

HOW THE NATION'S ONLY JESUIT H.S. ALUMNI MOTHERS' CLUB BEGAN AND WHAT KEEPS IT GOING 30 YEARS ON

There's a saying you hear at University of Detroit Jesuit... "It's the place where mothers never graduate." That's because of something that happened 30 years ago while **Colleen Batcheller** (Jimmy '85, Chuck '83, Bob '93, Patrick '98) was at her sons' school one morning.

"**Terri Krause** (Sean '88, Jeff '97) and I were walking down the hall when we met this Jesuit," said Colleen. "I'd never seen him before, and I don't remember his name. He started talking to us. Terri and I were in the moms' club there. We just started chatting and he said, 'You know, U of D High is the only Jesuit school that doesn't have an alumni moms' club. I think you two should start one.'" So we did. Turns out, the guy was fibbing. We were the only ones that *had* an alumni mothers' club. We couldn't believe it after we got it started.

"We got busy on it," said Colleen, who recently lost her husband, ardent U OF D JESUIT supporter and alumnus Charles Batcheller '54. "When you are together with all these women in the Mothers' Club and it's a city school, you feel a real connection. Let's face it. Not everyone is going to send their kids to a city school. It was the Jesuit bond first, then the city," she said. "That is what drew us together. I am sorry we've lost Terri Krause; she was instrumental in getting it started. It was her. Terri really carried the ball. She made it very emphatic - we were a dynamic but loose group, there to support the school but not in a fundraising atmosphere."

The Capuchins also have been the recipients of U OF D JESUIT alumni moms' generosity. "A friar from the Capuchins was a guest at one of our auctions years ago," recalled Colleen. "He asked, 'How can we do something like this for the Capuchins?' Someone pointed him in my direction." Colleen mobilized the alumni mothers to help with the Save Our Capuchin Soup Kitchen fundraiser and the rest is history. "We're still involved at the Capuchins and do the event every year," she said.

Three decades later, "we still stay in contact," said Colleen of her AMC colleagues. "We're like-minded women with a sense of purpose and belonging through the friendships we've made."

KRIS SBASCHNIG

"It was a grass-roots movement, what can I say?" said Kris Sbaschnig (Rick '95.) "Terri Krause invited me to a meeting at her house, and there were maybe 6-8 women there. She was very upfront and talked about starting this alumni moms' club. Before that meeting, I never met Terri Krause. I don't even know how I got invited, but I offered to do the directory.

"I think the large impetus was two-fold: one was as a social network, the other was to support the school. We always had a Mass around Easter, just women. It was very moving," Kris said. "The common focus of those Masses was that we all had sons; we tried to take on Mary's tragedy from her perspective. It was just the feeling you have about a son, and how she must have felt losing him. It had to have been unbelievably terrible.

“It wasn’t all religious – we went up to Blossoms and did a flower-arranging activity. We raised money for fire-escape ropes for a college after a tragedy, I remember that,” said Kris, whose husband Richard volunteered with the Dads’ Club.

“Rick’s tuition was the best money I ever spent,” Kris added. “UD tapped into my son’s individuality and he’s been highly successful because of it. I give UD Jesuit the credit. You develop such a social network when your child is at UD. To be able to continue that was wonderful. These women are energetic, organized and intelligent people who run businesses. It’s a great organization. I don’t know how to say it any better than that.”

DOLORES ZAKRZEWSKI

Active in the UD Mothers’ Club, Dolores Zakrzewski (Jason ‘88, Marcus ‘96) was in on the ground floor too, and served as president. “How I ended up going to the first meeting, I have no clue. But I thought the alumni club was a great idea,” said Dolores, who still serves as a class rep. “I thought it would be really good because we’d keep the women involved, and keep our sons involved. I remember Fr. Munz telling me that we are the only Jesuit school in the U.S. that has an alumni moms’ association – I thought that was fascinating. We’re the only game in town. I think it’s great we started a group that’s still going 30 years later.

“We began with just simple things...we had an Advent twilight and an evening of reflection. There was a breakfast and a Mass we started pretty early,” said Dolores, whose husband Ted is a UD grad and former UD golf coach. “That was a big thing to get people involved. For a long time, the alumni moms were very involved in setting up for the auction. We’d get a lot of volunteers to come in to set up tables, fold napkins, and do centerpieces. We are still friends and get together with many of those families.

“I see the group changing, but I see it lasting,” added Dolores. “Every so often, we have a group of women who really want to stay together and be supportive. I’d like to see us continue enjoying the religious aspects – evenings of remembrance and the historic church tours, which are phenomenal. The alumni moms keep you involved and keep you young. We come from all walks of life. It’s wonderful. Just come and enjoy the camaraderie. We all have something in common.”

BRIDGET MORIN

“Nobody wanted to give up the friendships (after graduation), and that of course included the moms,” said founding AMC board member Bridget Morin (Jamie ‘93, Matthew ‘95, Kevin ‘98), who also served on the UD Jesuit board and as Mothers’ Club president.

“Terri Krause’s idea took off in a nano-second. People were so excited because it gave us a structure to stay connected. You can still remain friends with a few people, but if you have events

and are still connected to the school, it's so much richer," Bridget said. "I feel like the mission of being involved – continuing the spirituality and social justice issues – is important.

"Current moms see there is an opportunity to keep active. We were always looking for connections...like doing things to support Loyola H.S. and help its development. It's still alumni moms setting up 75 percent of the centerpieces at the Capuchins' event. It's why joining the UD community has always been extraordinary."

MOLLY DALY

Former Mothers Club president and active alumni mom Molly Daly (Stu '92, Ryan '95, Matt '98) said, "I think what really bonded the moms is that these were formative years for our boys. Everyone was sending their boys from so many locations. We were all in it together and we wanted the best for their high school experience. I was always impressed with how involved parents wanted to be."

Molly belongs atop that list. In charge of refreshments at U OF D JESUIT family Masses, Molly found herself locked out early one Sunday morning – security nowhere to be seen. She was wearing a dress, and carrying donuts. No matter...she hopped the tall iron fence and threw pebbles at windows in the Jesuit Residence before finally getting in to brew the coffee.

"I think it's because the boys embrace the spirit of the place," said Molly, whose husband Dick served as Dads' Club president. "There were so many experiences they were positive about – the retreats and the pinnacle of it all, Kairos when they are juniors or seniors. The mothers just bonded, whether it was working registration, helping out with the walkathon or serving paczki on Fat Tuesday.

"Over the years, there's always been a group of moms who say it's worth it to stay together. At our retreat last January at Manresa, there were 30 women," said Molly. "It's the Jesuit tradition of being people of service for others. I think that's always been the goal; to support the faculty and let the boys know we are there for them."

ALICE BARRINGER and ANNE CALICE – U OF D JESUIT's "A TEAM"

St. Ignatius of Loyola is credited with saying, "Go forth and set the world on fire." Ask anyone at U OF D JESUIT, and they'll tell you Alice Barringer (Matt '01, Andy '03) and Anne Calice (Tony '97, Rob '03) – the school's "A Team" -- keeps the flame ablaze for the U OF D JESUIT alumni mothers.

Alice, current AMC president, is beyond humble. "I do not do anything without the help of many," she says. Keeping the AMC going is lots of work. Why do it? "By keeping women engaged with the mission of the school, it keeps the whole family engaged – and that benefits fundraising, it

benefits students coming to the school, and it also benefits and nurtures individual moms and their memories and feelings about their sons,” said Alice. “I think it’s been good when we’ve been there for women who have lost a son, or experienced some sort of hardship. I really believe we serve a purpose for the school.”

For many years Alice worked in the development and auction offices, so she’s outreach-minded. “You can think about remembering U OF D JESUIT in your will, or talk to your neighbor and say, ‘You might want to think about U of D for your son,’” she said. “We have done some interesting things. The AMC purchased new furniture for an AVC house and donated the crosses for the classrooms in the science center. Every year the alumni moms make a large donation to the Auction Gala. During the presidency of **Crystal Davidson (Scott ‘05)**, the ladies’ restroom was remodeled, and a \$6,000 donation was made to build a house in Latin America where Brother Boynton was doing missionary work,” Alice added. “While we are quite successful in raising financial support it has never been the main purpose of our organization. We wish to support the fellowship and camaraderie of the Alumni Mothers by offering opportunities for spiritual and social activities. You can nurture the school on many levels.

ANNE CALICE

“Alice played a key role in getting moms and the U OF D JESUIT development team involved,” said Anne. “She had her eye on the future, and I think the AMC would have likely fizzled out 20 years ago without her leadership. Her gift of hospitality has served U OF D JESUIT and our AMC immeasurably well.”

Anne Calice was inspired to get involved the day her oldest son started at U OF D JESUIT. For Anne, like Alice, her love of the school led to employment there. As stewardship director “Anne was critical to the success of the advancement department and ultimately the school,” said her boss when she retired. “Just as important, she took on the tedious task of database organization. As an alumni mom, she assisted with our Alumni Mothers’ Club.”

Anne’s biggest initiative was establishing the Mary Lackamp Women for Others Scholarship. For 30 years, Lackamp worked in administration for U OF D JESUIT. She was 89 when she was killed in a car crash on the way home from a Cubs basketball game in 2020. “She was the heart of the school for many, many years; such an important person for U OF D JESUIT,” said Anne. “I don’t want her to be forgotten. *(More information on the scholarship and giving is on the school’s website.)* What continues on is the bond with the moms. We have current members from the ‘80’s to the present who hail from Hawaii all the way to Boston. That was one of those unexpected blessings of choosing U of D Jesuit. Moms were interested in making the best for the boys and found it was their experience too.”

COLETTE RIZIK

“I think the U OF D JESUIT Alumni Mothers’ Club is so unique, and 30 years! That’s amazing!” said Colette Rizik (Luke ‘07, Jeff ‘10, Paul ‘13). “Alice, in particular, is the driving force behind the AMC, keeping it alive and thriving. Anne comes in a close second, since she was the liaison with the school for so many years and provided such great information on connecting with alumni moms.

“I was recruited by Alice in 2013 to be membership chair. Dolores Zakrzewski was president, Kathy Mills communications chair, Phyllis Smith, treasurer, and Beth Nemes, corresponding secretary. It was such a pleasure to get to work with and get to know them,” said Colette, who also served as web administrator. Highlights included the “welcome back” Mass and breakfast, setting up for the auction, and the auction gift gathering party each May, she said. “Mary Benedetto began the U OF D JESUIT Alumni Moms’ prayer team, which continues to this day.”

High tea in Plymouth, a scarf-painting event and cooking classes drew alumni moms. Based on a 2014 members’ survey, “we realized how many women were interested in the churches in the area, which led to the first of many historic church tours organized by the AMC,” Colette recalled. “Those have been very popular and continue almost every year. The group still brings me great joy and I love that the AMC is still supporting the school both financially and socially.”

MARTHA JOHNSON

Why did two-term Mothers’ Club president Martha Johnson (Patrick ‘14) agree to join and serve the AMC as president? “It was definitely Alice Barringer,” said Martha. “She was a very quiet mentor to a lot of moms before me and after me. When she asked, ‘Why don’t you come on over to the AMC?’ I said sure. I was going to be an empty-nester and wasn’t ready to say goodbye to all my friends.

“When I was president and we had issues and needed info on moms, Anne Calice was my point person,” Martha said. “She worked the developmental database. Anne would pull and do what we needed.”

Martha also commends Anne for founding the Women for Others Scholarship. “That was Anne Calice’s baby. She was the woman who did that. The hope is that more and more moms will know to put it in their plan for when they pass. This is something that will forever give back.”

Under Martha’s leadership, bylaws were re-written. “A healthy organization needs checks and balances. More minds on a decision make a better decision,” she said. Most of all, Martha prizes her U OF D JESUIT friendships and wants to see the AMC continue to grow. “Even if you can’t grab a friend to go to an event, pick one that interests you and come. You may be uncomfortable for about three seconds. People will come up, introduce themselves and pull you in. It’s fun. You’ll meet someone who will become your new friend,” said Martha.

CARINA GAYNIER

“I was at work one day when Anne Calice reached out to me, asking me to consider being AMC president,” said Carina Gaynier (Mitchell ‘13, Ben ‘18). “I did not feel worthy of that role. How could I step into this position with such a steeped history?” In the end, Carina agreed, seeing it as “a way to continue my involvement. I honestly enjoyed connections with all the women I’d met. I knew the ladies on the board, and I knew Martha was going to stand by me as vice president or past president. There was always going to be a team of us.

“Then Covid happened and we had to create all online events,” recalled Carina. “But super surprising, that’s the year we saw a big increase in membership, and donations were way up. Even though we weren’t meeting in person, women still wanted to support the organization, which was so refreshing.

“It’s such a great feeling to support a school that has done so much for both my boys,” added Carina, whose husband Fred was active in the Dad’s Club. “Now with the scholarship, we can continue to give back through a donation honoring someone who meant a whole lot to the school or a person who just passed away.”

The AMC did just that in memory of **Sue Ann Schellig** (Matt ‘94), a founding AMC board member who died this summer. It’s a fitting gesture, given her dedication to the school. Her husband Doug said, “Sue Ann really loved the fact that U of D dealt with Matt in such a fashion as to turn him into a man, frankly. I think that she felt so wonderful about that.” Director of Dorsey College’s Culinary Arts Program, Matt said, “My mom loved U of D. She loved being around U of D and she loved me at U of D. She got involved because she was a go get ‘em kind of girl. If she thought she was doing something for the greater good of you, then she had even more energy for it.” The thing she valued most about U of D? “I am going to hang my hat on Men for Others,” Matt said. “That’s something that still rings in my head.”

DAVID GUMBEL, BROTHER JIM BOYNTON

David Gumbel, U OF D JESUIT vice president for institutional advancement, said, “The Alumni Mothers’ Club is vital to U of D Jesuit in so many ways,” key among them keeping our alumni moms engaged with the school. “At almost every other school, the student’s mom would be there just for the four years and then move on,” he said. “The AMC continues the community that many of our moms are looking for after sending their sons off to change the world. AMC moms serve our Labre ministry among many other clubs by providing food and clothes that our Cubs take to those less fortunate. We’re lucky to have hundreds of dedicated alumni moms who want to stay active with each other and our community.”

U OF D JESUIT President Br. Jim Boynton said the fact that the AMC is going strong after 30 years “shows that we are a community that has a past, present and future. And all of those

aspects of the community are very important. Just like a family has generations – kids, parents and grandparents – the grandparents are really important. They are the source of wisdom, the memory of the institution, and that is what the AMC is,” said Br. Boynton.

“On a big level, Jesus did two things when he came to earth: He started a community, and he gave it a mission,” added Br. Boynton. “I like to think there are all kinds of communities of Jesus around the world, and all have missions. The AMC first and foremost I hope is a community of women with a mission that drew them together, and that mission is the U of D Jesuit community. Their sons all went here and got to know each other. Hopefully there’s a great sorority, a sisterhood, a common bond and ministry to help U of D High however they can at this stage of their lives, whether that means coming in to knit hats for Labre and helping our kids go deliver food, or whether it’s presence at an open house, getting the message out about U of D High, or putting us in your will – whatever it is. Everyone has their own contribution to the mission, and everyone is a member of the community for a different reason.”

FINAL THOUGHTS from MARY BENEDETTO

Mary Benedetto (Matt ‘06, Joey ‘11) spoke at the 2013 senior moms’ dinner. In part she said, “This is what it’s like to be an alumni mom. It’s reaching for your Love a Cub mug, Alumni Mom mug or some other U of D mug in the morning because it brings a smile to your face remembering U of D and your friends, and your sons, now in Chicago and D.C. It is being a prayer warrior and knowing the needs and prayers of the U of D moms and their families, lifting them up and covering them in prayer. It’s Fr. Kiser covering your son in prayer when you could not be there.

“It is seeing old friends at the fashion show and braving a storm that would bring a snow day, but could not cancel the alumni mom soup supper and Lenten fellowship...So being an alumni mom is not so very different from being a Cub mom. Your sons may move on, and you will miss them, and life will change for you. But I promise that you will have new and wonderful experiences and somehow YOU will find a Cub connection, even if it is only right here. Because you are always welcome, so please come back.”

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