

# 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

## Catholic/Marist emphasized in plan

The Catholic and Marist foundations of Notre Dame continue to be a major focus as the school releases its latest six-year strategic plan.

Catholicity, technology and a renewed emphasis on diversity are just three of the many touchstones included in the latest strategic plan for Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy. The plan, which covers a six-year time period, was completed in January and, as before, focuses on issues related to finances, organizational structure, facilities and enrollment.

“Strategic planning really is everything non-academic: financial, branding and marketing, building infrastructure, and so on,” said NDPMA head of school Fr. Leon Olszamowski. “And since our recent ISACS accreditation process addresses the academic side, the two processes really complement each other. The timing of the two worked out perfectly this time around. Using the ISACS report and the strategic plan side-by-side as the two main testaments for the school will help us plot our way forward.”

Members of NDPMA’s board of trustees and the school’s senior administration crafted the plan with the help once again from Independent School Management (ISM) and its executive consultant, Dr. Walker Buckalew. ISM worked with Notre Dame during its last strategic planning in 2008.

The actual planning process took place

via working sessions held January 11-14, which was preceded by an extensive data-generation and data-collection process orchestrated by ISM.

NDPMA has always had a strategic plan, according to Olszamowski, “but the last two times we’ve used ISM as our chief outside consultant and we’ve found them to be very helpful,” he said. “They’ve actually given us the courage to put things in place that you wouldn’t necessarily find within a traditional Catholic school matrix.”

### PLAN’S MAJOR THEMES

The new six-year plan includes the following major themes:

- The school’s Marist leadership will seek to offer increasing opportunities for all constituencies—in particular, faculty, staff, trustees and parents—to learn and live the Catholic and Marist way of life, thereby generating increasing numbers of adult role models for NDPMA students.
- The school will strive to strengthen student services, including college advising, campus ministry and academic support and to expand the social counseling function in the middle and upper divisions.
- School administrators will seek to

*Please see PLAN, 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.*

LATEST UPDATE ON NEW LOWER DIVISION SCHOOL  
(See page 4)

# 2010 alum and future MD goes on medical mission to Honduras

Notre Dame Preparatory School graduate Grace Wood says trip was “life-changing”

It is probably true that some medical students planning to become doctors do so only because the occupation pays well. It is also probably true that a few feel obligated to become doctors because they may have a parent who is a physician. But most, thankfully, go into medicine for all the right reasons. Firmly in that category is Grace Wood, who says she can’t imagine a better way to spend her life than helping others in ways they cannot possibly help themselves.

And this 2010 NDP graduate, currently an undergrad at Loyola University majoring in biology and minoring in psychology with medical school in her future, is already helping those in desperate need of medical support. In fact, she spent the recent Christmas holiday break in Honduras as part of a medical mission

chapters at universities all over the world and they go to four countries: Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua and Ghana.”

Besides medical support, the organization provides eight other types of brigades, including architecture, business, environmental, human rights, finance, public health and water.

Wood says for her the experience was amazing. “Just indescribable! I still get excited just thinking about it.”

She didn’t really know what to expect as she first headed to Honduras and was quite nervous as well. Wood and her “brigaders” started out in a very poor community called San Lorenzo, which she said is a beach community on the Pacific coast of Honduras.

“We spent four days on site—two days in one village and two in another,” she says. “This trip was the most life changing and meaningful experience I have ever had.”

The group set up shop in a school in the local village. One classroom was used as a pharmacy, one was for triage (blood pressure, weight, height, temperature, etc.), and the doctors and dentists had their own classrooms.

“We took with us to distribute to the patients any medication you could think of—from ibuprofen to Benadryl, hydrocortisone cream and vitamins to anti-parasite medicine,” Wood said. “Every day we would be assigned to a different area. The people would already be lined up waiting for us when we got there, sometimes with long lines wrapping around buildings. They would tell us their stories and some of them walked for two hours in 100-degree weather just to wait for a few more hours to see us.”

Over the four days in San Lorenzo, Wood’s group saw a little less than 1,000 patients, providing all of them with medications, vitamins and any medical help they needed. Wood switched from station to station, sometimes taking blood pressure, working in pharmacy, taking temperature and spending time helping the doctors with whatever was needed.

“I loved doing triage because I was able to talk to the patients a little bit,” she said. “I don’t speak Spanish, but was able to pick up the basics, like ‘what’s your name?’ and ‘how are you?’ After I had exhausted what little Spanish I knew, they would smile at me, sometimes laughing, knowing I was trying. But they loved that I was trying to communicate with them.”

Global Brigades wasn’t Wood’s first time doing medical work as a volunteer. She spent the summer of 2012 volunteering in pediatric research at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak. “I spent most of my time at Beaumont in the neonatal intensive care unit and on the pediatric floor going on rounds with the doctors,” she recalls. “It was such an amazing opportunity because I got to see so many interesting and unique patients and stories. It was also great because I was able to spend a lot of time with the new residents, so I got to see what that was like as well.”



Notre Dame Prep graduate Grace Wood ('10), top center, with children from one of the Honduran villages she visited as part of the aid group Global Brigades.

group sponsored by Global Brigades, which is a nonprofit organization that spans North American and European universities. Global Brigades is the world’s largest student-led global health and sustainable development organization. It develops health initiatives and provides relief where there is limited access to healthcare, according to the organization’s website.

“I got involved with this program because I had always wanted to do a mission trip abroad, especially a medical one, and this was such a great opportunity,” Wood says. “There are Global Brigades

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## PLAN, from page 1

communicate through word and action the ways in which International Baccalaureate aligns fully with the school mission, particularly as the mission relates to Catholic identity, thereby integrating IB completely into the culture and fabric of the school.

- NDPMA plans to develop and implement a strategic initiative to attract, recruit and retain a more racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse student and parent body, faculty and leadership (board and administration) population.
- The board and senior administration will determine a capital project sequence as a subset of the master campus plan, and will undertake a major campaign designed to strengthen and expand NDPMA's facilities, thus enhancing the school's capacity to deliver and sustain its mission at the highest levels.

Notre Dame is already deep into fine-tuning a plan designed to attract, recruit and retain a more racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse student body as well as faculty and administration. Olszamowski said that work on a school-wide conversation to inform a "statement of diversity and inclusion" is ongoing and that the statement will include a clear, "Catholic-consistent" definition of diversity for the school on which this initiative will be based.

Technology enhancements also play a major role in the school's next six years, beginning almost immediately. A group of administration officials, led by Joanne Widmaier, academic technology coordinator and registrar for NDPMA, is developing a plan to achieve a state-of-the-art technology program, which will end with the school becoming a 1:1 computer tablet school at the end of three years.

"Starting with the lower division, by the time school starts next fall, all of our lower division students and teachers will have Apple iPads," says Olszamowski. "Beyond that, we will implement tablets in the other divisions hopefully by the end of three years. We are looking at Apple and other platforms for the other two divisions, but have not decided yet specifically which platforms or which software we will use. That's one of the things Joanne is working on."

Olszamowski also stressed the importance of Notre Dame's Catholic and

Marist identity and that it should occupy a major part of any strategic plan for the school. "We as members of the Marist Fathers and Brothers congregation are here for a mission that comes from our founder," he said. "And we believe we are able to bring our mission to the school in the unique and special way we do education."

He notes that during the school's ISACS accreditation process, the ISACS team said they noticed a definite special ambiance in our facilities. "They said it's really palpable here," Olszamowski said. "They felt a definite atmosphere with the kids and with the faculty and staff that you don't find anywhere else. That's really our Marist 'charism' that we bring to the school. So if we can't operate the school based on our Marist mission, then we really don't belong here!" He said it's critical that we follow Marist mission—in the style of Mary. He said it's why Notre Dame exists and why it will always be a part of any long-range planning for the school.

Another critical component of the six-year way forward is enrollment. Projections in the plan say that the school should experience a net increase of two students by the end of year two and six students in each of the next four years.

Andy Guest, NDPMA's vice president for advancement, said the enrollment projection is modest. "It would be accurate to say that our planning numbers are extremely conservative, not only from an enrollment standpoint but from a fundraising perspective," he said. "However, it would be fair to say that we fully expect to exceed both the enrollment and fundraising goals set forth in the plan. We believe it is always better to exceed expectations than to fall short, particularly when dealing with financial decisions."

Guest added that it is always a good idea to remain flexible when working on such projections. "While it is important to plan, there are some things that are simply unforeseen," he said. "These can



Expansion of the Pontiac campus is continuing. Notre Dame is moving the lower division from Waterford to a site about a block from the main campus. A major capital campaign to strengthen and expand NDPMA's facilities even further is currently under consideration.

be both positive and negative occurrences. We have done a good job over the years of managing the appropriate balance between strategic planning and market opportunities. Part of the success of the school is our ability to remain nimble in changing circumstances."

A booklet detailing the NDPMA six-year plan was developed and is being distributed to the entire school community. 📖



### NDP STUDENTS TAKE TWO OF FOUR STATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Notre Dame Prep student-athletes—seniors Madeline Blocki and Michael Broderick—earned two out of the four scholarships awarded this year by the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

Each school year the MIAAA awards four \$1,000 scholarships honoring top high school male and female student-athletes. Only student-athletes graduating during the current school year and who maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.50 as well as earn a varsity letter in at least two sports are eligible. 🏆

# New lower-school building on schedule

Notre Dame's head of school, Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m., provides an update on the project to build a new lower-division school a block from the main campus in Pontiac

By Rev Leon Olszamowski, s.m.

Since November 23, when last I wrote an article in The Blarney Stone, our school newsletter, pertaining to the new site for the lower division (grades jr.-kindergarten through 5th), motion has been fast and furious. First, AEW, of Shelby Township, our engineer and architect for the project, and our builder have submitted plans to the city of Pontiac and to the state of Michigan for approval. The site plan documents were approved by the city of Pontiac planning commission on February 6. The plans now are in the hands of the city engineer for final approval. Those final plans must also be sent to the state fire marshal, who has final say over the building of all school buildings in Michigan.

Assuming that our plans are approved as drawn, we will begin the renovations of the former church building almost immediately. Plans include a new roof and new external brick and siding. The inside will house a media/computer center and offices. The multi-purpose room will also serve as a lunchroom, assembly space for weekly masses, meeting room and after-school play area. We are planning on a small-sized basketball court as part of the multi-purpose room. CYO games will be played at one of our two main campus gyms until we have sufficient funds to build a full-size gym at the lower-division campus.

Forty percent of the new 12-classroom building is already in production in Goshen, Indiana. Sixty percent of the classroom building will be constructed


on-site as soon as the necessary components arrive. Two houses, the small brick building (1405 Giddings) just to the south of the church property (1425 Giddings), and the blue house, the old Giddings family farm house and horse barn (1397 Giddings), will be demolished and the entire property will be reworked to accommodate our new structures, parking lot and playfield. The occupants of the old Giddings family farmhouse were scheduled

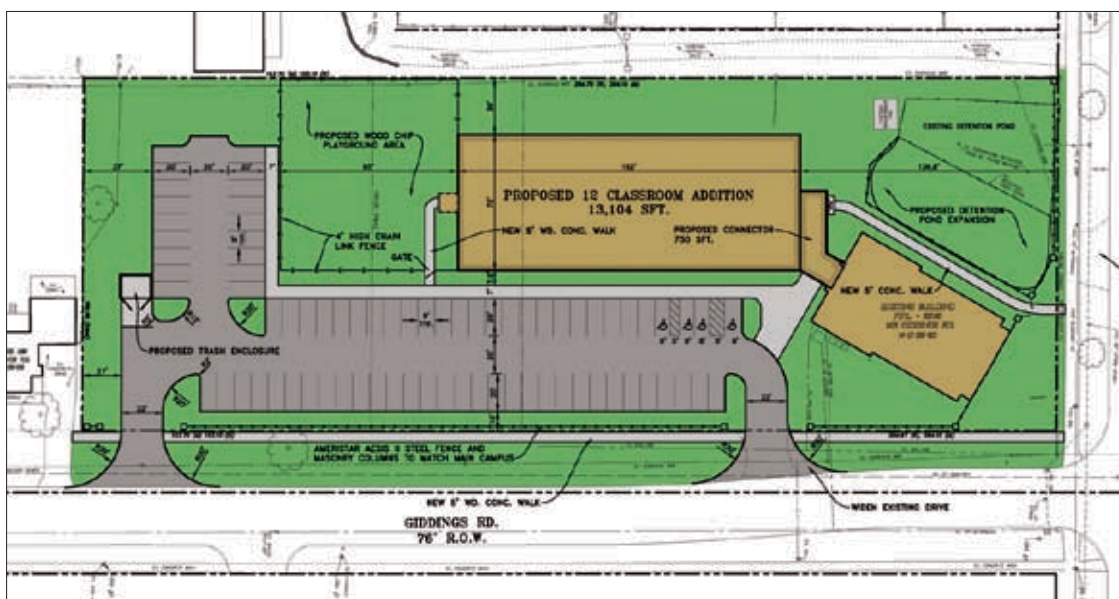
August. I think you will be delighted with the final product.

Our lease with St. Benedict Parish ends on June 30, 2013. We have already met with the pastor, Fr. Larry Sirosky, and have met with archdiocesan officers regarding the transfer of property, i.e., computers, desks, etc., to the new Pontiac site. Diana Atkins, the lower division principal, and I expect to have a general town hall meeting in the spring to discuss logistics

as we come closer to our summer-time move. We plan to celebrate a closing mass at St. Benedict Church and an opening blessing ceremony at the new site on the same day. This will serve as part of our 10th-anniversary celebration of the lower division.

We are currently offering an opportunity for families to make a donation to the lower-division project and to procure naming rights for any of the eleven remaining classrooms, media center, offices, multi-purpose room and playground area. One family has already secured naming rights to a classroom. If you are interested, kindly contact Andy Guest, our vice president for advancement. Just call 248-373-2171 or contact Andy at his email address: [aguest@ndpma.org](mailto:aguest@ndpma.org).

Timing and logistics will be worked out to ensure a seamless move from Waterford to Pontiac, but, as you are aware, hardly anything at any time goes forward without some hitch. So we ask the cooperation of all three divisions of the Notre Dame community to help make this lower division dream happen as smoothly as possible. 



Notre Dame's new lower-division building will feature 12 classrooms, a media center and large indoor activity area. Outdoors, the site will include a fenced-in wood-chip playground area and a large parking lot. Driveways will be configured to accommodate safe and easy student drop-off and pick-up.

to leave the property by February 28. Just after July 1, we will have purchased the property at 1389 Giddings Rd. which I call the "Tan House." This house will be kept for office space, and the remaining property will be used for additional storage or play space. The entire area will be fenced in similar to the upper/middle division campus.

We intend to close the Walton Blvd. entrance to the property and use two of the existing driveways on Giddings for student drop-off and pick-up. Start and end times will be staggered between the two campuses, and entrance to the lower division property is scheduled to be from the south end of the property, i.e., the entrance closest to the upper/middle division building. We expect to have the entire project completed for the start of school in

Wood plans to once again travel to Central America with Global Brigade, but in the meantime she is preparing to head to medical school and become an OB-GYN. She also gives kudos to her high school for preparing her for college thus far. “NDP definitely prepared me for my future,” she said. “It was a lot of work, but when I got to college, the workload didn’t feel like as much as it would have [without NDP]. “The classes were taught at such a high level that many of the classes I took freshman year at Loyola were like a review.”

She also says that NDP science teacher Jocelynn Yaroch definitely kept her interested in biology and that she prepared her well for college biology. “When we are taught things in my classes now that she taught us in high school, I still remember it,” she said. Also, Mr. Smith got me really interested in psychology, which I never thought I would be. I’m really glad because it encouraged me to pursue a minor in psych, which I love. It’s nice to take some classes that aren’t as intense as my bio classes but that are really interesting and are still relevant to my future career.”

# ISACS

## NDPMA RECEIVES RE-ACCREDITATION FROM ISACS

Keith Shahan, president of the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS), announced in February that Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy has fully complied with all of the ISACS standards for membership and is re-accredited as a member in good standing. He said the ISACS visiting team report on NDPMA “was reviewed thoroughly by the ISACS evaluation review committee” after which the executive committee of the association’s board of trustees recommended full accreditation. ISACS is a membership organization of more than 230 independent schools from 13 states in the U.S. Midwest region. Notre Dame has been ISACS-accredited since the school began in 1994-95 and shares such accreditation with Cranbrook, Country Day, Grosse Pointe Academy and The Roeper School.

## Community read day focuses on disability awareness

Just over one in four 20-year-old Americans will become disabled before they retire. Today, there are more than 36 million Americans classified as disabled, which is about 12% of the total population, and more than 50% of those disabled Americans are in their working years, from 18-64. (Source: Council for Disability Awareness)



Mike Harris, executive director of Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America, talks to students about how he became a paraplegic. He also discussed ways for young people to help those who are disabled.

With these statistics as background, Notre Dame’s middle-school last month hosted a “disability awareness day,” which exposed the 6th- through 8th-grade students to topics ranging from autism to alcoholism.

Speakers from Oakland University’s Center for Autism Research, Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America, Leader Dogs for the Blind and Paws with a Cause among others spoke to the kids during this year’s edition of the school’s “community read day.”

The students also raised \$1,400, which will send two children from the community to SCAMP, a camp for children with disabilities located in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Last year, NDMA’s community read day focused on the importance of fresh water and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. In 2011, the students studied the topics of worldwide hunger, health and nutrition.

The Filippis Foundation helped fund the activities for the school.

*The following are just a few of the many reflections by middle-division students after their community read/disability awareness day:*

“I learned that the only disability is a bad attitude. If you have a positive attitude it can conquer all disabilities. There is a way to do almost anything, even if it requires people’s help or special tools.” **Greg Turner, 8th grade**

“Today was definitely a learning experience, not just for myself, but for everyone else, too. I learned how fortunate I am to have arms and legs that work. I saw and experienced how hard it is to do things as a disabled person.” **Trevor Bishop, 8th grade**

“Today made me realize that disabilities can not only be an obstacle, but a door to an emotionally strong life.” **Mary Yanik, 7th grade**

“Disabilities affect people in many ways. It can limit what a person can do but also inspire them to do more.” **Thomas Robbins, 8th grade**

“Today impacted my life and made me think that although people may seem disabled on the outside, they are great people on the inside. Only a bad attitude disables a person.” **Dana Pangori, 8th grade**

“Disabilities affect people in positive and negative ways. It can limit people from certain things, yet also help them reach goals they didn’t know were possible.” **Mina Kambakhsh, 8th grade**

“Today was very inspirational to all of us, from the videos in the morning to the speakers we listened to. Today taught all of us to respect everyone no matter if they have cancer, are blind, deaf, or have autism; they are still people and they have feelings.” **Dane Kovaleski, 8th grade**

“Disabilities have always been looked upon as a burden. Maybe because they’re not ‘normal’ or ‘common,’ or maybe it’s because people see disabilities as a disadvantage. I used to think that, too. I guess I realized that disabilities make you stronger, they don’t define who you are.” **Asha Raghavan, 7th grade**



# NOTRE DAME

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Pontiac, MI 48340

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NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find link on the NDPMA web site: [ndpma.org](http://ndpma.org).



The new lower division 12-classroom building, shown at left in the illustration above, will be connected to an administration office building, which will include a media center and large activity area. The new structure, scheduled to open in August of this year, will be located on the corner of Giddings Rd. and Walton Blvd., about a block from Notre Dame's main campus.

See head of school Fr. Leon Olszamowski's update on page 4.