

THE blarney stone

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

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Helping students navigate school, life

In early November, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation (House Bill 4181) that affects the 150 hours of professional development counselors must go through when they renew their licenses. With the new rules, at least 25 P.D. hours must be on improving the college preparation and selection process and another 25 hours must be on career counseling. According to the new law, it applies to those renewing their high school guidance counselor credentials two years after January 2018, when the new rules take effect.

“Equipping students with the tools and resources they need to decide on a career path and finding the right avenue to get there is critically important for long-term success,” Snyder said in a news release posted after the signing ceremony. “This bill helps school counselors better serve students by expanding the focus on the diverse career and educational options that are available.”

For Notre Dame’s counseling group, headed by Vlado Salic, the new rules mean business as usual. That’s because, Salic said, his staff already is in compliance or will be shortly.

“I do not expect the new bill will have a big impact on our department since most of us have already either completed the MCAN (Michigan College Access Network) program or are in the process,” he said.

MCAN is an organization that works to increase postsecondary readiness in Michi-

Despite stress, long hours and new requirements from Lansing, Notre Dame counselors can’t imagine working anywhere else — and students are benefiting.



Notre Dame Prep counselor Jason Whalen, right, chats with senior Dominic Mistretta. Whalen is one of five counselors in the school's upper division.

gan and was one of the new legislation’s early backers. “We already do many of the items that are included in the bill,” Salic added. “We always seek out and try to take advantage of staff development opportunities as they become available. We actually welcome these changes as they will benefit many other students in Michigan who may not have access currently to a counseling function like ours.”

Besides Salic, Notre Dame Prep’s counseling “function” currently includes Stacy Golliff, Jason Whalen, Margie Bond and Jamie Rodda along with Denise Mahoney

as administrative support. Jessica Yauch handles middle division counseling.

“Golliff and Rodda work with freshmen and sophomores and they focus on adjustment issues, self-awareness, healthy lifestyles and career exploration,” Salic said. “Whalen, Bond, and I take care of the juniors and seniors, focusing more on college and career research, readiness for the next step and the college-application process.”

He said that they all do personal coun-

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Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its diverse student body a Catholic and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.



**'MARCH ON TO VICTORY' UPDATE
BEGINS ON PG. 4**

Serving others

Notre Dame alum takes a strong stand for nonprofits.

The world of nonprofits is one fraught with peril as there is an infinite number of causes worthy of support but a seemingly finite number of those willing to contribute to those causes. Ensuring that aid reaches needy individuals or organizations is a tough job requiring trained development personnel willing to do the hard work that has as its essence the often uncomfortable task of asking others for money.

Working hard, however, doesn't appear to be a problem for 2002 Notre Dame grad Kristen Rossi, who currently is vice president of development and communications at the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Michigan.

She said that despite the sometimes frustrating and difficult work, she loves working for nonprofits because it's challenging and because of its diversity — diversity of people and diversity of need.

"I've had the great opportunity to step into many different spheres and wear many different hats in the nonprofit sector," she said recently in an interview with the Notre Dame Alumni Association. "Apart from where I work, I'm also engaged in other local nonprofits as a volunteer. I serve on the board of a human-services organization, Community Social Services of Wayne County. I also sit on a committee for the Eastern Market and I'm very active in the Detroit Boat Club Crew."

WANTED TO BE A TEACHER

Rossi's interest in development and fundraising actually began back in college while working toward an expected career in education.

"I went to Western Michigan University and absolutely loved my time there," Rossi said. "Western was a perfect choice for me. I wanted a college on the smaller side, but not tiny. I wanted to be outside of my hometown, but not too far. And I wanted to be a teacher at that time, and WMU had a great teaching program."

But the path to becoming a teacher ended up being rather short.

"I must have changed my major five times or more at Western," she said. "I wanted something that wasn't quite as scripted but still very action-oriented. I just happened to take a class in nonprofit leadership during my junior year of college and I was immediately smitten. I ended up minoring in that subject and that drove me into a master's program in public administration with a focus on nonprofit management."

PERFECT GRAMMAR AND READY FOR ANYTHING

Rossi recalls how she felt totally ready for the rigors of college when she first arrived on campus in Kalamazoo.

"I felt very well-prepared in my first semester at college," she said. "I remember getting back my first writing assignment in advanced Spanish, and my professor congratulated me on having perfect grammar. I attributed that to Senora Tesada and Senora Anderson at NDP."

Rossi also noticed that many of her fellow students at Western were struggling during their first semester. But in her case, she felt

totally prepared due to some really great teachers at Notre Dame.

"I knew Mrs. Anderson when she was Ms. Rose and she was definitely one of my favorites and just an amazing Spanish teacher," Rossi recalled. "Mrs. Bembas taught me the enormously valuable five-paragraph essay and really helped foster my love of reading. And, of course, Mr. Simon made political science so much fun!"



Kristin Rossi '02 (NDP) currently is vice president of development and communications at the Alzheimer's Association of Greater Michigan.

FIRST NONPROFIT JOB

Meanwhile, as she was going through her master's track at WMU, Rossi picked up her first actual job at a nonprofit in the university's Foundation, which promotes and provides donor investments to the school.

"I received a crash course in fund development and learned what it actually takes to execute big initiatives," she said. "During my four years at the Foundation, I learned the importance of community connections and how to lead a team. This also was the first place that I truly felt part of a wider network. I joined a local board, I volunteered on an equal-rights campaign and felt totally connected to the Kalamazoo community."

She was tempted to stay in the WMU/Kalamazoo community after completing her Master of Public Administration degree because it had become like home to her. Instead she took a big leap, literally and figuratively, and she moved to Italy for two years to teach English as a second language with Berlitz.

"That really was fulfilling another one of my dreams of living abroad, plus I did get to do some teaching after all," she said. "Later, I even wondered if I should take those two years in Italy off of my resume because it wasn't really congruent to the rest of my career at that point. But eventually I realized that it was not only a pivotal experience in my life, but it actually taught me just as much if not more than any other job or course of study I had. I learned to get by on my own in another country, I had a front seat to ancient history, I learned another language and I connected more deeply with my family in Italy."

When Rossi returned to the states, however, she was eager to jump back into the nonprofit sector again, this time in Detroit. She got a job in development for the Detroit Opera House and quickly moved to the Detroit Historical Society where she also worked with another Notre Dame alum, Robert Bury ('71), who is the executive director and CEO of the Historical Society.

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COUNSELING, from page 1

seling, which is a major part of their day. It's also, he said, an opportunity for us to build more effective and supportive relationships with students.

"The rapport that we develop with the kids and how well we get to know them by the time we write their recommendations is unique here," said Salic, who is in his 18th year at NDPMA. "College reps often tell me that they can tell that we know our students well and can readily speak on their behalf, which is quite valuable in the application process at selective schools like the ones to which our students often apply."

Salic also believes the department's open-door policy makes it a more welcoming environment, which is well-appreciated by students and families.

"We make them smile, encourage them to think differently and we strive to provide the most opportunities possible while helping them maintain a healthy perspective and healthy lifestyle," Salic said. "Oftentimes it feels like we impact student lives in a positive way just by challenging them to take risks to be their best — and in that way we sort of impact the world, too. And that's a good feeling."

NUMBERS FAVOR NDP STUDENTS

Student-teacher ratios in the classroom garner a lot of attention when assessing educational opportunity and the potential for success for students. For many schools, especially public schools, the ratios usually are not good. It's a similar story in counseling departments in the state and nation. In fact, in Michigan, the ratio of counselors to students is 732 students for every one counselor — one of the highest in the nation, according to data from the American School Counselor Association, which recommends a ratio of 250:1. Nationally, the average ratio is 491:1.

Fortunately, for NDP students, that ratio is much, much lower, although it doesn't mean it's always smooth sailing for both counselors and students.

"Certainly we feel fortunate that we have a very supportive administration and a much lower student-to-counselor ratio that has allowed us to deliver student services with greater efficiency," Salic said. "More importantly, it has allowed us to develop greater empathy with what our students are experiencing and we're able to put more focus on each individual student and their needs."



Vlado Salic, at left, manages the upper-division counseling department, which includes Margie Bond, Stacy Golliff, Denise Mahoney, Jamie Rodda and Jason Whalen. Jessica Yauch, far right, is the middle-division counselor.

But, Salic said, there are always challenges due to all of the societal and social changes taking place in recent years and how it affects the needs of each young man or woman.

"Like with most other schools across the country, those needs have been amplified here at Notre Dame and have been increasing in recent years, particularly in the area of health and the overall well-being of students," Salic said. "Much is said across the media about student academic success and the amount of stress the kids are experiencing to meet everyone's expectations about getting admitted into the 'best' colleges."



In addition to the more private counseling sessions held with individual students, counselor Jamie Rodda tries to visit classrooms each month to discuss time-management and prioritization skills, anxiety-reduction techniques, brain-based study skills, communication skills, and more.

Salic and his staff have implemented a number of initiatives to address this, including hosting several parent meetings where they try to educate parents on their own roles in their children's well-being.

"We try to engage parents as a critical part of a team effort," he said. "Also, as our 'self-management program' continues to evolve, we will be addressing even more-so the mindfulness, health and well-being of our students. In addition, One Love Foundation, which was founded nationally in 2010 to ensure everyone understands the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, has been gaining traction across the nation and we are looking into ways to adopt some of their techniques."

TRYING TO MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR STUDENTS — AND TEACHERS

Notre Dame's counseling group also implemented an electronic appointment request format for students to make it easier for them to sign up for appointments with counselors. They also have plans to take students on college tours in the spring, particularly those who would not have such an opportunity otherwise.

"A recent uptick in opportunities to study internationally also has us looking into becoming a UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) center, which we'll use to assist students interested in British universities," Salic said. "And while our focus has always been on our students, we have not forgotten our teachers and the added stress they are feeling, so we are looking into ways to assist them as well."

So while no one could blame high school counselors if they get discouraged given the hard work and long hours, Salic said he believes his staff is doing very well, thank you, even with the new counselor credentialing requirements coming down from Lansing.

"It's a fine day when one can get up in the morning and look forward to going into work," he said. "I think I can speak for all our staff when I say we love what we do. Naturally, we have times throughout the year where we feel stressed and overwhelmed, but I don't think we feel overworked. After all, we're not pulling double shifts working in a coal mine!"

He said the rewards of seeing NDP students succeed far outweigh the amount of stress and gray hairs associated with the process.

"In the 18 years I have been here, I have never had the same year twice," he said. "It's a constant process of fine-tuning, adding or improving programming to fit student needs and maximize opportunities for them. We have to be flexible. House Bill 4181 will just be another thing on our plate that will be implemented fairly easily. It's only just a few clouds in an otherwise big blue sky for us." 🌈

Victory's on the horizon

Marching on to new science, art and technology wing: campaign steering committee is planning a thank you event for key donors, also says construction is on schedule, though additional funding still needed.



On January 31, Notre Dame will be hosting a special event at the school to update key donors on progress on the new science, art and technology wing. All concrete flooring is expected to be installed by then.

Contractor Frank Rewold's Darin Schafer, who is overseeing the construction of Notre Dame's new science, art and technology wing, said that the innovative facility is on schedule for the 2018-19 school year.

"The building is enclosed and dry and we will be working on the interior of the building throughout the winter," said Schafer, who is a construction superintendent with Frank Rewold and Son, Inc., the company tasked to manage the project. "We just beat winter by getting a roof on and the building sealed up with heat."

He also said that in the coming weeks, they plan on pouring all of the interior floors.

"Once floors are in, we will be installing more ductwork, electrical and water lines as well as fire sprinklers and other utilities in the ceiling," he said. "We will be doing the floors in part of the building starting this week, then the floors in the rest of the building after Christmas. We should be done with the remainder of what concrete floor we can install by mid-January."

SPECIAL TOUR IN JANUARY

Notre Dame Head of School Andy Guest said that the schedule is very favorable not only for the ultimate deadline for the wing, but also for an important event being planned for the end of January.

"On January 31, Notre Dame will be hosting another big event, which we're calling an 'update party' for those who have made key pledges or donations to the campaign," Guest said. "We plan to show those who've made a significant commitment to the campaign all the progress we've made and to walk them through the facility on a private tour."

Guest also said that the goals the school set for raising the necessary funds for the new wing are being made although there is still more to do.

"So far, we have secured nearly 200 commitments

to the campaign, including more than 75 members of our own faculty and staff," he said.

"We want to continue to close the gap between where we are today — about \$5.3 million in commitments as of December 18 — and the \$7.5 million goal. We want to secure as much as we can if not all of it before we open the facility ahead of the 2018 school year."

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED PUBLICLY LAST MARCH

On March 9, 2017, Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy launched the public phase of its campaign to raise a total of \$7.5 million for the science, art and technology wing.

Dubbed the "March on to Victory" campaign, the public phase of the fundraising effort was introduced at a special celebration to a crowd of more than 700 who



Notre Dame board chair Daron Gifford, a partner in Plante Moran's Strategy Consulting Services, is also a co-chair of the school's March on to Victory capital campaign.

heard from school and campaign officials and watched a special video presentation. Since then, Guest, campaign chairpersons Pat D'Agostini and Daron Gifford, and the NDPMA advancement office has been working hard to "close the gap" between the \$7.5 million goal and where they are today.

Gifford said the facility expansion is about investing in the next generation of children at Notre Dame. "Investing in the sciences, arts and technology will be critical for the education of our Notre Dame students," he said. "We want to keep Notre Dame on the leading edge of education in both STEM and the arts."

The latest data from the school's advancement office show that the money committed to the campaign thus far has been enough to get the construction well underway. The data also illustrate the areas of need still unmet, with a number of large, targeted donations remaining open.

"We are still looking for a few major donors to help get us to our \$7.5 million,



Darin Schafer, of Frank Rewold and Sons, Inc., is overseeing the construction of NDPMA's new wing.

Current total: \$5,311,553



Notre Dame coach honored for 1,400 wins

Last year, NDP's Betty Wroubel earned the American Volleyball Coaches Association's 2016 Victory Club Award for 1,300 wins. There was little doubt she'd hit the next milestone, 1,400 wins, this season, and she and her Irish volleyball team did not disappoint as Notre Dame helped their head coach hit that mark in early October after defeating Regina High School.

Last month, at the American Volleyball Coaches Association Convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, NDP's Wroubel was formally presented the 2017 AVCA Victory Club Award by AVCA executive director Kathy DeBoer for getting to 1,400 wins.

Now, she's looking at 1,500 likely very soon as the Irish, which steamrolled through the 2017 season to win a Class B state championship — Wroubel's third — and finished the season with a No. 8 national ranking, are well-positioned for a repeat.

Just ask Gabi Shilling.

"I think this team can be amazing next year," said NDP senior Shilling, who was one of the team's major contributors throughout this past season. "You have a lot of key players returning and a lot of good hitters. It really comes down to how hard they work, but they definitely will have the talent to repeat." 🇺🇸

Bees take flight in Notre Dame-hosted event

VEX Robotics competitions differ from FIRST robotics in bot size and configuration as well as the "games" the teams play. At Notre Dame, its award-winning robotics program competes in both with last month's VEX event, hosted by Notre Dame, a prime example.

"It was huge!" exclaimed Jerry Palardy, a current parent and



At the 2017 American Volleyball Coaches Association Convention held in Kansas City, Missouri, last month, longtime Notre Dame volleyball coach Betty Wroubel, right, receives the AVCA 2017 AVCA Victory Club Award from AVCA executive director Kathy DeBoer for getting to 1,400 wins. Wroubel also coaches softball and serves as Notre Dame's athletic director and assistant principal.

team mentor as well as one of the school's hardest working robotics advocates. "We had 48 high-school and middle-school teams from all around the state."

He said that NDP had 16 teams at the event, including 10 "Killer Bees" high-school teams, six of which have members who contend in FIRST Robotics competitions, plus six "Mildly Aggressive Bees" middle school-only teams.

According to the international VEX Robotics organization, its competitions "bring STEM skills to life by tasking teams of students with designing and building a robot to play against other teams in a game-based engineering challenge." They also say classroom STEM concepts are put to the test as students learn lifelong skills in teamwork, leadership, communications, and more. Tournaments are held

year-round at the regional, state, and national levels and culminate at the VEX Robotics World Championship each April.

At this event, most of the NDP teams were younger and relative newcomers compared to the rest of the competitors, but Plalrdy said they still held their own, while having fun and learning.

Highlights from the Dec. 16 event included:

- Seven Notre Dame teams advanced to the 'finals,' including five middle division teams
- Three out of the eight alliance captains were from the Bees
- The #8 alliance was all Bees
- The big winner of the day was NDP's 9th-grade team, 33T, or



Team 33T, freshmen Santiago Plazas, Nick Genord, Josh Samuels and Tommy Joppich, show off their creation.

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"I loved working in arts and culture — it's a tough game, but it is very rewarding."

She also learned a lot about community and economic development and how to make sure that one's organization always has a seat "at the table" in Detroit's philanthropic arena.

Now at the Alzheimer's Association, she said she considers herself lucky to be able to gain even more insight into public policy and research, and how to work toward big institutional goals. Rossi also is quick to credit her education and past positions for her early career success.

"Without a doubt, the mentorship and guidance I've received over the years has been the most influential as I moved into increasing levels of leadership," said Rossi, who in 2014 earned a fellowship in the Association of Fundraising Professionals

Greater Detroit Chapter Marjorie S. Fisher Fellows program.

"I love to meet and get to know new people, so asking for help has always been second nature to me. But especially early on, I never expected those connections to truly help guide my career. Starting with the professors in college and other people I've admired, I have benefited greatly from the kindness of others."

She said that because she realizes that her own good fortune was due in large part to her own mentors, she's learned to pay it forward, to be assertive, to never miss an opportunity to connect and be connected with others, to be a lifelong learner and to be genuine in all interactions.

"I am honored to work in service to others and hope that over time I can help give back all that has been generously given to me." 🇺🇸

“He who shall not be named,” which included Joshua Samuels, Nicolas Genord, Santiago Plazas-Leguizamo and Thomas Joppich. They placed second in qualifications, third in skills, and advanced to the semifinals, winning the “Amaze Award” for their fast and agile robot design. 🤖

Trustees adopt family through Lighthouse of Oakland County

On Dec. 18, NDPMA Trustees Elizabeth Brisley, Ann Stone and Board executive assistant Carrie Lytle delivered a couple of cars full of clothing and toys to Lighthouse of Oakland County’s Adopt a Family program.

The Board’s donated items were dropped off at All Saints’ Episcopal Church in Pontiac, which serves as one of the official Adopt a Family drop-off locations.

“Our donations, which we estimated to value at \$2,500, is providing a single mom and her five children clothing, warm winter coats, shoes, toys, dolls and generous gift cards,” said Lytle. “The Board’s generosity will help this family have a brighter, merrier Christmas.” 🎁

A ‘big question’ earns 8th grader top prize

If Notre Dame 8th graders seem a little more argumentative than usual lately, a bit of the blame could lie with LeAnne Schmidt, who teaches the 8th-grade Individuals and Societies class and Design in the middle division.

She’s also the moderator for NDPMA’s debate team, which is probably why she decided to get the entire 8th grade to participate in a Big Questions Debate tournament, a rather unique debate format supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, a national organization working in association with the National Speech and Debate Association.



Notre Dame 8th-grader Tess Censoni, left, won the inaugural middle division “Big Question Debate.” Classmate Marisa Ricci, right, was the runner-up.

“We had students preparing cases on both sides of the 2017-2018 national Big Questions Debate topic,” Schmidt said, “which is ‘Resolved: humans are fundamentally different from all other animals.’”

The debate was broken into multi-minute chunks — constructive statements, rebuttals, consolidations and rationales — with a pair of three-minute sessions midway through in which the opponents politely peppered one another with questions.

Schmidt said that after five in-class days of debate, the top speakers advanced to the quarterfinals, the semifinals and then to the finals.

“Semifinalists Grace Byrne and Jonathan Hubbard put up a good fight, as did runner up Marisa Ricci,” she said. “But the 8th grade champion was Tess Censoni. We’re very proud of her!” 🏆

Notre Dame yearbook gets national honors

Notre Dame Preparatory School announced today that it has received the Jostens National Yearbook Program of Excellence award for the school’s 2017 edition of “The Legend.” It’s the

fourth year in a row for the school and represents a rare honor — last year, only 19 other schools in Michigan shared in the award from Jostens.

Commenting on the award, upper division English and Theory of Knowledge teacher Kyle Lilek, who oversees the ND Prep yearbook, said as always, it comes down to the hard work of the yearbook staff.

“The editors and staff work very hard all year to maintain a high quality of coverage for the school,” Lilek said. “I’m especially proud of my editors, who take on most of the burdens associated with creating the yearbook, including putting up with me. Maddie McClune (‘17) was a three-year editor, from her sophomore through senior year, and Jacob Mancinotti (‘17) was a two-year editor during his junior and senior years.”

Lilek said current senior editors Alicia Ringwood and Anna-grace Agro worked with McClune and Mancinotti last year and quickly learned the editor responsibilities.

“I’ve always been very proud and impressed by the hard work and commitment of my editors.”

According to Jostens, the award was created to recognize those who excel in the creation and distribution of their yearbook, and meet the following criteria: a meaningful book for all students; a book in every student’s hands; and effective project management.

Yearbook moderator Lilek said the students who work on the yearbook are totally dedicated to its creation and production — and this year is no exception. “We are currently hard at work on the 2018 yearbook, which is Detroit-themed and titled ‘NDP Hustles Harder,’” he said. 🏆



Current Notre Dame editors Alicia Ringwood, left, and Anna Agro, both seniors, are with the upper division’s award-winning 2017 yearbook, which had as its theme, “Space,” and title, “To the Prep and beyond.”

THE NOTRE DAME FUND

Every Student, Every Day

YOU DECIDE

The Notre Dame Fund is off to a strong start! Officially launched in November, the fund has already reached 55% of this year’s overall goal of \$600,000 and more than 80 members have joined the St. Peter Chanel Society, the school’s leadership giving society. We still have a long way to go in order to reach our goal by June 30 and a gift of any size is appreciated. One of our other goals this year is to increase parent participation. Therefore, we encourage each family to make a gift—just once—to The Notre Dame Fund. For more information, visit ndpma.org/ndfund or for more information on the St. Peter Chanel Society, go to ndpma.org/spcs.



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being arranged, etc.," he added. "The old alphabetical lineup of kids in rows of desks is not something we're looking to replicate in the new facility. Plus, if these new setups prove popular and successful in the new wing, we'll look to replicate them in some of



Bill Kozyra is CEO and president of Auburn Hills-based TI Automotive and an honorary chairman of the MOTV campaign.

our other existing classrooms."

Guest also said that he's been in discussions with members of the building committee on the new greenhouse and which classes can or should be held in the greenhouse.

"In addition, we've been talking with senior academic administrators about teachers with experience in botany or horticulture who can help us build a curriculum that takes full advantage of the greenhouse facility."

MAJOR DONOR SAYS 'THANK YOU'

Bill Kozyra, who is the March on to Victory honorary campaign chair and a very significant contributor to the project, said he is pleased with the progress and hoping more in the Notre Dame community get on board with the campaign.

"Supporting the campaign was a way for me to 'give back' and say thank you for what the school has done for my children

and how it has impacted their successful lives and careers," said Kozyra, who thus far has committed \$1,129,000 to the project.

"I fully support the March on to Victory campaign as I believe all young people deserve a high quality and Catholic education," he added. "I was blessed with a private, Catholic education and would like as many young people as possible to have the same great experience that I had."



A dedicated robotics lab/room will play a major role in the school's new wing.