



St. Benedict Academy
Alumnae Association
Newsletter
Summer 2021

Reunion News

The Class of 1976 will be celebrating their 45th class reunion on Saturday, August 21. There will be a catered picnic held at the Erie Runners Club, Beach One, at Presque Isle State Park. The gathering will begin at 2:00 pm. For more information, contact Susan Pacinelli DiVecchio at 814-440-9092 or email sdivecchio1@gmail.com.

"We'll always come to thee again, when alma mater calls."

Let us pray for our SBA alumnae who have passed into eternity—

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Eugenia (Jean) Kubeja Hughes '42 | Anna Marie Gorke Neimeic '54 | Anna Marie Nicolia Scarpino '62 |
| Marjorie Morgan Scutella '43 | Theresa Pol Luarnoff '55 | Jean Marie Grolemond Konopka '62 |
| Ethel Trohoski Nowak '45 | Louise Joann Felder Leigl '55 | Mary Ann Heibel Wilkinson '63 |
| Joan Sosnowski Menosky '48 | Alice R Froess Kowalski '58 | Susan Gorney Grettler '64 |
| Charlotte E Knoebel Wienczkowski '53 | Judith Schell Ferrare Bodnar '58 | Mary Carol Brown '64 |
| Carmelita Hogan Munsch '53 | Margaret Roward Pond '60 | Catherine Ignasiak Stumpo '67 |
| Margaret Martin Curtis '53 | Norma Jean Mikula Kalie '60 | Irell Armwood Harden '71 |
| Dorothy Brzozowski Deutsch '54 | Amy Hines '61 | Marilyn Larese Brown '75 |

2021 Scholarship Winner List

The SBA Alumnae Association is pleased to announce that 25 scholarships of \$250 each were awarded to relatives of alumnae who will be attending Catholic grade or high schools for the 2021-22 school year. Awards have exceeded \$92,250 since the scholarship program began in 1991. Funding comes from monies raised at the annual Christmas Party and the Cash Bingsos.

| WINNER | SCHOOL | ALUMNAE | RELATIONSHIP |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Charles Campbell | St Luke School | Kathleen Belczyk Burik '77 | Nephew |
| Jordyn Worsdale | St Stephen Catholic School | Allene Schroeck Kraus '49 | Great Granddaughter |
| Ellen Dieteman | Villa Maria Academy | Anna Sabotinic Dieteman '88 | Daughter |
| Graham Hewitt | Our Lady of Peace | Peggy Henretty Hewitt '69 | Grandson |
| Henry Tellers | St Matthew Catholic School | Rosalie Hodas Tellers '65 | Grandson |
| Curtis McGraw | St Joseph School | Lucrecia Rogers Johnson '63 | Great Nephew |
| Holly Ciotti | Blessed Sacrament | Jennifer Jones Ciotti '89 | Daughter |
| Alexis Mobilia | Villa Maria Academy | Kathleen Mobilia '68 | Great Niece |
| Owen Vereb | Our Lady of Peace | Catherine Kupniewski '72 | Great Nephew |
| Emily Marz | Our Lady of Peace | Rosemary Marz Niebauer '72 | Great Niece |
| Benjamin Markley | St Jude School | Sandra Pulinski Veihdeffer '72 | Grandson |
| Isabella Noal | Guerin Catholic High School | Patricia Phillips Noal '54 | Granddaughter |
| Alli Heidt | Villa Maria Academy | Joan Dworakowski Heidt '58 | Granddaughter |
| Ashlyn Jessup | Mercyhurst Prep | Darlene Elsesser Kovacs '69 | Granddaughter |
| Alexander Little | Cathedral Prep | Kathy Patalita Little '67 | Great Nephew |
| Kasey Netkowicz | Our Lady of Peace | Donna Netkowicz '65 | Granddaughter |
| Samuel Applebee | Mercyhurst Prep | Cindy Anderson Tabolt '76 | Cousin |
| Addison Claire Johnson | St Luke School | Patty Kuntz Johnson '73 | Granddaughter |
| Matthew Bond | Cathedral Prep | Jennifer Devine Bond '90 | Son |
| Michael Popovich | Mercyhurst Prep | Marcia Popovich '87 | Son |
| Eli Pinzok | St James School | Barbara Dulin Kobylinski '65 | Cousin |
| Samuel Staab | Cathedral Prep | Janice Staab Shaffer '78 | Nephew |
| Kamron James Veshecco | St George School | Mary Beth Veshecco '73 | Grandson |
| Rita Reedy | St Gregory School | Cecelia Filipkowski '66 | Great Niece |
| Emily Piecuch | Villa Maria Academy | Gerri Bruno Piecuch '81 | Daughter |

Jennie Hagerty '83: Finding My Passion

St. Benedict Academy impacted my life in a remarkable way. My experience at an all-girls school defined me as a person, a woman, and a servant of God. SBA gave me lifelong friendships and confidence to face adversity with a smile.

The sisters and teachers at SBA taught us to be independent, self-sufficient, and rise above the storm. Somewhere along the way I learned that through God, "All things are truly possible."

A bittersweet time, one of uncertainty and adjustment, high school also prepares you for your forthcoming journey and purpose in life – and little did I understand then God's plan for me, or how I would get there.



In the years following graduation, I earned a degree in business from Gannon University; worked as an office manager at Hamot Medical Center; made a career shift to recruiting and cultivating donors to fund Catholic education.

But there was still something missing. The sisters at SBA told us to "be the change we wanted to see in the world," to be passionate about life and fight through challenging times. It was time to move forward but to where? Then in 2017 I walked into a building off East 27th Street in Erie and found my true home.

It was the day I walked into Mercy Center for Women (MCW) to interview for the position of executive director. I am not certain if it was the laughter of children echoing throughout the building or the simplicity of the home. Or knowing the women who came to MCW had survived real difficulties in life and how the gifted and talented staff at Mercy Center was making a difference for them. I took the position.

Mercy Center for Women was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in January 1994 and provides homeless women, with or without children, with up to a year of transitional housing and support services. The women are often fleeing domestic violence and addiction, and at MCW they have opportunities to learn financial literacy, basic life skills, parenting, and spirituality.



Jennie Buffalari Hagerty enjoys the blessings of the wonderful children of the Mercy Center for Women.

Sometimes women show up to MCW without a driver's license, social security card, or even a birth certificate. They were homeless and some sought warmth at a Tim Horton's or Walmart. I could not imagine a mother with her children having to seek a place to stay warm or living in a car. In the program, they work hard to get clean from drugs, find employment, and develop self-esteem, a beautiful gift from God. This is a mission I get behind every minute of the day. Before COVID-19, I would attend Drug Treatment Court to witness the graduation of our former clients. I tear up whenever a woman shares her gratitude to MCW with her head held high.

My heart explodes with delight when a mother reunites with her child. My passion is to interact with these women and children, they are my family and life. I often sit in morning reflection with each woman's story. They make me stronger by fighting battles beyond their control. To enjoy a laugh or a moment of tears is truly what God has called me to do.

The most difficult part I have witnessed is when a client has a set-back. We surround our clients with support



St. Benedict Academy office aides pictured in the 1983 *Scholastican*. Jennie is in the center of the third row.

after they graduate from the program. When a former client loses her battle to an opioid overdose there is a wound within all of us. How could we have prevented this?

Other times a woman shares with me how her life was shattered with broken relationships, but now she works fulltime, owns her own vehicle and is back in the lives of her children. These are the happy endings for which we are most grateful.

My teachers at SBA provided me with strength, courage and a sense of accomplishment in four short years. That is the core of my passion to help and serve others, to give back to my community and take on adversity with a smile. We can hold Mark 9:23 close to our hearts, "For all things are possible; for one who believes."

A cheer for all SBA alumnae! Although the school no longer exists it will forever hold precious memories within our hearts. Smile, offer a prayer, be kind!



The Class of 1983 celebrates their 35th reunion at Calamari's, Fall 2018. Seated L-R: Deborah Sinnott, Michelle Hoffman, Ann Pinczewski, Jennie Hagerty, and Debbie Simonelli. Standing L-R: Jane Kobielski, Sue Forish, Mary Beth Graml, Mary Herbstritt, Christine Scalise, Karen Kalunzy, Michele "Mimi" Rys, Angela Vincent, and Colleen Conway.

Have an address change? Story to share? Idea to highlight your class in the newsletter? Email:

sbaalum@eriebenedictines.org