spiritual, emotional and social development of the individual student.”

Head of School Fr. Leon Olszamowski,

s.m., who hired Wroubel as athletic director in 2005, notes that she spends more hours at the school than she does anywhere else. And along with all that hard work, Olszamowski says she stays on mission by attending to three major principles: “Number one, she always demands that coaches, parents and students act according to Christian moral principles. Two, she has always been a



“team-first” person. The program has a lot of individual talent, but most of Betty’s personal success as a coach and AD—and her department’s success—has been because of her drive to have people work as a team. And three, she demands that kids carry a good grade average in classes. But, I tell you what—she also understands that sports are everything for some kids. So she does her best to make sure the academics are attended to so that they will, in fact, succeed in school. For Betty, athletics and academics are indeed tied together.”

Wroubel’s tenure at Notre Dame follows administrative, teaching and coaching posi-

tions at Our Lady Gate of Heaven, Pontiac Catholic High School and Oakland Catholic High School. She completed her bachelor’s degree and earned her teaching certificate at Central Michigan University, and she earned a master’s degree in classroom teaching from Michigan State University. Wroubel has been a teacher, volleyball coach and softball coach for 32 years, and first moved into athletics administration in 2003. She is a member of the Oakland County Athletic Director’s Association, National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association, and has also served on many committees for the MHSAA. She also is an active member of many coaching associations.

Further accolades for Wroubel came in 2010 when ground was broken at Notre Dame Preparatory School’s campus for the new “Betty A. Wroubel Athletic Performance Center.” The 4,000 square-foot facility houses fitness, weightlifting and training equipment in a spacious, well-lit environment complete with a state-of-the-art athletic training center.

Wroubel has received a number of awards throughout her career, including the Catholic High School League Athletic Director of the Year Award two times, the Al Bush Award, and several coaching awards at the state and national levels, including National High School Coach of the Year (2007) by the American Volleyball Coaches Association. Notre Dame Prep earned the status of Exemplary Athletic Program

*Please see ADOTY, 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.*

CAMPUS MINISTRY DEPARTMENT HELPS STUDENTS PUT FAITH INTO ACTION (See page 4)

# After studying in Miami and London, alum now plans to pursue a career in Washington, DC



Ryan Aquilina, who graduated from Notre Dame Prep in 2009, is in front of the Tower Bridge on the River Thames in central London. He studied British politics, political communication and documentary production at Queen Mary, University of London.

## 2009 graduate says Notre Dame Prep provided a top-notch education that put him “strides ahead” when he entered college

Currently in his last year at the University of Miami (Fla.), Ryan Aquilina '09 (NDP) will graduate in May—a year ahead of schedule—with an honors degree, double majoring in communications (motion pictures) and political science. He says he was always interested in politics, having participated in Student Congress (also known as Congressional Debate) for four years at NDP. And film and mass communications also have been intriguing to Aquilina.

“I didn’t realize how perfectly the two marry until I began taking college classes in both areas,” he said.

While the University of Southern California originally had been his top choice school, after visiting Miami, Aquilina knew UM was the perfect fit. “The campus is a place I cannot believe is even a school. It looks like a resort—and the feeling you get when walking around and interacting with the people at the university was a match made in heaven.”

He had been offered a spot as a Foote Fellow at Miami as a part of his scholarship. It’s a program offered to the ‘highest

quality’ of entering students and it exempts them from general education requirements so that they can pursue many different course options outside of their discipline.

### Extra extracurriculars

While Aquilina has kept his academics front and center thus far, he also has allowed for a heavy dose of extracurriculars at Miami.

He’s kept an interest in theater (from his high school days), and has done sound and lighting technical work on a few shows on campus. He also took the lead role in a student-run production during his freshman year. But his main extra-academics involvement at Miami has been in student government.

“I was a cabinet member in the executive branch of our student government my first year, and slowly became more and more involved,” he said. “I held a Senate seat representing my school in my second semester and eventually ended up becoming heavily involved in the presidential election at the end of my freshman year, helping to run a campaign. We were successful, and the president-elect created a new position for me on the executive board in the role of

press secretary. My role essentially consisted of managing all communications coming in and going out from the organization, and I also was named Executive Board Member of the Year, with a plaque I proudly own.”

Aquilina’s other extra involvements at Miami included working in his school’s AV equipment room for two years where he and other students maintain all of the film equipment as well as conduct research with faculty in the political science department. He also spent time giving tours as part of the “president’s 100” (a volunteer group of 100 students) in addition to working in the alumni association and serving on a selection committee for student awards.

“I think what I’m most proud of so far in my college career has been the ability to work with so many different people—students, administrators and even the president of our university (Dr. Donna Shalala) on quite an array of projects,” he said.

He also worked this semester as the communications intern for a “real” political-advocacy group in Miami where he gets to communicate with donors, supporters and members of the media, and helps plan the organization’s communications strat-

*Please see Aquilina, page 5*



## ADOTY, from page 1

under Wroubel's leadership, the only non-public school to receive this recognition. Vic Michaels, director of the CHSL, commented at the time: "I can say Betty is one of our very best. Her success stems from balancing extremely high expectations with a genuine care for Notre Dame Prep, the students and the community. She demands maximum effort from her coaches and the athletes who she supervises."

Fr. Joe Hindelang, s.m., principal of Notre Dame Prep, has worked with Wroubel since 2005. "As a teacher, coach and AD, Betty is concerned with fostering growth in our student-athletes as Christians, as people concerned about others, and as students." Hindelang said. "She expects a lot of herself, of students in class, of athletes at practices

and contests, and of fellow coaches." He says that she honestly cares deeply about students and that is why she challenges them to develop to their potentials, to become the best they can be. "She spends a lot of time at school, at meetings and with parents but I think she most enjoys time with student-athletes, which makes the administrative stuff worthwhile. While she can be passionate about sports, she is more concerned with the overall growth and development of our students."

One of Wroubel's assistant athletic directors, Marty Simmonds (Megan Thayer is the other assistant AD), adds that she is one of the most respected coaches in the state. "Betty gets more out of her players than anyone I have seen."

That is evidenced by numerous champi-

onships during her coaching career, including state championships in volleyball (2007) and softball (1983).

But Wroubel always comes back to what she says is most important. "We all agree that first and foremost academic performance is the highest priority," she said. "We go out of our way to make sure that coaches know when one of their players may be struggling in school. We have guidelines in place designed to keep the focus on the student. It makes no sense to have a student spend extra time on the playing field when he or she may need that time to catch up on their classes."

Wroubel will be presented the Athletic Director of the Year award in Traverse City on March 17, 2012, at the annual MIAAA Mid-Winter Conference in front of over 500 fellow athletic directors. 🇺🇸

## Advancing the mission of the school

As part of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) accreditation process, we currently are preparing a rigorous self-study that assesses each aspect of the school. In this process, we will evaluate our mission, purpose, goals, philosophy, school community, personnel, academic disciplines, auxiliary programs, student services, governance and administration. The comprehensive top-to-bottom analysis will provide us an on-going platform for improvement.

One of the findings from our self-study, which includes an analysis of a constituent survey that we performed last year, is that the concept of advancement is not well understood in our community. Most people think that advancement is synonymous with fundraising. While fundraising is one component of a comprehensive advancement effort, there are many other facets important to the life of the school. According to Andy Guest '84 (NDHS), the school's vice president for advancement, families often think that advancement is about the money.

"It's not actually about the money at all," he says. "It's about the mission. Our mission of course is to prepare young people not only for college, but to be conscientious, moral contributors to society. When we succeed in our mission, the world is a better place!"

### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Since the last ISACS accreditation study in 2005, the school has completed \$3.7 million dollars worth of capital improvements. These improvements include tennis courts, new windows, the Jim Grimaldi Athletic Center, the Beverly Gifford Music Center, baseball dugouts, swing sets and the Betty Wroubel Athletic Performance Center. All of these capital improvements were completed based on the generosity of Notre Dame families, friends and alumni.

"People wonder how we have been able to accomplish so much during such difficult economic times," said Guest. "But it really comes down to the type of people we have in our community. The leadership of our school, including our Board of Trustees, works relentlessly to achieve our goals. Our parents sacrifice greatly to afford tuition and contribute both financially and through volunteerism to our efforts. Most importantly, our faculty, staff and

coaches will run through brick walls to ensure that each student gets the type of nurturing, leadership and individual attention that he or she needs to be successful. The business of Catholic education is not easy, but with the love and support of our entire community, we can get great things done."

### MARKETING

Over the last several years, the school has completely revamped its marketing strategy and presence. Directed by Mike Kelly, an alumnus of Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods, the school has rebranded itself. While the official name remains Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy, we now refer to each of our divisions as Notre Dame Preparatory School (upper division), and Notre Dame Marist Academy (middle and lower divisions). Or, more simply put, Notre Dame.

We also have undertaken steps to improve the outside areas of our campus and our lobbies with directional signage, light pole flags and International Baccalaureate display boards. These simple yet effective improvements give our campus a more professional look and feel.

Other aspects of our marketing efforts include the creation of a visual identities guideline, new advertising and media strategies, an overhaul of enrollment materials, reformatting of the school newsletter, a greater emphasis on media relations, a re-designed website and a social-media presence. Much of the school's increase in enrollment and fundraising can be attributed to the improved marketing and public relations presence of the school.

### ANNUAL FUND

The Notre Dame Annual Fund is the single largest fundraiser for the school. Over the last three years, the annual fund has risen more than 20% each year. In the school year ending in 2011, the annual fund raised more than \$360,000.

"It (the annual fund) is really the lifeblood of our fundraising efforts," Guest said. "The dollars we raise are completely unrestricted, so the administration can allocate funds toward the greatest needs."

Over the last few years, the greatest need has been financial aid for



*Please see Mission, page 6*

# Campus ministry helps students ‘walk the talk’

Department encourages students to grow in their faith and understanding, and to recognize God in their lives

The purpose of Campus Ministry at Notre Dame Preparatory School is to support and complement both school and family in their roles of faith formation and religious education. This extends to the “lived-faith” experience of the students. Campus ministers believe that each student’s spiritual development is the core focus of his or her Christian, Catholic education.



Cathy Zuccaro, left, and Grace Seroka form the nucleus of Notre Dame Prep’s Campus Ministry department.

Christian faith, values and theology are taught, encouraged and discovered at NDP. How students live out these principles becomes their spirituality. And Notre Dame’s campus ministry serves to support, enrich and foster this growth in its students by providing a structured, well-rounded, and holistic campus ministerial program.

Through the three main components

of campus ministry—Christian service, retreats and liturgy—students are given the opportunity to put their faith into action. Moreover, through peer ministry, students are given the opportunity to share their faith with their fellow students in a way that only they can relate to and take a leadership role in guiding them to a fulfilling faith experience.

Grace Seroka, who has been part of campus ministry at Notre Dame for five years, and Cathy Zuccaro, new this year, form the nucleus of the school’s campus ministry function. Their main focus currently is on upper-division students, but the vision in the near future is to more fully support the middle- and lower-division students who attend Notre Dame.

Since Zuccaro is the newest member of the department, The Blarney Stone recently asked her about first impressions and how she and the staff relate to the work they do.

*What generally do you see as the big challenge for campus ministry?*

The biggest challenge I see is channeling the students’ attitudes toward “faith in action,” to go from one of apathy to that of enthusiasm.

*Can you relate any specific instances where a student or group of students really embraced the mission of campus ministry?*

The “Great Give” was an amazing outpouring of generosity from both students and staff for those less fortunate. Also, the students who develop our class retreats take seriously their roles in creating an experience for their peers to retreat, reflect and reconnect with God during the day-long retreats.

*What is the most fulfilling thing for you so far in your role in campus ministry?*

The most fulfilling thing is providing opportunities for students and then watching them embrace growing in their faith, understanding and recognizing God in their lives, and “walking the talk.”

*For you personally, what has it been like since you signed on at ND?*

I genuinely love it here. The staff and students have been very welcoming to me. God has made it clear to me that my

journey through education was meant to bring me here to Notre Dame and to campus ministry and I couldn’t be more excited about it. Did I mention I can’t believe it is already February?! There is much to do in campus ministry!

*What were your first impressions of the school and staff, teachers, etc., after starting in your position?*

My first impression after starting was that the culture of the school is very hospitable, collaborative and professional. It is a very pleasant place to work!

*Is there something about you that might surprise people?*

Sorry, but I am pretty boring. But if I had to pick something I would say I enjoy cooking—probably because I am Italian and I like eating! 🍝



## ABOUT CATHY ZUCCARO

- Master’s in educational leadership
- Certified Catechist, taught religion, social studies, business education, and assisted in campus ministry at Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School from 2001-2007
- Admission director for Regina High School, student council moderator, 2007-2010
- Admission director for Marian High School, Ambassador Club moderator, 2010-2011
- Graduated from Regina in 1984
- Married 23 years to Mark Zuccaro
- Three sons: Joe (21), Anthony (18) and Mark (15)



### **Aquilina, from page 3**

egy during an election year. He says it's an incredible opportunity.

### **London's calling**

Another exciting opportunity came knocking on Aquilina's door in September of last year when he was chosen to spend an entire semester in London, England, at Queen Mary, University of London.

"I decided to study abroad in London after my advisor said that I should be able to graduate earlier than originally expected. Coming into college with so many AP



Notre Dame Prep grad Ryan Aquilina ('09), left, works on a project with the president of the University of Miami's student government. Aquilina was the group's press secretary at the time.

credits from the wide number of choices at Notre Dame Prep, I was told that I could graduate not only a year early, but a year and a half early. With the help of a scholarship for students studying abroad that I applied for and received, I decided to take that extra semester and spend it studying in London."

He says anyone who knows him can tell how much he is in love with British culture and politics. "I studied there from September of 2011 until December, taking courses in British politics, political communication and documentary production."

Like many people, Aquilina assumed that the cultural and educational differences between the U.S. and England would be minimal and easy to take.

"But getting thrown into a different country thousands of miles away can lead to a few shocks from the simplest things to things you never even considered," he said. "The manner in which courses are taught is extremely different than it is in the U.S., with very little time in the classroom and a heavy focus on independent study. In short, LOTS of reading! It was a great

experience, though, where I was able to feel completely immersed in the culture since I also lived with British students. And getting to witness first-hand one of the largest protests of recent English history [in 2011 over government austerity measures] was an incredible sight I will never forget! It is hard to imagine nearly three million protesters until you see what it looks like in the tangible form!"

### **DC is calling**

Meanwhile, now back at Miami, his post-graduate plans are as he says "in development." He does, however, plan to apply for a number of specific positions, including some on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, likely in public relations.

"Most people who work inside of the political PR sector do not hold post-graduate degrees—or wait to get them—and I plan on following a similar path, going directly into the work field."

His ideal job, he says, would be working as a communications director (i.e., press secretary) for someone holding public office. He's been fascinated ever since being able to do this type of work on a smaller level in college, and he simply can't imagine doing anything else.

"I think I've always been someone with a keen interest in politics, and I'm quick on my feet, good with words, and ready to help represent the best in someone," he said. "Looking back, I think studying rhetoric with Mrs. Derico in AP Composition probably started my love for language."

### **Prepared for life**

But it wasn't only his academic success and an interest in communications, politics and a career in Washington that Aquilina says resulted from his high school education. He says NDP most definitely prepared him for life, period.

"I'm still discovering the ways in which my education and experience at NDP have impacted me thus far. It provided a top-notch and unrivaled education that meant I was strides ahead by the time I entered college. But it also really helped to shape who I am as a person."

He says most kids who attend high school at

NDP—until faced with real-life situations—don't really quite grasp the positive values that are being instilled by the teachers and staff at NDP.

"When I spoke at my ND graduation, I not-so-jokingly said that the teachers taught us things far more important than biology or calculus. They took a genuine interest in our success, and I still hold the opinion that a pay-raise is deserved! Where would I be without some of the teachers I had in high school? They were the most valuable part of my high school experience because they taught me not only the things I needed to know for a test, but the things that I needed for life."

And among the many things he misses from NDP, he says he especially misses how expressive Fr. Joe's voice was, the walkathon and, of course, the chocolate chip cookies!

"But most importantly, I miss that feeling of absolute accomplishment when you were able to hide behind a freshman as you walked by Fr. Strasz or Mrs. Anderson without them noticing that your shirt was completely untucked!" 🇺🇸

### **TICKETS STILL AVAILABLE FOR THE DAVE COULIER COMEDY SHOW**

Dave Coulier, who has been a regular face on television, first starring as Joey Gladstone in the ABC-TV sitcom "Full House" from 1987 through 1995, 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 Assoc., the show is for all ages and starts at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for students and seniors (under 18 and over 65). Premium tickets are available for \$50, which also admit you to a private "Meet & Greet" afterglow reception with Coulier. All tickets are general admission seating. For more info or to purchase your tickets, visit [www.ndpma.org/davecoulier](http://www.ndpma.org/davecoulier). ■



### Mission, from page 3

families who have experienced hardship due to the economy. Administration officials are quick to point that the school's family retention rates are extremely high. This is due largely because of the efforts the school puts into working with families that have been adversely affected by the economy.

One of the messages that Frank Castronova '89 (NDHS), the school's new annual fund director, is trying to get out to constituents is about the importance of participation at any level.

"You don't have to be a millionaire to donate to the school," he said. "We have donations as little as \$5 and every little bit helps. Our goal is to get support from every parent, alumnus and friend regardless of age or financial means. If everyone pitches in, we can accomplish a great deal!"

### ALUMNI RELATIONS

In 2008, the school created a full-time alumni director position. The goal was to do a better job of communicating and working with our alumni body, which includes alumni from Notre Dame Prep and Notre Dame High School as well as graduates of Pontiac Catholic, Oakland Catholic, St. Michael and St. Frederick.

"We have an open-door policy and want all alums to know that we care," said alumni director Rachel (Alexander) Miller, a 2000 graduate of Notre Dame Prep. "The future of our institution is our alumni and it's important that we stay connected," she added.

In addition to the IRISH magazine, which the school began to send to parents recently, the alumni office also supports the alumni through reunion planning, e-newsletters and special events such as homecoming, Traveling Irish Dinners and the Dave Coulier Comedy Show. In 2009, a volunteer

alumni board of directors was created to help plan and execute events for all alumni.

### ON THE HORIZON

In the last Blarney Stone, Fr. Leon announced plans to move the lower division from the campus in Waterford to the main campus in Pontiac. The move is designed to bring greater unity between the three divisions and ensure a longer term future for our school. Plans are currently underway to move the lower division into a temporary building on the south end of the campus as early as the summer of 2012. The move is expected to increase enrollment and improve the long-term financial stability of the school. Ultimately, the school will be launching a capital campaign to help fund a permanent building as well as other needed improvements to the campus.

"There are a lot of things that we would like to do for the school, including a performing-arts center, a track and field and renovations to older parts of the building, said Guest. "While we can't get it all done right away, if everyone pitches in, we can move a little closer to our goals each year.

"We are the only Catholic, IB, independent school in Michigan and the first Catholic school in the nation to offer the IB program to students in junior kindergarten through 12th grade. It will be exciting to see what our kids will be like in the future once they've had the opportunity to go through a complete Notre Dame education. The possibilities are endless!"

### Advancement Coffee

Any parent who would like to meet members of the advancement team or learn more about any of the aforementioned topics is invited to attend an informal advancement coffee on Thurs., Mar. 15 at 8:00 a.m. The coffee will be held in the board room near the main triangle on the Pontiac campus. No RSVP necessary. Refreshments will be provided.

*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

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Mariast Academy is an International Baccalaureate World School



2005 2007 2008 2009



Notre Dame Preparatory School and Mariast Academy 1300 Giddings Road Pontiac, MI 48340

NOTRE DAME



NDPMA is on Twitter! (twitter.com/NDPMA) Get the latest news and updates on your cell phone by texting "follow NDPMA" to 40404. Scan the QR code at right with your smartphone QR-code reader to get to instructions. NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find link on the NDPMA web site: ndpma.org.



Non Profit U.S. Postage PAID Royal Oak, MI Permit 615