

# 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

In late 2011, the NDPMA board of trustees gave its stamp of approval to a plan to move the school's lower division to property closer to the two divisions in Pontiac. Below, the head of schools gives an update on where that plan is currently.

*By Rev. Leon M. Olszamowski, s.m., Ph.D.,  
President*

**Y**ou may remember that last year we unveiled a plan to move Notre Dame Marist Academy—Lower Division to directly across Giddings Road on a parcel of land owned by the Missionary Baptist Church. In late January, we were informed by the church that, contrary to its original intention, the church community decided not to sell us a parcel of property. This constituted the first major obstacle on our journey to move the lower division.

With that we began to look for other parcels of property near the Pontiac campus. Finding none suitable, we turned to the Archdiocese of Detroit on whose property our Pontiac campus sits. We asked if we would be able to use a portion of Archdiocesan land at the south end of our Pontiac campus near Perry Street for the lower division. We were initially led to believe that building there would be an easy process. However, at a March meeting with the Archdiocesan Consultors we were

told that, despite the fact that the archbishop and his Consultors thought it was logical to make the move and that such a move would accrue to the benefit of our school and Catholic education in metro Detroit, we would not be given permission to do so because of the Archdiocese loan covenants remaining from the Vision 2000 campaign that included continuous occupancy of the St. Benedict site in Waterford where our lower division is currently located. We informed the Archdiocese that we would remain an additional year at the St. Benedict site to fulfill our negotiated lease, which would end June 30, 2013, but that we would not sign another lease on that property. We agreed to put off the move until the fall of 2013. This constituted our second major obstacle on our journey.

The Board of Trustees then sought to purchase a piece of property owned by Lawrence Tech that stretched from the AutoZone wall north abutting onto Marist Fathers' property that runs north of the bend in Giddings Road to our

tennis courts. We are currently in negotiations with Lawrence Tech to purchase that property, but the property will be set aside to further service our sports programs. We would like acquire the five usable acres from Lawrence Tech to build a couple of ball diamonds and an additional six tennis courts. We decided that the Lawrence Tech land would be a good option for the lower school move, but we continued to search for other parcels of land.

We continued looking and waiting for land to become available. A few months ago 1425 Giddings Road went up for sale. This parcel of land at the southwest corner of Walton Boulevard

*Please see United, page 3*

## United divisions



Main entrance to what will become the Notre Dame Marist Academy—Lower Division. The building is located on the corner of Walton Blvd. and Giddings Rd., not far from the main campus.

*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 ALUM RETURNS TO ADVANCE AN  
INSTITUTION HE DEARLY LOVES  
(See page 4)

# UND sophomore has ‘incredible’ internship

2011 Notre Dame Prep grad starts her second year at the University of Notre Dame with a wealth of experience gained from an internship at the Vatican.

Alex Genord '11 (NDP) is entering her sophomore year at the University of Notre Dame, a place she's dreamed about since she was in the eighth grade at Holy Family Regional School in Rochester Hills.

"And I stuck with that dream throughout high school," she says. "The University of Notre Dame's high academic standards motivated me to do the best I could in school and on standardized tests to make sure I fit the profile of the students the university regularly accepts. When it came time to start deciding where to apply junior year, Notre Dame was right at the top of my list along with a handful of other schools, including Georgetown."

But she could feel what a special place Notre Dame was from the first few minutes on her campus visit and she knew it was somewhere she could call home for four years.

"I absolutely love my 'home under the dome' and I haven't regretted or doubted my choice for a second. I am a double major in political science (international relations) and economics, and I have a minor in politics, philosophy and economics (PPE)," she said.

With such a heavy academic load, Genord still finds time for extracurriculars. She was a four-year soccer player at ND Prep, and now she's playing in South Bend on co-rec and interhall teams, and she plays interhall flag football as well. She's also a member of the Model United Nations club on campus, and has traveled to conferences in Chicago and at Harvard last year.

But what likely has been the most exciting part of her still-young college career was a two-month internship this summer at the Vatican where she worked in the Office of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, an organization within the Vatican that is responsible for all of the fundraising for the conservation and restoration of the artwork in the Holy See collection.

"As an intern in the office, I worked on a wide variety of different tasks, including writing and editing articles, and restoration updates for some of the office's internal publications," she said. "I also helped with the publication and mailing of the office's new newsletter, organized information for the office's website, and promoted donor relations, especially during donor visits to the

museum and office."

Genord said living in Rome for those two months was an eye-opening experience and so different from her life here at home or at school. "I lived by myself in an apartment that was a 15-minute walk from St. Peter's Square, and a 25-minute walk to the entrance to the Vatican Museum, which is where I entered to get to work. Living by myself was probably one of the most different parts of my experience. I worked Monday through Friday, so a big part of my day was obviously being in the office, but I also had errands to do which aren't regular parts of my routine, such as grocery shopping, going to the laundromat and cooking dinner."

She also took a beginner's Italian class, which she said was a lot of fun and that really helped her communicate with the locals. In fact, she enjoyed the class so much, she's added an Italian language class to her fall schedule at UND.

Genord said her internship at the Vatican was both an incredible experience and an honor. "One of the best parts of my experience was just having the privilege to walk through the Vatican Museums every morning and into the Apostolic Palace, where the Patrons Office is located. I could see the pope's private residence from the windows of the office! Regular days in the office often turned into something a lot more special, including the opportunity to see the beautiful and historic Pauline Chapel, one of the private chapels of the pope and the site of Michelangelo's last two frescoes."

She saw parts of the Apostolic Palace that are rarely seen by outsiders, especially young lay people, and she thoroughly enjoyed going into the restoration labs of the museums.

"The restoration process isn't one that most people think about when they visit a

museum, but it truly makes such a difference in our museum experiences," she said. "I have gained a lot of respect for restorers and I think it would be an incredible job for someone who was interested in art. The restorers are artists, historians and scientists all in one, and I could tell the passion that they have for their job after speaking to them for only a few minutes."

Genord's international experience has only reinforced what she thinks might be her career after college. "I would like to work in the public sector in some capacity after graduation. I would love to work for the State Department or another governmental agency and be involved in foreign policy utilizing my international rela-



Alex Genord '11 (NDP), left, with Marco Pratelli, one of the restorers in the Painting Restoration Laboratory of the Vatican Museums. Genord spent two months this past summer interning in Office of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums.

*Please see Genord, page 6*

## United, from page 1

and Giddings is a little over 1.2 acres and currently has the former 4,500-sq.-ft. Calvary Church (Victory Center) as the sole building on the property. Since this parcel and building constitutes less area than we will ultimately need for an expanded lower division, we intend to purchase at least one other parcel of land to the west or south of the church for additional parking and play field space. During the week of August 5, the Board of Trustees voted to purchase this parcel of land, and convert the church, its offices and meeting room into a large all-purpose room, school offices and media center, thus providing a third of the permanent space needed for a school building.

We also plan to revamp the exterior of the church building and parking lot, adding greenery and suitable fencing around the property perimeter. Following our already agreed-upon plan, we plan to lease a ten-room modular building with restrooms to provide the necessary classroom space. A connector hallway will be built between the office/media center and the modular building.

It is our intention to keep the modular building for a few years to gauge the size of the population and permanent space we will ultimately need to accommodate. We consider this to be Phase I of our process. The timing of this phase will also afford us the opportunity to raise the funds necessary for a permanent structure. Phase II will involve the building of a total permanent structure to accommodate our projected enrollment. Our expansion plans include the purchase of more adjacent parcels of land up to about six acres. The Phase I building configuration will give us space for about 150-160 students with

an average of around 20 students per classroom. The Phase I plan also calls for three specials rooms, a media center and large meeting room—some of which will be created from the former church building space.

The Board of Trustees has approved the purchase of the site at 1425 Giddings



The building in which the Notre Dame Marist Academy's lower division will be based is viewed from the north across Walton Blvd. The offer to purchase the property has been accepted by its current owner.

Road and also has approved the purchase of an additional parcel of land to accommodate playground space and more parking. The motion to purchase the property and an additional parcel of land has been approved by the Board of Directors of the Marist Fathers of Detroit, Inc. On August 29, our offer for the parcel at 1425 Giddings Road was accepted by the current owner, and we hope to close by mid-September. We also have put in offers for the parcels at 1405 and 1357 Giddings Road to complete the purchase of land for the lower division. We hope to have responses from the owners soon.

School officials have already brought the idea before the Pontiac Planning Commission and they are very much in support of our expansion. We hope to present a site plan to them at the

October Planning Commission meeting. Should the site be approved, we will begin the interior renovation of the church/office building during the fall and winter and complete the exterior cosmetics during the spring/summer. We expect to attach the modular to the renovated meeting room/media center/school offices in the late spring or early summer with occupancy by the fall of 2013. The entire cost of this project will be about \$700,000—well within our financial means. With the completion of this project, we will have brought our three divisions within very short walking distance of each other.

You probably have a million questions in mind. We have probably thought of most of them already as we moved through this process. Just four examples that we already know will be necessary are staggered starts and endings of the school day between current Pontiac campus and the lower division, and lunches will continue to be serviced from the upper/middle division building. PE and games can be played in the multi-purpose room which is 18 feet in the center and 12 feet at the outer walls. The playground equipment belonging to Notre Dame will be brought to the new campus. An appropriate security fence will surround the property so that the children are safe at all times. We also hope to position the new playground area away from the main roads.

As the process unfolds, I will do my best to keep you up to speed. Of course, lower division principal Diana Atkins will be a major source of information for parents as well. Please continue to pray for our success in this venture. 🙏

## NEW MEN'S VARSITY BASKETBALL COACH

Notre Dame Prep's athletic department has hired Whitney Robinson as the new men's varsity basketball coach. Robinson is a graduate of Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods ('98) and Central Michigan University ('03).

He comes to Notre Dame after four years as a basketball coach at Walled Lake Central High School in Walled Lake, Mich. Prior to this coaching experience, he was the coordinator and director of the Whitney Robinson Basketball Camps and assistant coach for Providence Boys and Girls AAU Basketball.

"I'm very excited to be the new coach at NDP," said Robinson. "I fell in love with NDP instantly! The campus is amazing—likewise are the faculty, staff and student body. My high school years at NDHS (Harper Woods) were seriously some of the best years of my life! And I'm looking forward to duplicating those sentiments for the current and future student-athletes at NDP." 🙏



# Alum returns to help advance school



“Who IS that guy?!” Have you ever wondered about that well-dressed, erudite, friendly and personable “young” man who is at just about every school function and who regularly travels the hallways but doesn’t teach a class?

Urbane to a fault but always ready with a handshake and a smile, he’s Frank Castronova, Notre Dame’s annual fund director.

And like almost-too-many-to-count others working at this institution, Castronova graduated from Notre Dame—in his case, Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods. Also, like his fellow alums here, he felt compelled to return to ND and the Marists because of what he gained from his own four years in high school.

“They gave me the tools I needed to succeed educationally and professionally,” he says. “I consider my service to the school my way of showing my appreciation to the Marists.”

Castronova grew up on the east side, first in the Nortown neighborhood of Detroit—“two doors down from where my father grew up”—then to East Detroit (now Eastpointe). He attended Pleasantview Elementary and Kelly Junior High

schools before his family moved to St. Clair Shores. Then it was on to Notre Dame, from which he graduated in 1989. He attended Wayne State University, earning a BA in English and a master’s degree in library and information science.

The oldest of three children in his family, Castronova has a sister who went to Regina High School and a brother who graduated from South Lake HS in St. Clair Shores. Both of his parents are native Detroiters—dad’s a researcher and mom’s a nurse.

So how does an English major get to be an annual fund director? “Good question,” he says, and he’s ready with an abridged account of his professional résumé.

“Like many people in this business, my original career goal definitely was not to be a fundraiser. After college, I became a researcher at Gale Research, a reference-book publisher, and eventually became one of their senior editors.”

But then when the economy took a downturn, he was one of about 200 people at Gale whose jobs were eliminated. “So obviously I needed to find something else,” he said. “A few months later, thankfully, I landed a job as a prospect researcher at Wayne State University, providing information on donors and prospects to the school’s fundraisers, eventually becoming one myself.”

## **Fundraising**

It’s a field he really enjoys. “It excites me to see people passionate enough about a cause or an institution to financially support it.” After WSU, Castronova earned a position in the development office at Cranbrook Schools in Bloomfield Hills and, when an opportunity came up to join NDPMA in a similar capacity, he literally jumped at it.

Andy Guest, Notre Dame’s vice presi-

dent for advancement, recalls that when he was interviewing prospects for the AF director position, Castronova was by far the most enthusiastic. “Frank literally bounced into the building. You could tell he felt right at home. He was like a kid in the candy store!”

He joined the staff in August 2011 and his first day of work was at the faculty/staff offsite meeting. “I knew from day one I was at home,” he said. “My first impression was of friendly, welcoming colleagues who cared very much for the mission of the school and for the students. Once classes started later that month, I also was inspired by the energy of the students. The impression I get from the kids is that they really, really love their school.”

With a year under his belt now, Castronova, 41, has no regrets. “I love it here. But still there are challenges,” he says, though not any different than what development people see at other non-profits that rely on a steady stream of donations.

“I think the most significant challenges are to inspire people to make their first gift to the institution, to increase their giving as time passes, and, if they are parents, to continue to support the school even after their kids graduate,” he said. “Also, while alumni participation is growing, it’s slower than it should be.”

“This fall, with the help of parent volunteers, we’ve got members of the parent community who will follow up with each other on the school’s annual fund initiative. There is plenty of research in our business that says that people are more likely to make a gift if the ‘ask’ comes from someone they know well. That’s why I’m looking forward to getting parent volunteers at all grade levels as well as alumni volunteers.”

## **‘Fun’-raising**

While fundraising can be a 24/7 occupation, Castronova does manage to fit in a fairly active life away from the school. A Ferndale resident for 15 years, he and his wife, Gaye, love to do all sorts of things around metro Detroit.

“We both love the energy of the city itself and urban life, which is why we chose to buy a house close to Detroit. We’ve had season tickets to WSU’s Hilberly Theatre for more than 10 years, and I always look forward to the next play on the schedule. I enjoy watching the actors—all graduate students at WSU—go through their three

years on that stage.”

Castronova says he and his wife also love good food but hardly ever cook at home. “We eat out almost daily, which is our main vice, and there are plenty of outstanding options within walking distance of our home. And I spend most of my at-home down time reading, mostly nonfiction, and hanging out with our cats. I’m also a big Tigers fan and love classical music. “If you stop by my office on campus, it’s a pretty sure bet that my radio is either tuned to a game or to WRCJ!”

### Happy to be back at Notre Dame

All in all, Castronova feels really blessed to be doing what he does where he does it.

“Notre Dame has been a big part of my life and there are many former teachers who’ve had a big influence on me. However, I hesitate to name specific teachers because there is only so much room in The Blarney Stone. “But I can’t not mention a certain one of them. Fr. Leon, who taught me Latin, philosophy and advanced word processing at NDHS, was tough yet gentle, always encouraging me to do my best. And you know what, he hasn’t changed a bit!”

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Homecoming: Friday, Sept. 28

Many activities, including an alumni tent and special recognition for a Notre Dame alum who was a three-time Olympian. Gates open 6:00 p.m., game time 7:30 p.m.



#### Oktoberfest: Saturday, Oct. 6

6:00 p.m. at the Pontiac campus. \$50,000 Super Raffle drawing will held at 9:00 p.m. Tickets \$30.00 per person and include a barbeque buffet dinner, beer, wine, live music, dancing and door prizes. Dress is fun casual. Adults 21+ only. RSVP by Sept. 17 by calling Joan Kopytek in the advancement office at 248-373-2171, ext. 2.

## Science labs renovated

Work finished in mid-August on the new science labs at the Pontiac campus as new cabinets and special tables were installed. The administration approved the complete renovation of the science and chemistry labs, which, among the many major steps taken in the project, included the conversion of the biology lab in room C-3 to a chemistry lab. This means that the school’s two chemistry labs are adjacent to one another and the biology labs also are together in the B-wing.

Additional exhaust/fume hoods and fans have been added to the lab along with new gas and water lines, lighting and flooring.

The total cost of the renovation is estimated at about \$200,000, the majority of which was donated by the Jurkiw and Schwabauer families.



## Work on sand volleyball courts completed



Special sand was used in the sand volleyball courts.

Construction work has been completed on the new sand volleyball courts planned for Notre Dame’s Pontiac campus. Located between the softball and baseball fields, the area features two regulation-size volleyball courts side by side. The cost of the courts was donated primarily by two families from the Notre Dame community.

According to school athletic director, Betty Wroubel, the courts are an integral part of conditioning for all sports at Notre Dame, not just volleyball.

“We think first and foremost it will be great for conditioning for all programs here,” she said. “Plus it will be included into the PE curriculum for both the high school and ND Marist Academy. And it also could be used by both our parent and alumni communities. It’s really going to be fun!”

Wroubel says she doesn’t think any other high school in the area has such a facility “so it’s still another great and unique thing about Notre Dame.”

## Graduating class sets new record in scholarships

To date, more than \$13 million in college/university scholarships and grants have been offered to the Notre Dame Prep graduating class of 2012, which numbered 159 students. This is a record amount in total for the school and the \$80,000+ per-student average exceeds the per-student average of 17 previous NDP graduating classes.

Also, this year’s graduating class logged over 20,000 hours in community service—once again proving that besides turning out academic scholars, Notre Dame continues to graduate “Christian people and upright citizens.”



## Another perfect ACT at Notre Dame

Eric LaRose, a senior at Notre Dame Preparatory School, scored a perfect 36 on his ACT — the highest score available — and the now the fifth student in recent years from ND Prep who has achieved such perfection.



According to test administrator ACT, Inc., less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all test takers earn the top score. In 2011, only 704 students of more than 1.6 million test-takers earned a 36.

It was announced in April that LaRose’s fellow senior Joe Soisson earned a perfect 36 on his ACT. Last year, Matt Siatczynski ‘12 (NDP) scored a 36. In 2010, Jon Sheperd scored a 36, and Ryan McIntosh, who graduated from NDP in 2009, also achieved a 36 on his ACT.

**Genord, from page 2**

tions and languages education. I think that my passion for these areas of study and my curiosity and desire to continuously learn and improve will help make me successful in whatever field I choose to pursue.

“By the way, all of the social science classes I took at Notre Dame Prep made me confident in my choice of majors, and the first time I was exposed to economics was the economics class I took at NDP! Both the classes and the teachers I had at NDP made me excited to continue in that area of study.”

She notes that she misses NDP and many of her teachers there.

“All of the teachers I had in the International Baccalaureate program made a special impact on me and the program would have been exponentially more difficult if they hadn’t been there to push us, support us and be willing to spend so much time and effort helping us. I am so grateful for their commitment, passion and dedication to teaching.

“I felt so well prepared for my first year at UND and I’m confident that the foundation built at ND Prep will continue to be incredibly helpful going forward.”



Genord is in the Vatican Gardens in front of one of Pope John Paul II’s favorite places to pray.

**TWO NEW ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS NAMED IN UPPER DIVISION; NEW ASSISTANT AD**

Notre Dame Preparatory School announced this summer that Marty Simmonds, formerly an assistant athletic director, has moved from athletic administration to school administration and that Nick Kator also has taken on administration duties in addition to teaching and student leadership. They form the school’s new “discipline team” and replace Fr. Strasz, who will be on sabbatical, and Kim Anderson, who will be in the classroom full time. Dean Allen has been hired to replace Simmonds as assistant athletic director.



Marty Simmonds



Nick Kator



Dean Allen



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NDPMA also is on Facebook! Find link on the NDPMA web site: ndpma.org.



*A world of education*

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