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**Olympians Katie Ledecky '15, Phoebe Bacon '20, and Erin Gemmell '23
Come Home to Their Alma Mater Before the Fall Semester**

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BETHESDA, Md., (September 4, 2024) - [Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart](#), an all-girls school for Pre-K through Grade 12 in Bethesda, Maryland, was thrilled to cheer on alumnae Katie Ledecky '15, Phoebe Bacon '20, and Erin Gemmell '23 as they competed with Team USA in the Paris Olympics this summer. Before diving into their busy fall schedules—Bacon and Gemmell returning to college and Ledecky balancing book tours for her recently released New York Times bestseller *Just Add Water*, visiting family, and TV appearances—these three Olympians made time to stop by their alma mater.

Gemmell, a newly minted silver medalist who anchored the U.S. Women's 4x200m relay team, swimming after Ledecky, surprised Stone Ridge employees during their orientation with a Q&A session led by Head of School Catherine Karrels '86. She provided an insider's view of the Olympic experience, from the excitement of meeting world-class athletes from around the world and training with Team USA in Croatia, to the not-so-glamorous aspects, such as the often unsuccessful hunt for chicken in the dining room.

Gemmell thrilled the English teachers in the audience when she said she journaled every day in Paris, inspired by seasoned Olympians who told her that her first Olympics would be a blur later if she didn't write it all down. She found journaling beneficial for her mental well-being, explaining, "I think it's really good to be able to get your thoughts out of your brain and put them on paper. It's not in my brain anymore when I get all my thoughts out onto the paper." She shared that another favorite, and certainly creative, technique for managing stress and anxiety is bedazzling t-shirts, which helps quiet her mind while preparing for big meets.

Ledecky dropped by the next day to say an informal hello to the swim coaches and a small group of school administrators. She was warmly welcomed with big hugs and shared how much the Stone Ridge community's support meant during the games. Having participated in her first Olympics as a young high school student, Ledecky formed close, supportive connections with the school administrators, faculty, and staff, and continues to visit whenever she's in the area.

In a video message she recorded while on campus, Ledecky thanked the Stone Ridge community, "for all the cheers this past summer. Erin, Phoebe, and I felt it all the way to Paris. We loved the pep rally...Know that we were thinking of you the whole time. It was

really special to share this summer with Phoebe and Erin. It made this Olympics probably the most special Olympics I've ever been to."

Ledecky '15 plans to return to campus this fall for a book talk and student assemblies, where she'll be able to connect with students and community members.

To round out the week, Bacon joined Director of Athletics Andrew Maguire for a Q&A about life as a student-athlete in both high school and college. Speaking to an audience of Stone Ridge athletes on campus for try-outs and employees, Bacon spoke about the balance she has found between training, recovery, and mindset.

When Maguire asked about what she has learned about perseverance from sports, Bacon responded, "In sports, there isn't a fail. You can't fail because there's always something to learn from it. Every time I touch the water in practice or in a competition, there could be a hundred things I do right and also a hundred things that I do wrong. That doesn't mean I've failed, or it's a terrible race, or a terrible season. It's okay. It's what did I do right and what did I do wrong, and how can I move on and get better. You can't let a bad season, a bad meet, or a bad practice affect you the next day. You can take some time to reflect on it, but be ready the next day to take the step forward to get better from it."

Representing 15% of the 2024 U.S. Olympic Women's Swimming Team, all three renowned Stone Ridge "Gators" graduated from the independent all-girls school in Bethesda, Maryland. While it is not uncommon for swimmers from the same college to be named to an Olympic Team together, it is nearly unheard of for three athletes from the same high school to achieve this feat. Ledecky '15 left the Paris Games with four new medals and the title of most decorated female American Olympian in history. Bacon '20 came in fourth place in a very close 200m Backstroke final, and Gemmell '23 earned her first silver medal in the 4x200m Freestyle Relay.

Stone Ridge is incredibly proud of all three of these women and their accomplishments and love that they continue to feel supported by the community. The School looks forward to welcoming them back to campus during the school year.

About Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart

[Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart](#), located in Bethesda, Maryland, is an all-girls, Catholic, independent school for grades 1–12, with a coeducational program for children in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.