

# THE blarney stone

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



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Innovative technology (and furniture) initiatives implemented in the new science, art and technology wing to spin off throughout rest of campus.

## TECHTALK

**A** relatively recent survey of 2,462 middle-and high-school teachers across the U.S. found that digital technologies overall have been a help in teaching their students in many ways. At the same time, the internet, mobile devices, and social media have brought new challenges to teachers, mostly related to the inherent distractions they tend to create.

Asked specifically about the impact of the internet and digital tools on their role

as educators, 92% of the teachers said the internet has a “major impact” on their ability to access content, resources, and materials for their teaching; 69% said the internet has a “major impact” on their ability to share ideas with other teachers; and 67% said the internet has a “major impact” on their ability to interact with parents, and 57% said it has had an impact on better enabling their interaction with

students.

The study, which was conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, also pointed out that teachers are not only using digital tools in an effort to improve the learning experience for their students, they are also using these tools in their own training, develop-

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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.*



COMPASSION, BENEVOLENCE AND SOCIAL CONSCIENCE INFORM CAREER FOR NOTRE DAME ALUM, PG. 2



# Living (and working) the school mission

Compassion, benevolence and social conscience inform career for Notre Dame alum.

**B**y the time students at Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy graduate from the upper school, they have a pretty good idea what the school's mission statement is all about. The idea of service to others is one of the key components of the NDPMA mission, and it is so well-integrated into the activities of students that by the time they graduate, it has become second nature.

That is why we frequently run into alumni of the school who not only carry the NDPMA mission through college, they end up in actual careers that focus on serving and helping others in need.

Kathryn Woodstock, who graduated from NDP in 2007, is another great example of this phenomenon. She currently is chief development officer for the Methodist Children's Home Society, a not-for-profit agency that helps children who are in either the foster care or adoption systems and who have experienced traumatic child abuse or neglect.

She is absolutely convinced that Notre Dame Prep played a role in influencing her career path.

"I remember that during our school volunteer hours, I worked as a Sunday school teacher at St. Andrew's in Rochester," she said. "I taught kindergartners and first graders about God's Word and felt so amazing and connected to the Word through those kids. I knew right then and there that I wanted my career to involve helping children."

Helping children was a major theme for Woodstock in college as well. She graduated from Grand Valley State University and majored in health professions and minored in business. During grad school at the University of Detroit Mercy in its health services administration program, she found her calling.

"It was in that program where it clicked that I wanted to build my career around advocating for the health and wellness of children," she said. "Previous to MCHS, I was with Children's Hospital of Michigan at the Detroit Medical Center, which is where I began my career as an administrative intern during graduate school. After I got my master's degree, I went back to Children's Hospital to work as a continuing medical education program planner, and was then promoted to their marketing and business development team as a community affairs project manager."

## DAYS AND NIGHTS

In September of last year, Woodstock was recruited to Methodist Children's Home Society and received a two-part offer after signing on as director of major gifts. The offer included the opportunity to transition to chief development officer in November. She's been the organization's CDO ever since.

While Woodstock's days at MCHS are chock full of activity and sometimes her work days turn into nights and weekends, she's not complaining.

"My typical day is far from typical," she said. "At some points



Notre Dame alum Kathryn Woodstock ('07) has been chief development officer for Methodist Children's Home Society since November of 2017.

during the year, my team is busy planning and executing our signature charity events, which include our always fun-themed annual dinner, the In Bloom women's luncheon, our annual Golf Classic, and the MCHS formal gala. Other days, I am busy meeting and cultivating relationships with corporate sponsors, and helping to find ways they can get more involved with our mission. For example, a corporate partner may give monetarily annually, but might also want to organize a day where their staff can come volunteer on our campus."

Other days, she said, she's researching and brainstorming with her department on foundations and local clubs to approach for grant opportunities that may potentially fund new initiatives on their campus, which is located in Redford. These initiatives could include launching a charter school, building a new workspace for MCHS's Independent Living Plus program, or expanding the after-care system for its foster care program.

"Still other days, I'm at local or state-wide networking events, advocating for our kids and building new connections," she said. "You'll also find me doing speaking engagements at local Methodist churches, business groups or conferences."

## HELPING YOUTH LEARN TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

Currently, MCHS has 60 boys who live on its 80-acre campus as

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## TECH, from page 1

ment, and professionalization.

For the most part, very few teachers in Pew's focus groups expressed outright disinterest in bringing new technologies to their teaching or a belief that digital technologies have no place in the learning process. Instead, most emphasized the practical constraints in making it happen and/or a desire to make sure it is done with the best interests of the students in mind — and only when it clearly improves the learning process.

For Notre Dame teachers, the introduction of technology into their classrooms also has been a net gain for both students and teachers, with most greatly anticipating what the future of technology will bring to their "craft."

Eden Konja, who is director of information and academic technology for NDPMA, is leading the school's charge into that future. He said he's putting the finishing touches on a new five-year plan, which will be submitted to the school's board of trustees and, once approved, implemented starting in the next school year.

"The plan will include a road map to improving technology infrastructure and classroom technology integration," said Konja, who heads a department of four that also includes Melissa York, technol-



Specially designed classroom by Steelcase will initially be installed in the new wing with eventual implementation in certain areas of the existing facilities.

ogy integration specialist; Jason Born-gesser, network administrator; and Eleanor McCaskey, who is an IT technician.

Konja also said he plans to implement a student-led Help Desk next year to supplement his team. "We budgeted money to create a walk-up window in the B-wing triangle so that the students staffing it can support the devices and variety of software used by their peers. They also will



The technology plan will include a road map to improving technology infrastructure and classroom technology integration.

get training by Microsoft employees and be encouraged to earn industry certifications."

### NEW WING TO BE MODEL

Technology and the internet will continue to play a large role in all classroom instruction from the upper school to the lower school at Notre Dame. But when the new science, art and technology wing opens in the fall, the school is taking the opportunity to incorporate a number of unique initiatives within the 26,000 square-foot facility.

"The new audiovisual classroom technology in the new wing will be a model for current classrooms," Konja said. "We have included ceiling speakers with special short-throw projectors from Epson, which will improve the current projection systems and sound quality in every new classroom."

He said the facility's new robotics lab will include a mobile 65" 4K Ultra HD interactive flat-panel display made by ViewSonic for classroom collaboration and all new classrooms will have wireless presentation devices to allow the teacher to project content on a screen, even while roaming the room with their device.

"The teachers also will be able to allow students to connect and project to the screen," he said. "We also plan to add another 3D printer for the CAD computer lab, larger and faster than the current models. We hope to also add a plotter printer for the new art space, budget

permitting."

Special classroom furniture for students and teachers manufactured by Steelcase also is being planned for the new wing, according to NDPMA facilities manager Julie Frakes. It has been chosen after careful evaluation by the new building architect and most importantly, by teachers and students who were able to "test out" sample furniture options on campus about a month ago.

"TMP, the architect for the new addition, has been researching 21st-century learning classroom styles for us as opposed to traditional learning environments," Frakes said. "The objective is to



Ceiling speakers with special short-throw projectors installed in the new wing will serve as models for the rest of the campus classrooms.

enhance student engagement by allowing them to feel more comfortable in their learning environment. The furniture options were selected based on mobil-

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### **TECH, from page 3**

ity, flexibility, variety and easy transitions between the various styles of teaching and learning among our faculty and students.”

Frakes added that the philosophy behind the new furniture is to give the students and teachers mobile furniture that can easily be rearranged for collaboration for active learning and to give them different choices of seating: tables and chairs or rocking buoys; high-top tables (standing height) with stools; rolling tablet arm-chair type desks, etc. “The classroom space is being designed to be flexible and fluid, to go from lectures, to projects, to discussion groups,” Frakes said. Plus, the furniture will be much more colorful!”

### **LOWER SCHOOL AHEAD OF THE CURVE AND NEW TABLETS COMING**

Currently, Notre Dame’s lower division has progressed a bit more than the other two divisions when it comes to innovative learning spaces for students, according to Konja. But soon enough, everyone on campus will be updated, he said.

a majority of device-lease contracts will expire at the end of this school year. We ordered 450 last year with the expiration of those three-year contracts. This year, we are estimating another 450 devices will be ordered.”

Last year, the Microsoft Surface Tablets for the middle and upper schools were purchased with a savings of 25% from the initial acquisition. This also included a three-year warranty coverage, whereas previously it was two.

“I am now working with Microsoft once again to ensure we get the best device at the most affordable price,” he said. “The Surface tablets are a superior device and work very well in our learning environment.”

For Notre Dame’s lower-school students and teachers, who use Apple iPads and MacBooks instead of Microsoft Surface tablets, there have been some major gains in technology utilization as well.

“We have been working with Apple on becoming an Apple Distinguished School,”

faculty and students demonstrate how best practices in learning and teaching are continuously evolving in the classroom.”

He said that every teacher in the lower school has become an Apple Certified Teacher and there has been documented evidence of student success through school-based research practices that measure year-to-year improvement and program sustainability.

“I am excited about the lower division earning this distinguished designation,” Konja said. “They have done a fantastic job integrating the 1:1 iPad program into their curriculum.”

### **SHOWCASE SCHOOL**

Konja said the school’s relationship with Microsoft has been equally fruitful.


“NDPMA continues to be the largest school in Michigan with a 1:1 Microsoft Surface Tablet program,” he said. “We are a showcase school and have welcomed other schools to visit and see the technology integration in our classrooms. Employees of Microsoft have been on campus for several events hosting workshops, sharing computer science information, and even setting up game nights for the students.”

Konja said that Microsoft also has been working closely with Notre Dame’s IT department to help as much as possible.

“We’ve caught the attention of the Microsoft folks in both Chicago and Seattle,” he said. “They even want to shoot a professional video on our school soon. I am very excited that they want to capture what we are doing at NDPMA as far as technology.”

### **NEW CLASS IN COMPUTER SCIENCE**

To put a final exclamation point on the technology initiatives planned for NDPMA, Konja said he is very happy to announce that the upper school is planning to offer two sections of AP Computer Science Principles next school year.

“We’re very excited to have helped bring this program to the school,” Konja said. “We plan to follow this up by offering AP Computer Science A the following school year. These classes will help our students to better understand technology and programming. We are heading into a world where code will coexist with AI and internet-connected things will change how we live our lives in even more dramatic ways.” 



The lower school, which uses Apple iPads, has been working with Apple on becoming an Apple Distinguished School.

“For LD students, since they have their own tablet computers, they can move around easily and not have to worry about wires or device weight,” he said. “Also, this year was our fourth year in the 1:1 tablet program school-wide, which means

Konja said. “Administrators and teachers in the division have shown a clear vision that articulates how their technology-rich environment supports the divisions goals for learning. The Distinguished School requirements include a 1:1 program using Apple devices, which we have, and it also requires that

# Parent, 'enseignant,' advocate

**L**ongtime French teacher Mary Jane Williams has been a fan of the language of France for many years. In fact, she says it goes back to high school.

"Mademoiselle Gorecki, my very first professeur de français, at Immaculata High School in Detroit inspired me to become a French teacher and made me realize how much I adored the language," said Williams, who came to Notre Dame in 2010. "After four years taking high school French, I continued four more years at Michigan State University and couldn't wait to get into my own classroom to transfer that grand enthousiasme to high school students."

Williams graduated from MSU with a degree in French. She also earned a degree in sociology. Her first position teaching French was at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills, and after a few years, she became chairperson of the school's department of languages.

"We had an outstanding department back then of nine full-time language teachers offering six foreign languages: French, Spanish, German, Latin, Polish and Russian," she said. "Over the years, I've also had the privilege of teaching French to preschoolers, grade schoolers, and middle schoolers in both public and parochial schools in Michigan and one in suburban Chicago, Ill., in a school with more than 3,000 high school students."

Williams came to teach at Notre Dame Prep to finish up the French program after long-time French teacher, Dee Connors (Elbode), retired. She wasn't a stranger to NDP, however.

"My son, Bert, attended Notre Dame Marist Academy and graduated from NDP in 2006," Williams said. "It was truly interesting to experience Prep from a different vantage point when I joined the staff. This time, I was getting a view of the school as an insider."

She said that as a faculty member, she witnessed first-hand what she already knew in her heart as a parent: that the administration and faculty are hard-working, selfless, dedicated to their students and committed to excellence.

## SAFETY FIRST

"As a parent of Marist Academy, I was



thrilled to help launch the very first International Day, which still is in existence today," said Williams, who now helps out at Notre Dame's upper school in study hall and substitution. "As a parent at Prep, I enjoyed being co-president of the band boosters and also helped organize the band's trip to London, England, in 2004. As a football mom, I loved helping out on those Friday night pasta meals for our team and joining with other parents before each home game praying the rosary for the safety of both teams around Mary's statue in the courtyard."

It wasn't just football safety that concerned Williams. Traffic safety around the NDPMA campus also got her attention.

"In addition to submitting petitions to MDOT with hundreds of signatures from parents, students and first responders from the Pontiac police and fire departments, it was a phone call into a local radio show and a discussion with Governor Granholm that finally got the ball rolling for a traffic signal at the very dangerous, fast moving, five-lane intersection of Giddings and Perry Roads," she said.

Williams said she truly misses not being able to teach French these days, but she's delighted that she's had a number of transfer students under her wing, finishing up third-year AP and IB French.

"Now, in my study halls, the students look forward to what they affectionately call 'French Fridays,' when we pray the Hail Mary in French," she said. "It is amazing how many were able to memorize it so quickly."

Williams also mentors for online learners at ND Prep who are taking courses through the Michigan Virtual University.

**Mary Jane Williams has been a school parent, teacher and all-around advocate for Notre Dame for many years.**

In addition, as moderator of the school's Champions for Life Club, her students have been very active and have participated in the March for Life every year in Washington, DC.

## THE BEATLES AND GILDA RADNER

Williams currently is a resident of Rochester Hills, but grew up in a family of nine children (four boys, five girls) on the northwest side of Detroit within the Gesu Catholic Church parish, which was located across the street from the University of Detroit.

"Our neighborhood was chock full of Catholic families who attended Gesu Grade School," she said. "I remember being green with envy when the Cavanagh kids [Jerome Cavanagh was the mayor of the City of Detroit] down the street got to meet the Beatles when they came to Detroit in 1964. Also, we were accustomed to seeing Gilda Radner [of Saturday Night Live fame] walking by our house on her way to nearby Mumford High School."

## DEER IN THE YARD

In her spare time, when she's not on the Notre Dame campus, Williams remains busy. In fact, she currently works as a wedding coordinator at her parish, St. Irenaeus in Rochester Hills.

"It's lots of fun meeting happy brides and grooms planning their upcoming weddings, walking them through their wedding rehearsal and preparing them for their big day," she said. "I also enjoy gardening, but unfortunately these days, it is becoming more like trying to outsmart the endless deer that traipse through my backyard and devour everything floral."

Williams and her husband, Bert, who is a senior key account manager at an electronics firm in Auburn Hills, remain active supporters of all things Notre Dame.

"For many years, Bert was the team videographer for ND Marist and ND Prep football," she said. "Nowadays, he still enjoys attending our football, volleyball, basketball games and all the school plays he can get to. He joins me at school dances when I chaperone and loves attending school jazz band and marching band events as well as seeing our talent shows and Concerts on the Hill, too." 🎨



## Notre Dame announces new trustees



Fr. William Rowland, s.m., left, and John Wernis were named NDPMA trustees in April.

appointed to the board on March 14, 2018, by Fr. Frechette, s.m., provincial superior of the Society of Mary, U.S.A. Province, with the unanimous consent of the Marist Council.

Frechette also approved of the Wernis appointment based on NDPMA's Catholic identity and Catholic mission.

Andrew Guest, NDPMA's head of school, said the board and school administration are pleased with its two new trustees.

"We are very excited to add Fr. Rowland and John Wernis to our board," he said. "As a Marist educator, Fr. Rowland will provide educational perspective and spiritual guidance to our Catholic

On April 16, 2018, the Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy Board of Trustees unanimously ratified the nomination of John Wernis as a school trustee, effective on that date. Fr. William Rowland, s.m., was

mission. And John is a terrific strategist and successful entrepreneur who has the best interest of the students at heart."

Originally from Ohio, Rev. William Rowland, s.m., was educated at the Catholic University of America where he earned a bachelor's degree in English literature and a master's degree in theology. He professed his vows to the Society of Mary in 1971 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1979.

Appointed president of Marist School in Atlanta, Ga., in 2018, Rowland previously has worked in a variety of capacities for the Society of Mary, including as parochial vicar at both Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church in Atlanta, Ga., and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Wheeling, W.Va., before becoming pastor at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Paulina, La. He also served as provincial for the Society of Mary U.S. Province from 1994 to 2000.

Immediately prior to moving to Marist School, Rowland was the Society of Mary's vocations director, residing in Berkeley, Calif. He first came to Marist School in 2010 and has served in a variety of positions, including special assistant to the president and alumni chaplain before becoming president. His role as president of Marist School maintains the legacy of Marist leadership for the school, which was founded by the Society of Mary in 1901.

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part of its residential program. Their ages range from 5-18 and up to 10 of those children are in the organization's Independent Living Plus program, which works with teens 15-19 years old who are at risk of aging out of the foster care system. Woodstock said the organization helps them get ready to be on their own, find jobs, manage finances, how to cook, clean, learn about different professions or college options, and more.

"We also are able to place an average of 70 children per year with foster or adoptive families," she added. "We receive two-thirds of our funding from the state, and for the rest, we must fundraise. My job is to oversee all of our agency's fund development and signature charity events."

Helping the kids, said Woodstock, is a huge focus for the MCHS since many come from dire circumstances.

"Children we serve have experienced an average of three traumatic experiences of either child abuse or neglect in their young lifetimes," Woodstock added. "They have lived in, on average, six different residential settings or foster homes before they come to us."

She said children are placed with her organization because staffers are able to handle the emotions and cognitive impairments the children are dealing with, and they treat them holistically.

"Through our school, a number of therapeutic programs (including pet therapy), clinical programs, mentor groups, and our overall caregiving, we give these kids the most loving and normal childhood they deserve."

### BEV WILLIAMS INSPIRED

Obviously focused on her work and serving others, Woodstock, who lives in Berkley, nonetheless manages to find some time for herself.

"Whenever I have any free time, I love to read and learn about anything and everything," she said. "I love sailing and am an active member at the Detroit Yacht Club. I also get really excited about the revitalization of Detroit — I can't wait until we don't have to use that term anymore — and love exploring and checking out new

restaurants in the city."

As far as her high school alma mater, Woodstock has many, many great memories. She also continues to see many classmates and remains close with a number of them.

But Woodstock reserves a special place in her heart for one particular Notre Dame teacher, though.

"Mrs. Beverly Williams was such an inspirational teacher," she said. "Her death rocked so many of our worlds, and her wake was a testament to the positive impact she made on all of us! She injected so much energy into her class and students — and was so hilarious. To this day, I share one of her jokes with my friends and colleagues. She used to write 'S.H.I.T.' on the board which stood for, 'Sure happy it's Thursday. I also miss our uniforms! Choosing outfits was just so much simpler back then!'"

For more information on the Methodist Children's Home Society, its website is [www.mchsmi.org](http://www.mchsmi.org).

### Bev's Day for student aid

In addition to the school's regular annual fund initiative, The Notre Dame Fund, support for student scholarships and financial aid comes through "Bev's Day," a single day of giving that honors the legacy and memory of former Notre Dame teacher Beverly Williams, who taught at ND Prep from 1999 until her untimely passing in 2009. She was loved by faculty and staff, parents and students and her generosity included a strong commitment to scholarships and financial aid for Notre Dame families.

On June 6, we will once again celebrate Beverly Williams with "Bev's Day" and we hope you can honor Bev's legacy and help impact the lives of hundreds of Notre Dame students.

**How to give:** Visit [ndpma.org/bevsday](http://ndpma.org/bevsday) to make your gift on June 6.

**How to spread the word:** Share the news of your gift on social media with **#BevsDay** and **#MarysWay** hashtags; encourage others to give by tagging friends and family; and finally — laugh, love and live like Bev!

Please help us make **#BevsDay 2018** a success by making a gift on June 6.



John Wernis is originally from Shelby Township, Mich., and currently resides in Oakland Township with his wife and two children. He is a partner of Venture Management, LLC, and was a co-founder of Washington Township-based United Lawnscape, Inc.

Wernis and his wife, Stacy, have been members of the Notre Dame community since August 2017. Currently they have a daughter in NDPMA's middle division and a son enrolled for next year in the lower division. He currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees strategic planning committee as well as its education and student affairs committee. They are members of the Lutheran community.

Wernis attended Oakland University and over the years has been involved in all aspects of business, in multiple sectors. His leadership functions have encompassed both operational- and investment-management roles.

"I am excited to work more closely with the Notre Dame board and administration," he said. "I feel my strongest attributes in business are process management and financial management, which will be key components in school oversight by the board as we continue to plan for a strong future in Pontiac. I am amazed by our faculty and administrative staffs. I have no doubt that the legacy of NDPMA has only just begun."

## Notre Dame's athletic department acquires state-of-the-art medical cart

Last month, the athletic department of Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy took delivery of a new custom-made medic cart, the result of a grant from a local memorial trust devoted to non-profits in Oakland County.

The medic cart ambulance with a full-size utility bed, which will be used for all outdoor, on-campus sporting events and practices, was made possible with a grant from the Phillip & Elizabeth Filmer Memorial Charitable trust.

Chris Polsinelli, Notre Dame's athletic trainer, couldn't be happier with the new cart, which was built by HB Customs in Davison, Mich.

"I am absolutely thrilled about getting this new medical cart," he said. "It's been something I've wanted for our sports medicine department for quite awhile. The previous one was very old and didn't provide enough space for all of my supplies. In addition, this one can transport an injured athlete much easier and safer. Our students, and those from visiting schools, are fortunate to have access to this should the need ever arise."

Polsinelli said the cart is custom-built, has both a utility bed and a longer bed for transporting injured athletes and is equipped with headlights, a horn, an electric heater and an inclement-weather enclosure.

Mary Paquin, who chairs the board reviewing grant requests for the Filmer trust, said the trust focuses on awarding grants of up to \$10,000 for non-profits in Oakland County.

"Philip Filmer founded G. M. Photographic back in the 1940s and he died in the 1970s," she said. "He and his wife, Elizabeth, had one son who tragically died quite suddenly at the age of 13. He was their only child and that is one reason why the gift of the medical



cart to assist young men and women of about the same age at Notre Dame is so meaningful."

## Notre Dame students take home medals in national examination



National Spanish Examination medals were awarded to, from left, Kevin Orloski, Bautista Ballesty, Anna Nachazel, Elizabeth Brouns and Rachel Rook.

Congratulations to the Notre Dame students in the upper school who recently attained national recognition for excellent performance on the 2018 National Spanish Examinations.

A gold medal was awarded to Kevin Orloski (11), silver medals went to Bautista Ballesty (11) and Anna Nachazel (10); and bronze medals were earned by Elizabeth Brouns (11) and Rachel Rook (9).

A total of 12 NDP students earned honorable mentions: Anna Hein (12), Lorena Dorantes (11), Ana Laura Sanchez Montalvo (11), Marisol Rodriguez (11), Joseph Joppich (11), Joshua Montpas (11), Megan Obear (11), Alena Manzor (11), Evan Wells (10), Thomas Joppich (9), Laelan Reyes (9) and Elena Schwegman (9).

## The bats (and fields) get special blessings

Less than eight months after Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy first announced that it will renovate its softball and baseball fields, the school hosted a special dedication on April 12 when students, athletes, alumni and school administration officials came together to celebrate the new facilities with a "Bless the Bats" ceremony.



The ceremony included a hospitality tent with food and refreshments; introductions of alumni, former coaches and administrators; remarks by school and athletic administrators; and a formal blessing of the new fields by Notre Dame Corporate President Fr. Leon Olszamowski, s.m.

After the field dedication, Notre Dame's softball and baseball teams played home games vs. Marian and Royal Oak high schools, respectively. Baseball beat Royal Oak and softball took two from Marian.

## The Bees were buzzing in Louisville

Teams representing Notre Dame at the 11th Annual VEX IQ Challenge World Championship in Louisville, Kentucky, fared well in the

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Notre Dame  
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School and Marist  
Academy is an  
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School website: [ndpma.org](http://ndpma.org)

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competition that saw more than 30 countries participating.

"We had a team of 4th, 5th and 6th graders qualify for the VEX IQ Worlds," said Louise Palardy, a parent and mentor for the group. The 6th-grade team, which was Patrick Soumo, Beck Silver, Jose Turrubiartes and Jeffrey Guo, were in the Middle



Notre Dame's VEX IQ robotics teams had an exceptionally successful trip to Louisville, Kentucky.

School Engineering division and finished 16th earning them a spot in the finals. They finished 10th in their division!"

Notre Dame's 5th-grade team, consisting of Addison Barton, Dominic Sarti and Amelia Kayi, placed 7th in skills out of 400 teams and were third in programming in the world, a huge accomplishment, according to Palardy.

"The 4th-grade team, Auggie Villajuan, Andrew Chang, Lucas DiGrande and Sami Khouri, had an amazing time and worked very hard all three days," Palardy added.

"The technical skills and sportsmanship that VEX IQ Challenge participants show at such a young age truly inspire me," said Paul Copioli, president of VEX Robotics. "We can't wait to see what the future has in store for these bright students as they continue their education and move into the workforce."

Also last month, Notre Dame sent two middle-school robotics teams down to Louisville, Kentucky, for the VEX Robotics World Championship (VRC). This event, which ran April 25-28, featured small metal robots built by middle-school teams of

students. Truly an international competition, NDPMA kids were paired with and against teams from China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Columbia, and Saudi Arabia to name a few. In fact, more than 800 teams from 50 countries participated at this event, which was held in the Kentucky Exposition Center.

According to Jerry Palardy, a school parent and a longtime robotics mentor, there are two aspects to the competition: match play and skills.

Team 3333Y, which consisted of the Queen Bees (and John) (Jaimie Krankel, Manath Mohindra and John Jernigan), won second place in the skills challenge. This is the highest award that any of NDPMA's VEX or VEXIQ teams has ever achieved. The skills finals were played in front of a large crowd at the same arena where Muhammad Ali won his first heavyweight boxing title. It was quite an experience.

Team 3333B (Payton Beckman, Joe Lasota, Aaron Palardy and Jackson Plas), also excelled in skills, coming in fourth place.

In addition, they won the energy award for their enthusiasm, as well as for the loud, relentless cheering from their adoring fans (NDP parents). However, the high point of the event for this team was advancing to the elimination round for match play, making them the first NDP team to ever advance that far in VRC. 🇺🇸



Notre Dame's middle school VEX Robotics teams competed in the World Championships in Louisville, Kentucky.