

# 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: 248-373-2573

## Safety and athletics

Safety is job one in Notre Dame's athletics department

After a typically exciting and exhilarating year and a half or so of athletics at Notre Dame, it's interesting and quite telling that the school's athletic director, Betty Wroubel, says that the most important thing accomplished over the last 12 to 15 months was that there were relatively few serious student-athlete injuries. And this from the coach whose volleyball team just won a state championship.

"Bottom line is that our focus on providing a safe, mission-driven program for our students has been keeping our

kids, for the most part, 'major-injury' free," Wroubel says. "A lot of that is due to our strength and conditioning program run by our trainer," she said. "I doubt that any other school has a more qualified or more caring trainer than long-time veteran Chris Polsinelli."

The organization that oversees all of Michigan's high school athletics, the Michigan High School Athletics Association, also agrees with Wroubel on the importance of safety. Jack Roberts, the executive director of MHSAA, says that when parents send their children to "our programs of school sports, most parents have one hope above all others. More than they want a winning team, even more than they want their child to get playing time and score points," Roberts says, "most moms and dads want (and many of them pray) that their child will be safe in our care."

Roberts' organization recently announced a new initiative at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year called "Four Thrusts for Four Years." The goal, according to MHSAA, is to position Michigan schools in the center of best practices for ensuring the health of students, today and beyond.

The following are the four focal points of the MHSAA four-year plan:

1. Implement heat and humidity management policies at all schools for all sports.
2. Require more initial and ongoing sports safety training for more coaches.
3. Revise practice policies generally, but especially for early in the fall season.
4. Modify game rules to reduce the frequency of the most dangerous play situations, and to reduce head trauma.

Reducing head trauma, specifically concussions, is now a major focus on both the amateur and professional levels. Both the MHSAA and the Catholic High School League have issued numerous directives to member schools on concussion awareness and treatment as they relate to the Michigan Sports Concussion Law, which went into effect in June of last year.

But Wroubel says Notre Dame has been in front of this issue for a number of years. "I think we have set the gold standard in concussion awareness and its treatment," she says. "A lot of that is due to Chris's work as well as the constant education the whole department has been getting over the years. Dean (Allen, assistant AD), Maureen (Whidden, assistant AD) and I have spent a lot of time learning all we

*Please see SAFETY, 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.

READ ABOUT A 2011 NDP ALUM WHO IS TAKING HER HIGH-SCHOOL AP PSYCH CLASS TO THE NEXT LEVEL (See page 2)

# Alum takes high school psych class to college

U-M junior Abby Lyng graduated from Notre Dame Prep in 2011. She says her experience with high school AP psychology led her to a major and possibly a career

**A**bigail “Abby” Lyng graduated from Notre Dame in 2011. She matriculated to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, unsure of a major or future career. But the fact that she was able to skip intro psychology during her freshman year at Michigan and instead take developmental psychology convinced her that the subject could provide a career path.

Lyng was able to jump ahead at U-M due in large part to the AP psychology course taught by John Smith that she took as a senior at NDP. “My first psychology course in college was developmental psychology and I immediately fell in love with the subject,” she says. “And of course my prior knowledge really helped. Since I believe that college is about finding something that you love to study and the fact that I continue to enjoy the subject, I have been taking psychology courses as my major ever since.”

Lyng’s minor studies are in linguistics, which she says she chose due to a genuine love for the spoken and written word. “I had always enjoyed language, either in English or in French, but I signed up for introductory linguistics at Michigan only because it was a requirement. However, I found that it was quite unlike anything I had encountered before and have continued taking classes in this field.”

In fact, she was just one class away from completing her minor at the time of this interview.

After graduating from U-M, Lyng says she is definitely planning for post-grad studies. “At this point, I am still torn between getting a doctorate in psychology or utilizing my linguistics minor to get a master’s degree in speech and language pathology in order to become a speech therapist,” she says. “In either case, I will be heading to graduate school.”

## DANCE MARATHON

Ever since Lyng has been at U-M, she has been involved with the university’s Dance Marathon, the largest student-run non-profit organization in the State of Michigan. Dance Marathon raises both monetary support and awareness for the needs of pediatric rehabilitation programs at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital in Ann Arbor and Beaumont Children’s Hospital in Royal Oak. At the end of each school year, hundreds of students stand on their feet and dance for 30 hours to raise money for C.S. Mott.

“The Dance Marathon organization is filled with people who are extremely dedicated to the cause of making the lives of children who have disabilities just a little bit better,” Lyng says. “Each one of us must raise at least \$300 by the time the marathon starts to

be allowed to take part in one of the most difficult and rewarding experiences you can imagine: a 30-hour dance marathon.”

She says everyone who participates in the marathon must go without sleep and stay on their feet for the entire 30-hour event. “The mantra ingrained in every dance marathoner is ‘FTK,’ or ‘for the kids,’” she says. “We do it all for the families whose children

benefit from our fundraising.” According to Lyng, last year the event raised nearly \$517,000.

When she’s not studying or dancing, Lyng keeps busy at a local Ann Arbor pre-school as a volunteer teacher’s aid for children with autism spectrum disorders. “The kids I work with are generally in their last year of special education before they are placed into the general education system,” she says. “Therefore, the teacher is very much focused on preparing them for integration into different schools by emphasizing the learning of generalized skills.”

Lyng says the autistic students fall under a very broad umbrella of autism spectrum

disorders. This means that each child has a very unique form of expression and attitude. “I found it to be a very special experience because these kids were so sweet and their tireless efforts to achieve specific skills absolutely amazed me,” she says.

“Interacting with them each week brought a bright spot to even my worst days. It definitely helped to point me in the direction of wanting to help children who need special attention.”

If all of this isn’t enough to keep her busy, Lyng recently was chosen to be an admissions tour guide at Michigan. She applied mostly because of her experience as a student guide at NDPMA open houses.

“I knew I enjoyed the experience of talking to others about Notre Dame Prep, so I couldn’t wait to show off the University of Michigan,” Lyng says. “I like to believe that my genuine interest in helping prospective students was why I was chosen for the job.”

Notre Dame also figured in Lyng’s ability to write well. “Mrs. Bembas’ AP Lit class was super influential in shaping me into the writer that I am today,” she says. “With a major in the social science field, writing papers is a part of almost every one of my courses. Without Mrs. Bembas having such high expectations for students, I would not be doing as well as I am now.”

## NOTRE DAME MEMORIES

Lyng has many great memories of her high school. “My teachers and classes were wonderful, and I still try to visit at least once a year,” she says. “Also, I think that supporting my high school alma mater is important. No matter what station you are at in life, giving back in some shape or form is always necessary. Entering college, I felt prepared to handle all of its rigors and it’s all thanks to my time at Notre Dame Prep.” 📷



NDP 2011 graduate Abby Lyng volunteers at an Ann Arbor school for children with autism spectrum disorders.



## SAFETY, from page 1

can on the subject and making sure our coaches are all up to speed as well.”

She also credits the proactive policies the school has had in place on educating the parental and student body. In general, Wroubel says, “I do feel that we have a good track record for the past five or six years with injury reduction. This in part is due to our beautiful fitness center, a full-time athletic trainer, and aggressive education for our coaches.”

Polsinelli agrees with Wroubel that the school has been out front in identifying and trying to reduce the injury rates of Notre Dame athletes. “In addition to the work we’re doing with concussions, I feel we do a really good job with ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injury prevention by way of our off-season and pre-season conditioning programs,” he says. “Also, having the personal trainers working with our athletes, in conjunction with what the school does, has really helped not only improve their performance, but decrease the chances of injury.”

## BIGGER AND STRONGER

Since Wroubel first came to the Pontiac campus in 1979 (when it was Pontiac Catholic, then Oakland Catholic), she says the nature of high school athletics has changed for sure. But on the general nature of the students themselves, eh, not so much, according to Wroubel.

“I do not see a huge change in kids from the early days,” she says. “Kids are kids. They are inquisitive, they want to have fun and they are very forgiving. However, in physical terms, they are getting better training and becoming

*“In addition to the work we’re doing with concussions, I feel we do a really good job with knee ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injury prevention by way of our off-season and pre-season conditioning programs.”*

*Chris Polsinelli, athletic trainer*

bigger and stronger.”

The sheer number of sports and teams available to Notre Dame students also has gotten much bigger since the 1970s and 1980s.

At the end of the 2012-13 school year, NDPMA had a total of 46 interscholastic high school athletic teams, four interscholastic high school athletic clubs (sideline cheer, dance/pom, equestrian, and co-op figure skating), and 24 interscholastic CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) athletic teams.

It is one of the largest independent school athletic programs in the state.

During the last school year, NDPMA student-athletes participated in 1,087 contests (368 home, 719 away); 556 students in grades 9 to 12 participated in at least one sport/club sport, which equals 79% of the student population. About 190 students in grades 5 to 8 participated in at least one sport/club sport. That equals 75% of the student population. And 39 students participated in the athletic-sponsored intramural program.

In addition, Wroubel’s department oversaw 118 paid coaching positions last year and coordinated 50 volunteer coach-

*Please see SAFETY, page 6*

## COACHES ASSOCIATION ENDORSES NEW GUIDELINES

The Michigan High School Football Coaches Association (MHSFCA) has endorsed USA Football’s Heads Up Football program to make the game better and safer for youth and high school players in the state. USA Football, based in Indianapolis, is the sport’s national governing body.

The MHSFCA, which is engaged with all 648 high school football programs in Michigan, joins the Indiana and Minnesota Football Coaches Associations as the first three such organizations to endorse Heads Up Football for all youth and high school football programs in their respective states. The National Federation of State Athletic Associations (NFHS) also has endorsed USA Football’s Heads Up Football program.

“The MHSFCA is pleased to support USA Football’s Heads Up Football program,” MHSFCA Executive Director Larry Merx said in a press release. “The health and safety of our student-athletes is our No.-1 priority. Heads Up Football advances that priority in a smart way through coach certification for a better, safer game. We are proud to stand with USA Football in Michigan.”

The MHSFCA formalized a proposal recently at a conference that would limit preseason football practices to one “collision” practice a day, not to exceed two collision practices each week during the season. Also formalized at their conference are guidelines limiting single practice ses-

*Please see MHSFCA, page 6*

The identification and reduction of concussion injuries continue to be a major focus of Notre Dame’s athletics department.





# Teaching life lessons a big part of athletics

Assistant athletic director Maureen Whidden believes that building character and learning life's lessons are important for today's student-athlete

**N**otre Dame's assistant athletic director Maureen Whidden says that among other things, playing sports builds character. In fact, she says that building character and helping to teach life's lessons are some of the main things on which the school's athletics department focuses.

"When we make decisions as a department, we always keep those things at the forefront," she says. "In addition, it is important to me to provide excellent customer service not only to our student-athletes but to our parents as well. For me and for Dean (Allen, also an assistant athletic director), it is also our job to know all of the MHSAA rules. When parents and students have questions, we always want to be available to help with the right answers."

Whidden came to Notre Dame in the summer of 2013 from Houghton Lake High School in Houghton Lake, Mich., where she served as athletic director for the 600-student school. She replaced Megan Thayer, who now is athletic director at Bishop Foley High School in Madison Heights. While at Houghton Lake, Whidden also served as a member

of the adjunct faculty at Baker College in Cadillac, Mich., and prior to that was an assistant manager of operations at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

She is a certified athletic administrator and holds a B.S. in business administration and an M.A. in sports administration from Central Michigan University. She moved to southeast Michigan before school started in the fall and enrolled her twin boys at Notre Dame Marist Academy's lower division.

"Troy and Blake turned 6 in November and currently they are in kindergarten," she says. "I am amazed at what they've learned so far since starting school in August. Blake has found a passion for learning Spanish. In fact, he taught his entire recreation soccer team to count in Spanish during stretching! Both my boys use Spanish interchangeably at home, sometimes without even realizing it!"

Whidden says she is very thankful to have her kids attend Notre Dame. "The administration and teachers are all powerful mentors for my children, not only with the excellent academics, but for learning

and practicing the Catholic faith as well."

As an assistant AD, Whidden's specific responsibilities include promoting student-athlete scholarship and leadership opportunities and providing support during the application process. "I also conduct the pre-season parent and coach meetings, publish and distribute weekly athletic and coaching newsletters, compile and publish the athletic end-of-year report, communicate eligibility of student-athletes to the MHSAA (Michigan High School Athletic Association) and CHSL (Catholic High School League), and manage the summer-camp registration process."

Whew!


In addition to these major office duties, you also will likely find her, Allen and athletic director Betty Wroubel helping with the setting up and tearing down of games on nights and weekends. It's not all work, though, as Whidden says she gets a huge kick out of watching the kids compete. "There is something about watching an athlete have an 'a-ha' moment during the season when he or she connects everything they have been taught with their hard work and determination."



Whidden thoroughly enjoys being part of the Notre Dame experience and feels completely comfortable on campus. "The Notre Dame community has embraced me from the moment my family and I stepped foot on campus," she says. "And I believe in the school's mission."

As for the future, in the long term, Whidden wants to continue her career in athletics administration. "I also see myself continuing to be involved with the MHSAA by serving in leadership roles so that the positive relationship our school already has with that organization continues to thrive."

In the short term, she is looking


forward to heading up the school's intramurals program next year as well as a student leadership class she will be teaching in the fall. "The leadership class is an exciting new opportunity for students and I am very happy to be a part of it." 

## Board approves diversity statement



At a recent meeting, Notre Dame's board of trustees formally approved an official diversity statement for the school. The statement, which has been published in its entirety on the Notre Dame website, begins as follows: "Notre Dame, guided by


the spirit and teachings of the Catholic Church and Society of Mary, actively seeks students, families, faculty, staff and trustees of diverse backgrounds who are committed to the formation of a community of inclusion that respects the dignity of every individual."

For the full statement, go to the school's website and click on the "About Us" tab and then "Mission and Philosophy." 

## Notre Dame senior one of only four in state with scholarship

Notre Dame senior Max Schwegman was named one of four senior student-athletes in Michigan to earn the 2014 Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAAA) scholarship.

The \$1,000 grant is part of an annual MIAAAA program that helps defray the college expenses of exceptional graduating seniors as they make their way to colleges and universities in the fall.

A two-sport (football and track) athletic and academic standout for the Fighting Irish, Schwegman also was named a state winner in the Wendy's High School Heisman program, one of only two from Michigan. 



## Carlson picks up All-American honor




Katherine Carlson, a junior outside hitter for the state-champion Notre Dame Prep volleyball team, has earned first-team All-America honors from MaxPreps for the 2013 volleyball season. Out of more than 400,000 high school volleyball athletes nationwide, Carlson's honor puts her in the top half of one percent of that group.

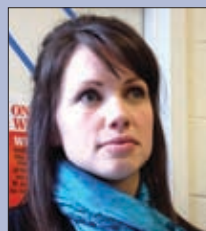
According to MaxPreps, to be a high school All-America "you must have made a massive impact on your high school team. 'Massive' is subjective, but at a minimum requires that you be the best player on your team and one of the top three to five

players in the state regardless of class."

In January, Carlson finished a close second in PrepVolleyball.com's National High School Junior of the Year award, which has never been won by a Michigan player.

Carlson's teammate, senior Danielle McCormick, also received special recognition on the MaxPreps All-America list. 


## Notre Dame Marist Academy teacher named one of 200 nationwide for fellowship



Notre Dame Marist Academy middle division science teacher Katherine Thomas has been selected for the 2013-14 fellowship program in the prestigious National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) New Science Teacher Academy. She is one of only 200 in the United States chosen by NSTA, the largest professional organization in the world

promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning.


Selected from more than a thousand applications nationwide, Thomas and 199 other Fellows will participate in a host of science-related activities and professional learning opportunities designed to help promote quality science teaching, enhance teacher confidence and classroom excellence and improve teacher content knowledge.

NSTA collaborated with The Dow Chemical Company, Lockheed Martin, the American Honda Foundation and the Bayer USA Foundation on this program. 

## Two seniors named National Merit Scholarship finalists

Two members of Notre Dame Prep's Class of 2014 were named finalists in the 2014 National Merit Scholarship program.

NDP seniors Kathleen Finn and Ben Sutkiewicz now will compete for 8,000 scholarships worth more than \$35 million that will be awarded in the spring.

More than 30,000 students across the country applied last year for the National Merit Scholarship program. 





# NOTRE DAME

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

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



Notre Dame  
Preparatory  
School and Marist  
Academy is an  
International  
Baccalaureate  
World School.

*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](mailto:mkelly@ndpma.org).

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

*A world of education*



NDPMA is on Twitter! ([twitter.com/NDPMA](https://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 a link on the NDPMA web site: [ndpma.org](http://ndpma.org).



### **SAFETY, from page 3**

ing positions.

"You have to have a great staff to coordinate and run a program our size," Wroubel says. "Along with Dean and Maureen, we have some great department mainstays in both Mary Jo Leseman (administrative assistant) and Duane Holmes (assistant to athletics), who work tirelessly to ensure that our activities and events go off without a hitch."

Wroubel says the school's parental community, head of schools and coaches also are critical to the department's success. "Our booster club and especially its officers provide tremendous help and resources and are a model for other organizations," she says. "Fr. Leon as president of the school oversees the entire department. I have never experienced or witnessed in other schools the level of wisdom and support that he gives to our program."

"Of course our coaches are key to running a quality program," she adds. They are in contact with the kids on a day-to-day basis and without them and the sharing of their time and talents our program would not be as successful as it is both in and out of the athletic arena."

And finally, Wroubel, who also coached a Notre Dame Prep volleyball team to a Class B championship in 2007, says that nearly as important as safety is the school's focus on creating an environment "that enhances opportunities to educate, reinforce, and practice the characteristics included in our mission statement, which states that we must work to 'form Christian people, upright citizens and academic scholars.' We take that responsibility very seriously." 🇺🇸

### **MHSFCA, from page 3**

sions to three hours and total practice time per day to five hours.

USA Football's Heads Up Tackling technique was developed with contributions of USA Football's Tackle Advisory Committee, which includes Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald, UCLA head coach Jim Mora, former NFL running back Merrill Hoge, Miami Christopher Columbus High School head coach Chris Merritt, and sports psychologist Dr. David Yukelson. 🇺🇸



### **GRAND ANNIVERSARY DINNER PLANNED FOR APRIL**

Please join the Notre Dame community for a fun, casual, adult evening to celebrate the Grand Anniversary of Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy.

Saturday, April 12, 2014

The San Marino Club  
1685 E. Big Beaver Road in Troy

Cocktails • Dinner • Entertainment • Dancing

This will be a night of celebrating the past and looking forward to a great future!

Ticket price: \$55 per person